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LIFE20 NAT/AT/000049 | LIFE NBI

Annual Report 2025

Photo: C. Esterer; Kuchl 2025

REINTRODUCTION OF THE NORTHERN BALD IBIS IN EUROPE

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FOREWORD

The year 2025 marks an important milestone in the reintroduction of the Northern Bald Ibis in Europe. With more than 323 individuals recorded for the first time, the threshold for a potentially self-sustaining population has been exceeded – a major success!

At the same time, the project is increasingly entering a new phase: moving away from pure reintroduction toward long-term conservation under changing environmental conditions. In the future, the success of conservation projects will not only be measured by population numbers, but increasingly by the resilience of populations to climate change and landscape transformations.

Particularly encouraging is the significant increase in breeding activity outside established colony sites, as well as the remarkable flexibility of the ibises in selecting their nesting locations. This adaptability supports the natural expansion of the population and opens up new perspectives for long-term stabilization. Equally significant is the establishment of another breeding colony in Catalonia in connection with the development of a climate-adaptive migration route to Spain.

A key milestone for this new route was the independent return of the two subadult females, Dr. Saurier and Espi, from Andalusia to the breeding area at Lake Constance. The subsequent loss of both birds during autumn migration in Spain was a painful setback, but it does not diminish the importance of their pioneering achievement.

The year also brought considerable challenges. In particular, the human-led migration proved difficult, requiring a large portion of the route to be covered by vehicle transport. Nevertheless, important orientation flights were carried out, and the young birds were successfully integrated into the newly established colony in Torre d'en Mornau in Catalonia.

A highlight of the year was the International Northern Bald Ibis Symposium in Andalusia, attended by 66 experts from 14 countries. Another notable event was a parliamentary session in the Italian Chamber of Deputies in Rome addressing the threat to biodiversity posed by poaching. The project visit by the European Commission also confirmed the positive progress and promising outlook.

Thus, despite many challenges, 2025 proved to be a successful year. This is primarily due to the outstanding commitment of the LIFE project team under the leadership of Schönbrunn Zoo, as well as all partners and supporters.

Johannes Fritz

Mutters, March 22, 2026

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1. DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

The demographic development in 2025 (Tab. 1) confirms the positive trend of recent years. The total population increased from **280 to 323 individuals**, representing a growth of **43 birds, or 15.4%.**

Table 1: Demographic development in 2025. Recruitment refers to birds that joined the population independently of sedentary free-flying colonies. Lambda (λ) represents the population growth rate, where λ > 1 indicates growth. The reproduction rate refers to the average number of fledged chicks per nest.

	Kuchl	**BGH**	**ÜBLG**	**Rosegg**	**extra-territorial[1]**	recruited birds Grünau	Fagagna	unidentified[2]	TOTAL
Initial population	70	63	40	65	12	17	13		**280**
Nests	9	4	3		22				47
Fledged juveniles	21	8	8		22				75
Transfer for release[3]				2					-2
Release	14	15	0	16	1				46
Recruitment									15
Losses	26	27	22	13	4	4	0		-96
Final population	79	59	26	82	31	21	20	5	**323**
Lambda	*1,13*	*0,94*	*0,65*	*1,26*	*2,58*				*1,15*
Reproduction rate	*2,33*	*2,00*	*2,67*	*1,78*	*1,00*				*1,60*

[1] Extraterritorial refers to chicks that hatched outside the established breeding areas.
[2] Unidentified refers to unringed birds in the population that cannot be assigned to any origin group
[3] Number of chicks from the Rosegg colony that were taken to complete the group for the releases in Kuchl and BGH (HLM).

A total of **136 juvenile birds** were added to the population. This figure consists of **75 fledged juveniles** from the wild population, **46 released juveniles**, and **15 recruited individuals** from the existing sedentary colonies in Grünau im Almtal (N = 8; AT) and Fagagna (N = 7; IT).

