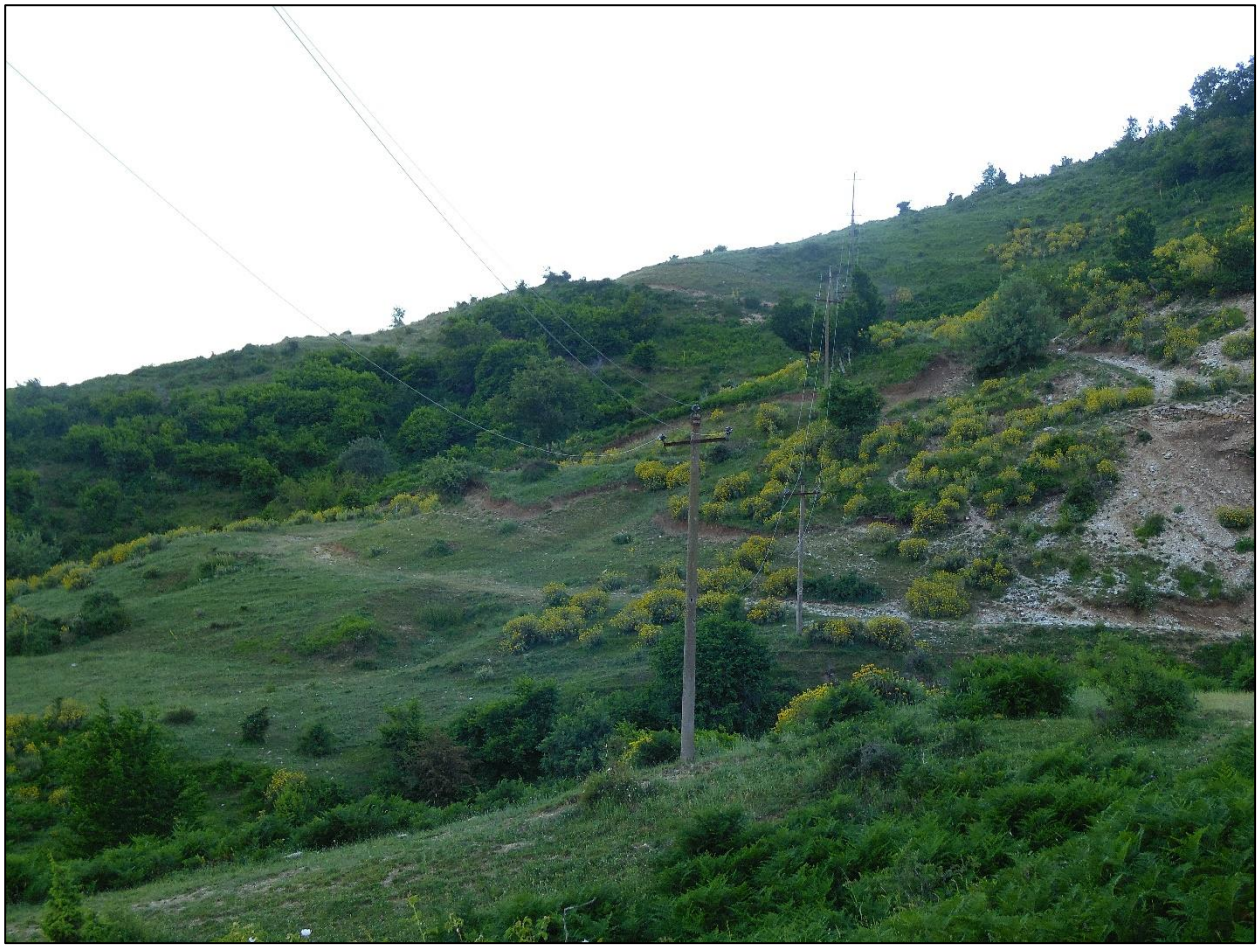
FIELD STUDY ABOUT THE IMPACT OF ELECTROCUTION IN THE EGYPTIAN VULTURE BREEDING TERRITORIES IN ALBANIA



Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania (PPNEA)
2019

LIFE16 NAT/BG/000874

FIELD STUDY ABOUT THE IMPACT OF ELECTROCUTION IN THE EGYPTIAN VULTURE BREEDING TERRITORIES IN ALBANIA

Authors: Mirjan Topi, Ledi Selgjekaj, Dea Zyryku, Ilçe Kostovski, Roland Lleshi

This survey has been ralized by the center for Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania (PPNEA) within the frame of the project "Egyptian Vulture New Life" with project code LIFE16 NAT/BG/00874.

