



**Raptor Protection of Slovakia, Trhová 54, 841 01 Bratislava, [www.dravce.sk](http://www.dravce.sk)**

## **Transnational project to prevent thousands of birds from electrocution and collisions with power lines**

Press Release

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In view of the current climate and environmental crises, the need of protection of the suffering wildlife on our planet has become more crucial than ever. One of the biggest threats for the wild living species of birds is electrocution and collisions with power lines causing the thousands of avoidable deaths and injuries. These threats are targeted by the LIFE Danube Free Sky project representing a unique example of wide transnational cooperation along one of the most important migration corridor, stop-over site and wintering place for many bird species in Europe - the Danube river. The project has officially started on 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2020 and has received funding from the LIFE Programme of the European Union. During the period of over 5 years of project implementation, 15 partners from 7 countries will develop strong collaboration and implement the most effective solutions in order to prevent existential threats to birds. After this period, the visibility of more than 245 km of top priority power lines will be increased. Also, more than 3200 of the most dangerous poles within the project area will be adjusted to ensure birds' safety.

Bird mortality caused by interaction with power lines and other electric-utility structures has been documented for over 380 species of birds, including critically endangered and threatened ones. Around 2074 km of 8 types of the above ground power lines dangerous for birds can be found within the LIFE Danube Free Sky project area. Impact of this range of power lines represents serious and considerable threat for wintering and breeding/reproducing population of 12 target species. By installation of bird flight diverters and insulation of dangerous poles in 23 Special Protection Areas and 9 Important Bird Areas, the project will prevent about 2000 individuals of target species (and many more of other species) from being killed or injured after collision with wires and/or due to electrocution EVERY YEAR.

“Raptor Protection of Slovakia (RPS) – an NGO in the role of coordinating beneficiary will manage the whole project and ensure implementation of project actions such as survey of power lines, improvement of breeding and feeding conditions for target bird species, etc. We are very happy that the project was approved by the European Commission for co-financing. The project is based on and will apply results and best practice methods of a very successful [LIFE Energy project](#) implemented in the area of Slovakia between 2014 and 2019,” informs Lucia Deutschová from RPS, the Project Manager.

Please watch a short video presenting the project partners uploaded on Youtube [here](#).

Additional information:

- The LIFE Danube Free Sky – Transnational conservation of birds along Danube river (LIFE19 NAT/SK/001023) project has received funding from the LIFE Programme of the European Union.

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- Preventing birds from collisions and electrocution is important to compensate other threats that the endangered species need to face. The restoration of water habitats along the Danube river was carried out under 16 LIFE projects so far. In a result, the birds are more attracted to the restored sites, including the target species. Therefore, it is necessary to prevent them from being killed on power lines in such areas.
- Under the project the population of 12 target species will be monitored by standardized methods to confirm efficiency of the project measures. As a result of the project, mortality of birds on power lines will be reduced within 23 [Special Protection Areas](#) (SPAs) and 9 [Important Bird Areas](#) (IBAs). SPAs are the part of [NATURA 2000](#) – the largest coordinated network of protected areas in the world, consisting of over 18% of the EU's land area and more than 8% of its marine territory. IBAs are places of international significance for the conservation of birds and other biodiversity, while main purpose of the IBA Programme of BirdLife International is to secure the long-term conservation of locations that are significant for birds and biodiversity.
- With its riparian zones and riverine habitats, the Danube forms ecological networks and often build the backbone for bio-corridors. In addition, the corridor and its adjacent areas attract hundreds of bird species. Every year millions of birds follow the Danube on their spring and autumn odyssey to and from distant migrating sites. Only the Lower Danube and Danube Delta host some 331 species of birds, including the rare Dalmatian Pelican, as well as 90% of the world population of Red-breasted Geese. Many of these species have undergone dramatic decline in recent decades. Due to electrocution and/or collision, EACH YEAR this range kills 20% of the reproducing population of Imperial Eagle, Saker Falcon and Dalmatian Pelican.
- The LIFE Danube Free Sky project represents a unique example of wide transnational cooperation. Strong collaboration is presented of beneficiaries from 7 countries (Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania) and one non-beneficiary country (Germany) including the private commercial sector (8 electric companies and 1 railway company), nature conservation authorities, municipality and private noncommercial entities. The project presents solution to one of the biggest threats for the wild living species of birds today – interaction with power line.

For more information please visit project website: [www.danubefreesky.eu](http://www.danubefreesky.eu)

Please feel free to use following movie for short videos: [Flying over a safe place](#)

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