In contrast, there were **96 losses**, corresponding to a relative mortality rate of **34%** in relation to the population size at the beginning of the year (Fig. 1). This represents the lowest loss rate documented so far over the course of the project. However, the growth rate was also comparatively low this year at 46% (Fig. 1).

With 323 individuals, the threshold for a self-sustaining viable population (MVP; Minimum Viable Population Size), based on the modelling by Drenske et al. (2023), was exceeded for the first time. In addition, the population is approaching the target size of 357 individuals within the ongoing LIFE project LIFE20 NAT/AT/000049 | LIFE NBI (Fig. 1).

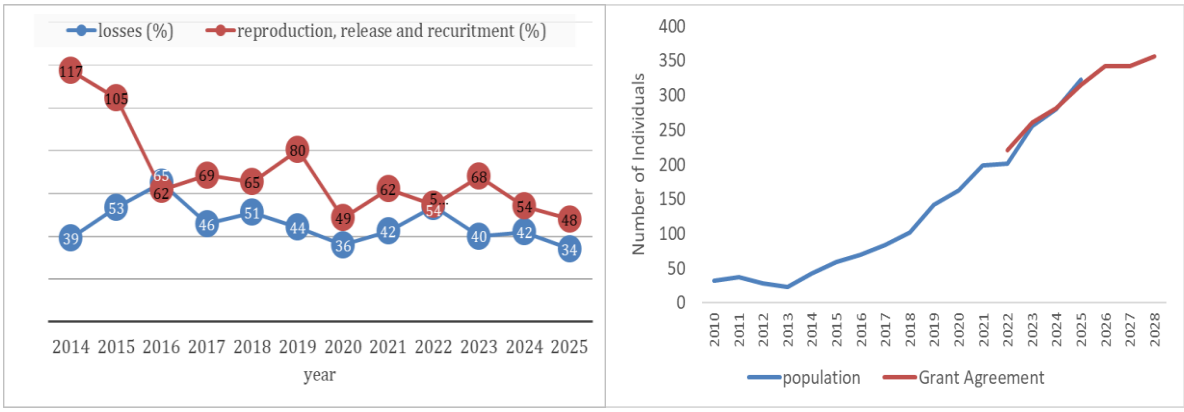

Figure 1: left: annual losses and gains as a percentage of the population at the beginning of the year; right: annual population increase (blue) and target values of the ongoing LIFE project (red; 2022–2028, LIFE20 NAT/AT/000049 | LIFE

However, the current estimate of the minimum viable population size (MVP) is based on modelling that does not yet take the impacts of climate change into account. Therefore, an expanded modelling approach is planned that will incorporate not only climate effects but also the development of the pan-European metapopulation, taking into account migratory, sedentary, and mixed colonies. This metapopulation currently already comprises more than 700 individuals.

2. HUMAN-LED MIGRATION AND RELEASE 2025

The human-led migration in 2025 was one of the most challenging undertakings in the project's history. A total of **32 chicks** were taken from the breeding colony at the zoo and trained in Taching am See (Upper Bavaria). An exceptionally wet and windy summer significantly affected the training, meaning that flight exercises could only be carried out to a limited extent.

Despite the sometimes very adverse conditions, the team remained highly motivated. In particular, the two foster mothers worked professionally and with great commitment under highly demanding circumstances.

During the training phase, two birds suffered fatal accidents, and another had to be excluded from training due to an injury. As a result, the migration began on 19 August 2025 with 29 juvenile birds. Already during the first stage, it became apparent that the birds followed the aircraft unreliably. Despite additional training measures, including a 13-day stay in Paterzell, the behaviour could not be stabilised.

