

## Short Communication

# Update on successful nesting of bearded vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus*) in the Lanzo Valleys, Piedmont region (NW Italy)

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**Abstract** - Since the first successful nesting of bearded vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus*) in the Piedmont region, which took place in the Lanzo Valleys in the province of Turin during the 2018-2019 breeding season, with the fledging of the juvenile named “Belavri” (W288), three other juveniles fledged in the following years at the same nesting site: “Maurich” (W365), “Chateaux” (W413) and “Eolo” (W490). Thus, the number of successful breedings in this area increased to 4 from the beginning of the international reintroduction project and we note the exceptional young age of the female during the first recorded breeding (4cy).

**Keywords:** scavenger, gypaète barbu, reproduction.

**Riassunto** - Aggiornamento sul successo della nidificazione del gipeto (*Gypaetus barbatus*) nelle Valli di Lanzo, Piemonte (NO Italia).

In seguito alla prima nidificazione con successo di gipeto (*Gypaetus barbatus*) in Piemonte, avvenuta nelle Valli di Lanzo in Provincia di Torino nella stagione riproduttiva 2018-2019, con l'involo di “Belavri” (W288), negli anni successivi, presso lo stesso sito di nidificazione, si sono involati i seguenti altri 3 individui: “Maurich” (W365), “Chateaux” (W413) e “Eolo” (W490). Questi involi hanno fatto salire a 4 le riproduzioni con successo in questo territorio, a partire dall'inizio del progetto internazionale di reintroduzione, e si rimarca l'eccezionale giovane età della femmina durante la prima riproduzione registrata (4cy).

**Parole chiave:** spazzino, gipeto, riproduzione.

After the extinction of the species in the Alps in the first decades of 1900 due to human persecution, with the last

bearded vulture killed in 1920 and few supposed observations between 1924 and 1930 (Mingozzi & Estève, 1997), an international reintroduction project based on captive breeding has been launched in 1978. The first captive-born individuals were released in 1986 in Austria (Frey & Walter, 1989), while the first successful breedings occurred in 1997 in Haute-Savoie, France (Heuret & Rouillon, 1997) and in 1998 in the Stelvio National Park, Italy (Jenny, 1998).

In the Western Italian Alps the first fledging events were reported in 2012 in Aosta Valley (Fasce & Fasce, 2012), followed by the settlements of several pairs with successful reproductions (Fasce & Fasce, 2021), while in the Piedmont region the first successful reproduction just occurred in 2019 in province of Turin, Lanzo Valleys, despite a pair was present since 2015 (Chiereghin & Sartirana, 2019); this reproduction was particularly interesting due to the young age of the female, a 4<sup>th</sup> calendar year in autumn 2018 (Fasce, 2020).

During the 2022-2023 breeding season, a minimum of 67 territories resulted occupied by bearded vultures across the Alps, 19 of which occurring in Italy: 10 in Stelvio National Park, Sondrio Province and South Tyrol (Bassi *et al.*, 2022), 6 in Aosta Valley and Gran Paradiso National Park (Chioso *et al.*, 2022) and 3 in the Piedmont region (Sartirana *et al.*, 2022). For the Aosta Valley, an additional 2 pairs are indicated, raising the number of territories to 8 (Fasce & Fasce, 2021).

The territory in the Lanzo Valleys was occupied since 2015, but a turn-over of individuals has been observed (Chiereghin & Sartirana, 2019; Fasce, 2020), while since autumn 2018 it was occupied by the current Usseglio's pair, which is composed of “Italia 150” (male released in 2011 in Entracque, Cuneo, as revealed by genetic analyses, following the collection of feathers within the territory of the pair; F. Lorcher in Fasce, 2020) and the female wildborn named “Bellacò” (Fig. 2), 4<sup>th</sup> calendar year in 2018. Despite the early female age, the pair was able to successfully fledge a juvenile on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August 2019, named “Belavri” (W288; Chiereghin & Sartirana, 2019, Fasce, 2020), and three other consecutive fledglings in the following breeding seasons, respectively: “Maurich” (W365; Sartirana *et al.*, 2020, Fasce, 2020), “Chateaux” (W413; Sartirana *et al.*, 2021) and “Eolo” (W490; Sartirana *et al.*, 2022).