2019

Abstract

This report has been prepared thanks to the support of the Egyptian Vulture New LIFE project (LIFE16 NAT/BG/00874), which is coordinated at first level by the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds (BSPB)/BirdLife Bulgaria. BSPB has subcontracted PPNEA to act as local partner in Albania for the implementation of project activities. This survey is realized to accomplish the requirement of the Action A3 "Conduct field survey on the mortality of birds due to dangerous power grid". To realize this survey, the methodology provided by the project has been implemented. The surveying group has walked along the power lines to check carefully if any case of mortality of birds has occurred due to the electrocution or collisions. In addition, a landscape analysis has been realized in order to estimate the availability of roosting sites in the area and the chances that exist that the electric pylons are used as roosting or perching sites. Despite the existence of very dangerous power lines in the area, no birds have been found dead in the transect surveyed. This result might be explained by the landscape features where plenty of perching and roosting opportunities on cliffs and even trees are available. Therefore, birds do not need to use the pylons and risk to be electrocuted. On the other hand, pylons are short and in a considerable part of the transect are closed to the trees or the ground, this decreases the chances for collisions as well. Based on this results, no insulation intervention is required to be performed within this transect.

Contents

List of Figures

Introduction

This report has been prepared thanks to the support of the Egyptian Vulture New LIFE project (LIFE16 NAT/BG/00874), which is coordinated at first level by the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds (BSPB)/BirdLife Bulgaria. BSPB has subcontracted PPNEA to act as local partner in Albania for the implementation of project activities. This project builds on the work realized earlier within "The Return of the Neophron" project that has been implemented along 2011-2016 and PPNA has also participated as a local partner in Albania.

The new project aims to reinforce the vulture population in Europe's easternmost range by delivering conservation measures that eliminate major known threats such as illegal poisoning and electrocution in the breeding grounds, stabilizing this Balkan population will ensure the species survival in its global range. This breeding population will also be reinforced by restocking actions to boost the species recovery.

This survey is realized to accomplish the requirement of the Action A3 "Conduct field survey on the mortality of birds due to dangerous power grid".

Methodology

To realize this survey, the methodology provided by the project has been implemented. The surveying group has walked along the power lines to check carefully if any case of mortality of birds has occurred due to the electrocution or collisions. In addition, a landscape analysis has been realized in order to estimate the availability of roosting sites in the area and the chances that exist that the electric pylons are used as roosting or perching sites.

The surveying group was composed from 4 people, 3 were surveying and walking along the trails and one was driving the car to leave and collect the surveying team. The power line transect includes at least 4 territories of the Egyptian Vulture in Albania, out of which three are occupied in 2019. The entire transect is situated within the area of Kurvelesh, including both territories under the administrative borders of Tepelena and Gjirokastra Municipalities. A total length of around 35 km of power line transect, divided in two sub-transects have been surveyed as showed in the two maps bellow. The transect has been registered using the GPS Essentials application for the Android system.

The first transect (fig.1), includes the power lines situated between the territories of Salari and Nivice, whereas the second transect (fig.2) lies in the territories of Golem, Zhulat and Kardhiq.