Figure 2: left: HLM 2025 team (from left to right): back row: Johannes Fritz, Clara Renner, Christina Demel, Natalie Lippold, Zoe Foeteler, Verena Bruckschwaiger, Johanna Haas, Marie-Luise Batzdorf, Eszter Bajka, and Lena Hofmann. Front row: Emmanuel Fritz, Tabea Gaugler, Karin Ebel, Mira Silberling, Barbara Steininger, and Giovanni Guzman Mendez. right: foster mothers Marie-Luise Batzdorf and Johanna Haas with a juvenile bird in Taching am See (photo: M. Batzdorf).

The migration covered approximately 1,400 km over 42 days, but could not be carried out as planned in continuous flight. Instead, the birds were predominantly transported in crates from airfield to airfield. At all 11 stopovers, however, the animals were able to perform orientation flights. The journey ultimately ended in Empordà (Catalonia), where the 29 juveniles were integrated into the founder group for a new colony within the reintroduction project of the ALIVE Foundation. In March 2026, all juveniles are scheduled to be released into the wild.

It is hoped that, due to the conducted orientation flights and the partially flown route segments, the birds will still be able to find their way back to their breeding grounds.

3. THE RETURN OF DR.SAURIER AND ESPI

Figure 3: Dr. Saurier meets her two foster mothers, Barbara Steininger and Helena Wehner, in Überlingen. (Photo: J. Fritz)

A particularly encouraging event of the year was the independent return of two subadult females from Andalusia to the breeding area at Lake Constance. Dr. Saurier reached Überlingen in May 2025, followed by Espi in September. Both successfully integrated into the local colony and provided the first convincing evidence that the new migratory route to Spain can become established.

In autumn, both birds once again embarked on their southward migration. After a stopover in western Switzerland, they continued their journey at the end of October along a more direct

route towards Spain. On 6 November, both individuals died approximately 120 km southeast of Madrid due to predation, most likely by an eagle owl.

Despite this very painful loss, Espi and Dr. Saurier remain pioneers of the new Spanish migratory tradition. Their successful return demonstrates that the route is fundamentally functional and is independently used by the birds—another important step towards a climate-adapted and long-term stable migrating European Northern Bald Ibis population.

4. REPRODUCTION

In the 2025 breeding season, a total of 25 nests were active across the four established breeding sites. Overall, 53 chicks successfully fledged. While the number of nests remained the same as in the previous year, the number of fledged juveniles decreased by 10%. This is particularly attributable to reduced breeding success in Burghausen. There, breeding productivity in 2025 was 2.0 fledged chicks per nest, significantly below the long-term average (2.6; 2014–2024). This decline is primarily due to repeated disturbances at the nesting site caused by a marten.

