BREEDING SUCCESS OF THE EGYPTIAN VULTURE (NEOPHRON PERCNOPTERUS) IN THRACE AND TEMPORAL VARIATION OF ITS USE IN THE DADIA FEEDING STATION

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Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) populations have recently decreased dramatically over a large part of their European and African range, including Greece. The species is currently classified as globally endangered (EN) and in Greece as critically endangered (CR). The prefectures of Evros and Rhodope include at least 30% of its national population. In 2010-2011 we looked for changes in the local population and determined its breeding performance and success. Moreover, the species' Dadia feeding station use was monitored, recording temporal variation in the number of birds and age classes (only in 2011). Out of around 18 possible Egyptian vulture territories, ten in 2010 and nine in 2011 were occupied. Productivity differed significantly between the two years rising from 0.57 fledglings/breeding pair in 2010 to 1.2 in 2011, due to the increased number of twins fledging. There was no statistically significant difference in the overall number of birds observed at the feeding station. In 2010 the highest concentration at the feeding station occurred in late August (9 birds), in the pre-migratory phase, and in 2011 in late July and August (10 birds). The use of the feeding station seemed to be more frequent in the morning and early afternoon. These initial results highlight the need for intensive/systematic monitoring of the Egyptian vulture populations so as to explain the observed annual differences in productivity and also as a tool for future conservation projects and management schemes necessary to address the recent population decrease of the species.