

# THE MAGICAL RING



It was a hot summer day in 2008 and the young ornithologists were hiding beneath the nest. Vladi was clutching a small plastic green ring with initials B28. Few moments after he gently put it on the foot of the scared feeble chick. He put the young bird back in the recess, trying not to think of the troublesome statistics:

**"...of every nine young Egyptian vultures, only one survives."**

He glanced at the nestling on last time and said:

*And don't forget to come back home*



Just a few short months after her hatch in the heart of Rodopi Mountains, Maya (whose name was given to her years later) departed on the long and dangerous journey to Africa.

For three years no one of the team "The Return of the Neophron" had heard anything about her. Until they received a call about a bird in a bad condition with poisoning symptoms in Northern Bulgaria. Vladi recognized the ring right away.



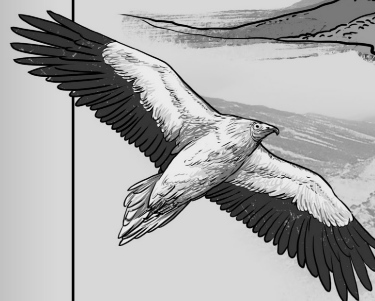
Thanks to the local people (who gave the signal) and the quick action of the project's team, the bird was admitted in The Green Balkans Wildlife Rehabilitation and Breeding Center. After two months of treatment and recuperation, Maya was once again released under her home skies in the Rodopi.



Illustrations: Yana Kazakova

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"Will she remain here, in spite of the dangers? Will she come back?" After another two years of waiting for an answer, the ring intervened once more. Maya was sighted and photographed, thanks to the skills and zealous efforts of one of the project's most experienced collaborators. Already an adult, Maya had returned and found a mate in Northern Bulgaria, 230 km from the nest she had hatched in. Unfortunately their attempts to breed were unsuccessful.



From that point on, the ring hasn't stopped supplying the team with information for the bird's whereabouts, every time she comes back in the spring. The distinctive markings "B28" helped Vladi find out about Maya's new mate and their new nesting territory.



Just a small plastic green ring that turned out to be anything but ordinary. And a bird, gifted with the extraordinary ability to cleanse the earth, protecting people and animals alike from diseases, to cross seas and continents, carrying on its wings the hope, that there will continue to be Egyptian vultures. Here, at home. Our common home.

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