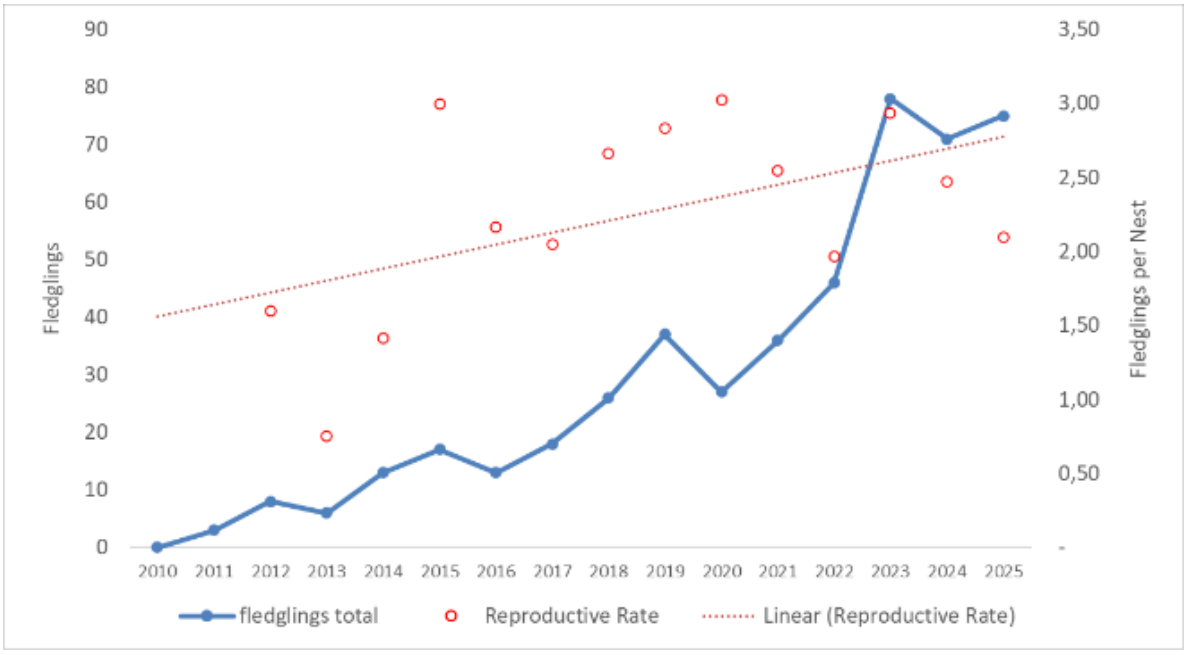

Figure 4: blue: annual number of fledged juveniles; red: reproductive success (mean number of fledged juveniles per nest in the breeding sites); red dashed line: trend line of reproductive success.

This year once again saw a remarkable trend continue: a strong increase in breeding activity outside the established colonies. Since 2023, the number of these extraterritorial breeding attempts has risen significantly. In the past year, **21 breeding pairs** were recorded in Italy, distributed across Friuli, Tuscany, and other locations, producing a total of **19 fledged juvenile**s. In Switzerland, a new pair successfully bred and raised **3 chicks**.

This development is particularly noteworthy as Northern Bald Ibises were long considered highly site-faithful. The increasing extraterritorial breeding is likely driven by two factors: on the one hand, their pronounced migratory behaviour enables large-scale use of available habitat;

on the other hand, climate-related increases in the transport of juveniles across the Alps mean that a growing number of birds do not reach their traditional breeding areas.

Also striking is the high flexibility in nest site selection. The birds breed on buildings, towers, trees, and even unusual structures such as palm trunks or abandoned stork nests. This ecological adaptability represents an important foundation for further range expansion and the long-term stabilisation of the population.

In the long term, a stable positive trend is emerging (Fig. 4). Since 2012, a total of **509 chicks** have hatched in the breeding areas, of which **433 successfully fledged**, corresponding to an average **survival rate of 85%.**

5. AUTUMN MIGRATION

Figure 5: Northern Bald Ibises in the snow. (Photo: C. Esterer)

In late autumn and early winter 2025, a total of **109 birds (69.9%)** migrated successfully and independently from the breeding areas to the south, while **47 birds (30.1%)** required human assistance. These figures demonstrate that nearly one third of the population is still unable to complete migration independently. We attribute this primarily to climate-induced shifts in autumn migration timing and the consequently reduced availability of thermal updrafts in the Alps.

This development underlines the central importance of establishing a second migratory route to Spain, which offers a climate-adaptive alternative to the increasingly problematic crossing of the Alps and can thus make a decisive contribution to the long-term stabilisation of the population.

In 2025, however, we also observed a promising new development: for the first time, birds from the Überlingen colony managed to cross the Alps independently in the Graubünden region—doing so in **three separate, independent groups** consisting of a total of 8 adults and 4 juveniles. In previous years, these attempts had repeatedly failed despite multiple efforts. So far, we have no conclusive explanation for this phenomenon. However, it represents a potentially significant development, the repetition and possible consolidation of which will be closely monitored with great interest in the coming years.

6. BIOLOGGING

In 2025, a total of **82 juvenile birds were equipped with GPS transmitters**. Of these, **46 transmitters were deployed on released juveniles**, corresponding to a marking rate of **100%.** A further **36 transmitters** were fitted to wild-hatched juveniles, representing a proportion of **48%**. In addition, **7 adult birds** were newly tagged.