Figure 1: Territories Salari-Nivicë

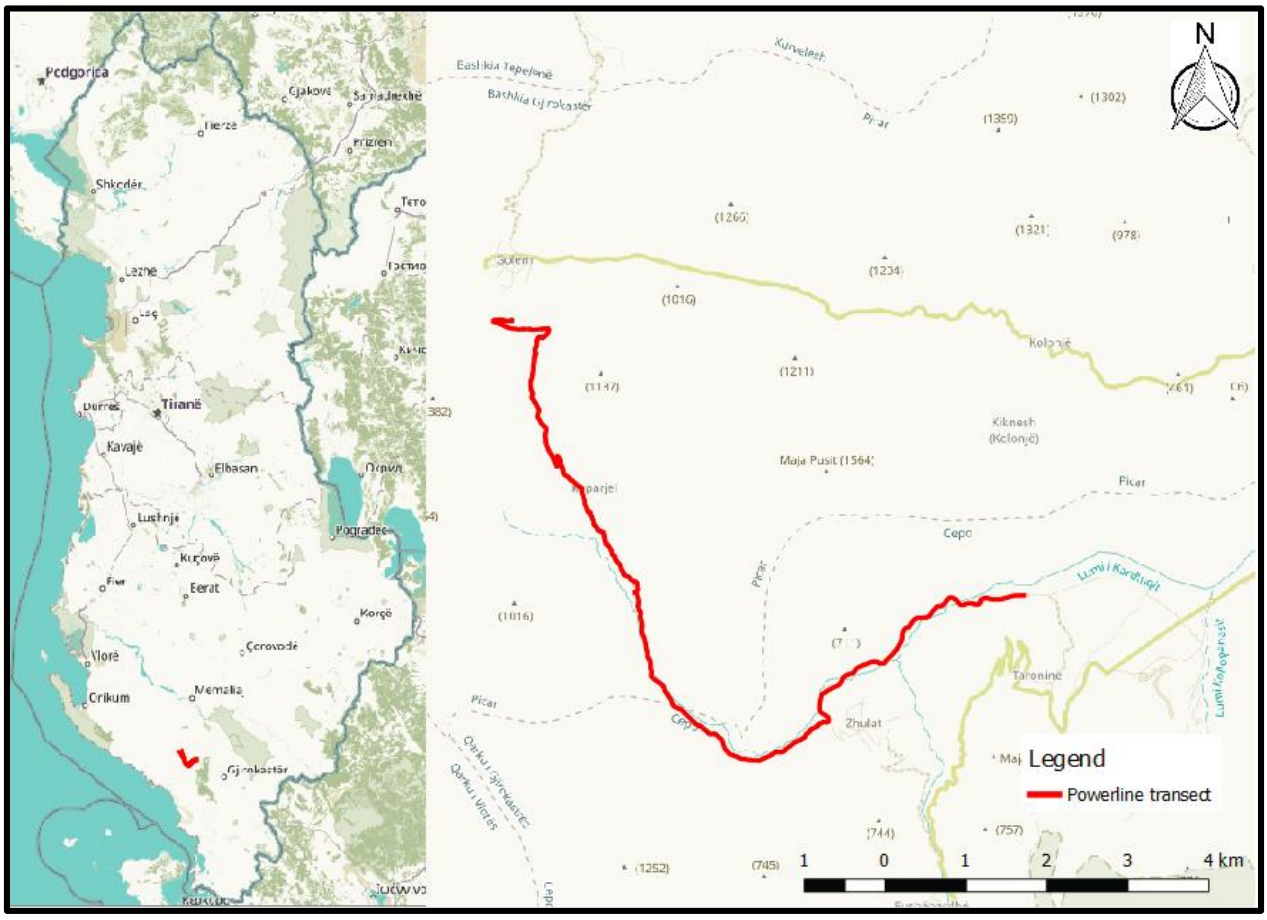


Figure 2: Territories Golëm-Zhulat

Results and Discussions

A considerable part of the power line pylons were placed in dense shrubby vegetation, and steep terrain where the observation access was impossible. Therefore the observation in these parts of the transect has not been performed. Please see figure 3 and 4 bellow.

Figure 3: Power line transect situated in dense shrubby vegetation and steep terrain.

Figure 4: Power line transect situated in dense shrubby vegetation terrain.

The rest of the transect is situated in open area (please see fig 5 and 6 bellow) where surveying is possible and easy to carry out.

No signs of dead birds have been observed in the entire transect. This result could be explained due to the availability of numerous perching and roosting sites in the area. In an area like this, where there are found plenty of cliffs and trees where birds can perch or roost, the power lines have much less chances to be used. Therefore, the risk of electrocution is considered very low. On the other hand, the pylons are short and closed from the ground, this decreases or eliminates the chances of collisions.

Moreover, pylons are of medium voltage and constructed in such way that would be very dangerous for birds of prey if used for perching, as the wires are situated closed to each other that easily enable contact even for falcons.

The pylons situated in the territory of Nivica, in an open area (where Egyptian Vulture has been observed to use and be present around) have been insulated by the project last year. Thus, the risk of electrocution here has been eliminated.

Figure 5: Power line transect situated open area.

Figure 6: Power line transect situated open area.

Conclusions

Despite the existence of very dangerous power lines in the area, no birds have been found dead in the transect surveyed. This result might be explained by the landscape features where plenty of perching and roosting opportunities on cliffs and even trees are available. Therefore, birds do not need to use the pylons and risk to be electrocuted. On the other hand, pylons are short and in a considerable part of the transect are closed to the trees or the ground, this decreases the chances for collisions as well. Based on this results, no insulation intervention is required to be performed within this transect.