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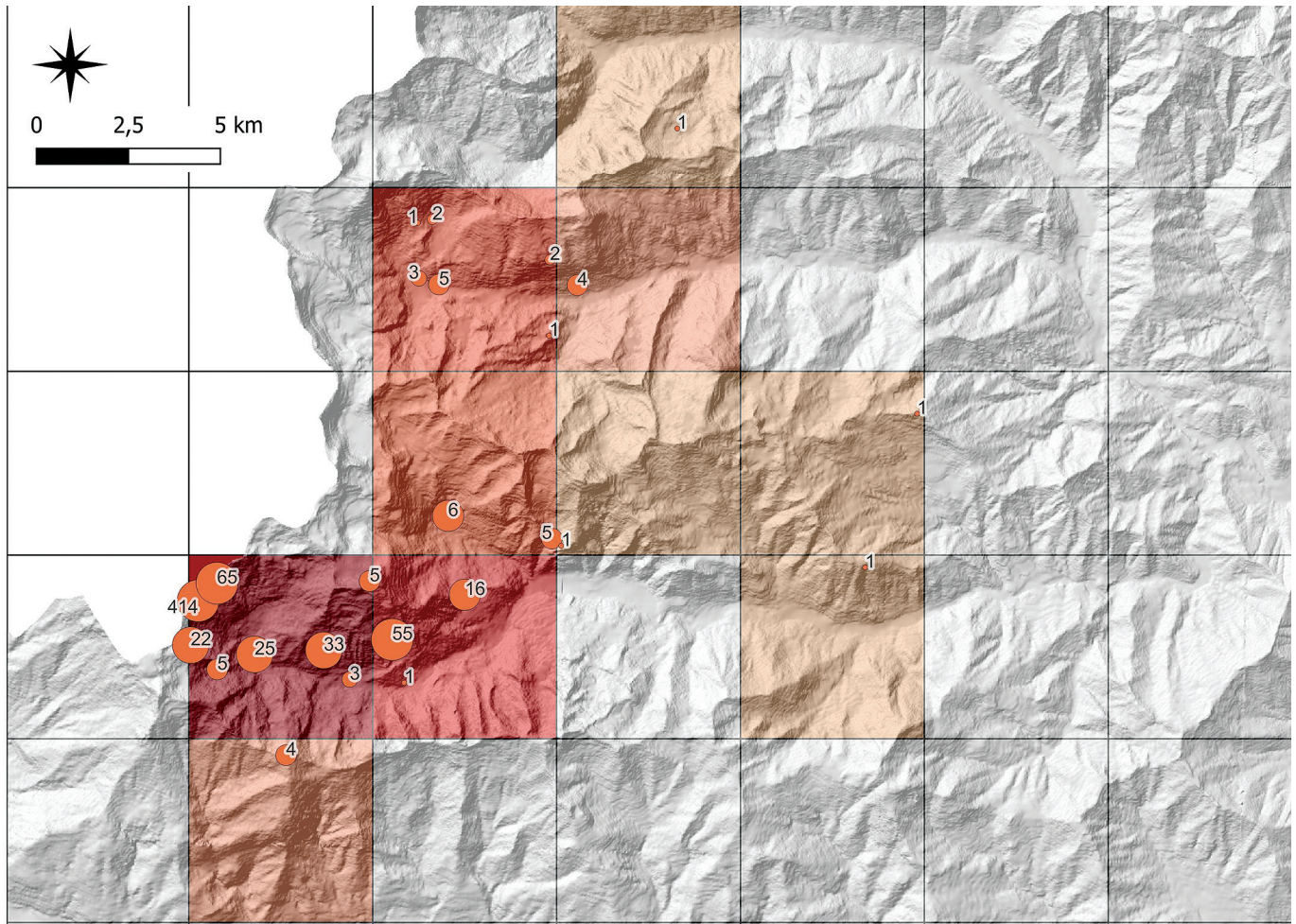


Fig. 1 - The map shows the Italian side attended by the Usseglio's pair, where increasing shades of the color red indicate a greater number of observations in which members of the pair were identified through the collection of photographic documentation during the period from May 2017 to June 2023. The background used is DEM (digital elevation model) in scale 1:150.000. / La mappa mostra il versante italiano frequentato dalla coppia di Usseglio, dove tonalità crescenti del colore rosso indicano un maggior numero di osservazioni in cui i membri della coppia sono stati identificati attraverso la raccolta di documentazione fotografica nel periodo da maggio 2017 a giugno 2023. Lo sfondo utilizzato è il DEM (modello digitale di elevazione) in scala 1:150.000.

In 2022-2023 the pair used the same nesting site but breeding failed on 24/05/2023±2 and no changes of partner have been reported yet, as confirmed by the photographic documentation collected.

The following table shows the reproductive dates recorded over the years.

Tab. 1 - Reproductive dates for the Usseglio's, pair. / Date di riproduzione per la coppia di Usseglio.

Breeding season	Clutch	Hatch	Fledge	Failure
2018-2019	15/02±1	12/04±1	18/08	/
2019-2020	14/02±1	06/04±1	11/08	/
2020-2021	15/02±1	06/04±1	06/08	/
2021-2022	16/02±1	29/03±1	27/07±1	/
2022-2023	13/02±1	22/03±1	/	24/05±2
<b>Average date</b>	15/02±1	02/04±1	07/08	/

It is worth to mention that in the beginning of the first successful breeding season (September 2018) the female was just in her fourth calendar year, an extraordinary event for this species (Fasce, 2020).

On the Italian side, through the collection of numerous photographic records, it was possible to identify the areas most frequented by the pair, as shown in Fig. 1, which are mainly in the Ala and Viù valleys within the boundaries of the municipalities of Balme, Lemie and Usseglio.

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Fig. 2 - A) Male of the pair “Italia 150”, March 2021. B) Female of the pair “Bellacò” (5th cy) carrying an ungulate limb to the nest, April 2019. C) Juvenile “Eolo”, September 2022. / A) Maschio della coppia “Italia 150”, marzo 2021. B) Femmina della coppia “Bellacò” (5° cy) che trasporta un arto di ungulato al nido, aprile 2019. C) Giovane “Eolo”, settembre 2022. (Photo / Foto M. Chiareghin).

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