The relatively low marking rate among wild-hatched birds reflects the increasing difficulty of capturing these individuals for ringing and tagging. In the breeding colonies of **Kuchl** and **Überlingen**, where the birds nest on inaccessible cliff faces, capture and tagging have become increasingly challenging. In particular, there is currently a lack of capacity to tag the growing number of juveniles from extraterritorial breeding sites.

Despite these limitations, the Northern Bald Ibis population remains one of the most intensively monitored bird populations worldwide. Since 2016, more than **80% of individuals** have been equipped with GPS transmitters, enabling detailed data collection on spatial use, migration, and mortality. In particular, the Northern Bald Ibis has become an important **indicator and flagship species in Italy**, documenting the extent and dynamics of illegal bird hunting.

7. MORTALITY

In 2025, **96 birds** died, representing **34% of the population** at the beginning of the year and thus the lowest relative mortality rate in the project's history.

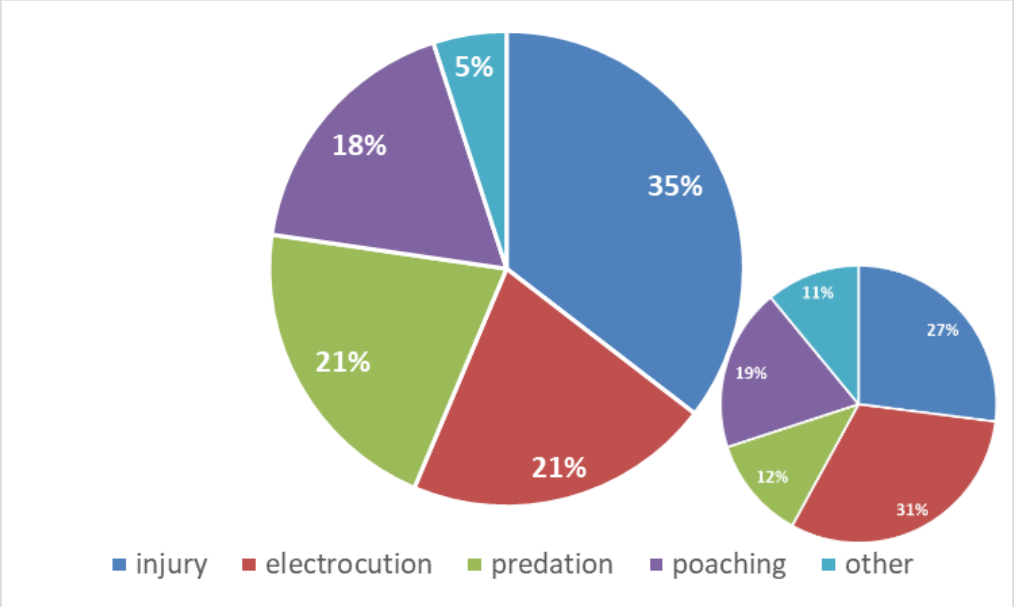

Figure 6: mortality in 2025; N = 62 cases with known cause (65%); inset: period 2014–2024.

The pattern of mortality causes has changed only slightly compared to previous years (Fig. 6). Injuries remain the most common cause (35%). Electrocution is the most important anthropogenic source of mortality at 21%, followed by poaching (18%); this distribution is thus largely consistent with previous years.

However, a marked **increase in predation** is evident: its share rose to 21% in 2025 compared to 12% in the period 2014–2024 (Fig. 6). The majority of these losses occurred in Spain, which correlates with the high density of birds of prey in the region. In particular, the Spanish imperial eagle, golden eagle, and eagle owl are potential predators of the Northern Bald Ibis.

Electrocution remains a significant threat throughout the project area, with the exception of Germany, where comprehensive mitigation measures are in place.

Poaching is primarily a threat in Italy. There, poaching accounted for 24% of losses in the past year. This value is slightly below the long-term average of 30% (2014–2024).

8. MITIGATION MEASURES AND CAMPAIGNS AGAINST MAJOR MORTALITY CAUSES

Measures to reduce mortality were consistently continued and further expanded in 2025. In the area of electrocution, the focus remained on securing dangerous medium-voltage power poles.

In Austria, **182 high-risk pylons have been retrofitted** in recent years within the core areas of the population, including **43 pylons in Upper Austria (Burghausen region), 55 in Salzburg (Kuchl & Salzburg region), and 71 in Carinthia (Rosegg region).** In 2026, the securing of a further 5 pylons is planned in the Kuchl area. These measures make a substantial contribution to reducing the risk of fatal electrocution in the main feeding areas of the Burghausen (on the Austrian side), Kuchl, and Rosegg breeding colonies.

The anti-poaching campaign in Italy was further intensified. In 2025, **11 confirmed poaching cases were documented, 10 of them in Italy and 1 in Spain**. In Italy, this corresponds to 24% of all losses. These figures highlight the continued high relevance of this problem, particularly along the central migratory route through Italy.

Long-term analyses now show initial positive effects of the measures: mortality due to electrocution has **significantly decreased** in recent years, while poaching also shows a slightly declining, though not statistically significant, trend.

9. RESEARCH AND DISSEMINATION

In 2025, **three scientific articles were published**. A large number of additional scientific manuscripts are currently in preparation.

Fritz J (2025) The story of the Northern Bald Ibis: from extinction to conservation. Re/Embodied Data. Ambiguities of Knowing, Berlin, Zurich. Conference Proceedings.

Fritz J & Wehner H (2025) Rediscovering European Skies: The Return of the Northern Bald Ibis. The Geographer Magazine; The Royal Scottish Geographical Society, London.

Fritz J, Unsöld M & Gaugler T (2025) Wiederansiedlung des Waldrapps: Neue Wege im Artenschutz angesichts zunehmender Einflüsse des Klimawandels. Monticula, 115, 1-8.

In 2025, **23 contributions were presented at seven international conferences** in the form of talks and posters.

Drenske, S; Radchuk, V; Scherer, C; Esterer, C; Kowarik, I; Fritz, J; Kramer-Schadt, S (2025) On the road to self-sustainability: Population viability of reintroduced northern bald ibises. International Northern Bald Ibis Symposium; Andalusia, Spain; talk.

Fernández Vélez C; Gutiérrez Ruíz V; Ceballos Relinque C; Domínguez Márquez I; Pineda Peña C; Tirado Oliva C; Tirado Oliva É (2025) Waldrappteam's Northern Bald Ibis Field Data Collection in Andalusia: towards a connection between science and education. International Northern Bald Ibis Symposium; Andalusia, Spain; talk.

Fritz, J; Unsöld, M; Gönner, B; Kramer, R; Steininger, B; Wehner, H (2025) Northern Bald Ibis in Europe: 20 Years of Conservation, Research, and Reintroduction Success. International Northern Bald Ibis Symposium; Andalusia, Spain; talk.

Fritz J (2025) Projektvorstellung LIFE Northern Bald Ibis. 26th LIFE Platform, Schloss Rosegg, Austria. Talk.

Fritz, J & Stefani L (2025) Il progetto europeo LIFE per la reintroduzione dell'Ibis eremita. Expert Meeting on Wildlife Crime and Environmental Law, Rome, May 2025. Talk.

Gönner B; Fritz J (2025) Electrocution on medium voltage power poles: Threat to the reintroduced Northern Bald Ibis population and measures against it. International Northern Bald Ibis Symposium; Andalusia, Spain; talk.

Scope, A; Trobe, D; Esterer, C; Meyer, J; Fritz, J (2025) Veterinary Care of the European Migratory Northern Bald Ibis Population. International Northern Bald Ibis Symposium; Andalusia, Spain; talk.

Schmalstieg, AG; Esterer, C; Trobe, D; Fritz, J (2025) Safeguarding the Northern Bald Ibis: Integrating Management Measures and GPS Tracking. International Northern Bald Ibis Symposium; Andalusia, Spain; talk.

Stefani, L; Peroni, R; Fritz, J (2025) Protecting Northern Bald Ibis from Illegal Hunting in Italy. International Northern Bald Ibis Symposium; Andalusia, Spain; talk.

Steininger, B; Wehner, H; Fritz, J (2025) The Method of Human-Led Migration: A Unique Approach to Restoring the Migratory Tradition of Birds Like the Northern Bald Ibis. International Northern Bald Ibis Symposium; Andalusia, Spain; talk.

Unsöld, M Fritz, J (2025) Some new historical facts about the Northern Bald Ibis in Europe. International Northern Bald Ibis Symposium; Andalusia, Spain; talk.

Wehner, H; Fritz, J (2025) Remote Sensing for Conservation of the Northern Bald Ibis – Ongoing Studies and Opportunities. International Northern Bald Ibis Symposium; Andalusia, Spain; talk.

Wirtz, S; Fritz, J (2025) Insights into the Northern Bald Ibis genetics in European zoo populations: Recommendations for captive breeding and reintroduction. International Northern Bald Ibis Symposium; Andalusia, Spain; talk.

Fritz, J; Perinot, E; Mizrahy-Rewald, O; Ruf, T; Fusani, L; Gönner, B; Wehner, H; Voelkl, B (2025) Flying Smart: Energy-Saving Strategies in Migrating Northern Bald Ibises. International Northern Bald Ibis Symposium; Andalusia, Spain; poster.

Gaugler, T; Fritz, J; Wehner, H (2025) Habitat Suitability Analysis for the Northern Bald Ibis Across Europe. International Northern Bald Ibis Symposium; Andalusia, Spain; poster.

Gönner, B; Winkler, V; Fritz, J; Kramer, R (2025) From 3D prints to real life: Northern Bald Ibises at Lake Constance. International Northern Bald Ibis Symposium; Andalusia, Spain; poster.

Peroni R (2025). From Extinction to Protection: Biology, Ethology, and Anti-Poaching Strategies for the Northern Bald Ibis. Workshop on "Tecniche di Polizia scientifica applicata al Wildlife Crime, Centro Addestramento Ceva. Talk.

Peroni R (2025). The Northern Bald Ibis: Biology, Conservation, and Anti-Poaching Strategies. Workshop on Scientific Police Techniques Applied to Wildlife Crime; Rieti Training Center, Italy. Talk.

Peroni R (2025). From Ex Situ Conservation to Reintroduction: The Northern Bald Ibis (Geronticus eremita) Project and Its Challenges. Conference on Ex Situ Conservation as a Support Tool for the Protection of Threatened Animal Species Italy; University of Tuscia in Viterbo, Italy. Talk.

Schmalstieg AG; Trobe D Esterer C; Gönner B; Fritz J (2025) External breeding areas and extraordinary nesting sites of the Northern Bald Ibis. International Northern Bald Ibis Symposium; Andalusia, Spain; poster.

Steininger, B; Mizrahy-Rewald, O; Voelkl, B; Grogger, H; Ruf, T; Fritz, J (2025) Minimizing Impacts of Biologging Devices: The Effect of Shape and Position. International Northern Bald Ibis Symposium; Andalusia, Spain; poster.

Unsöld, M; Gönner, B; Kramer, R; Wehner, H; Fritz, J (2025) Incorporating Climate Change into Conservation Planning: The Case of the Northern Bald Ibis. International Northern Bald Ibis Symposium; Andalusia, Spain; poster.

Wehner, H; Kölsch, EC; Quevedo, MAA; Fritz, J (2025) Can Migratory and Sedentary Populations Merge Successfully? A Space Use Perspective. International Northern Bald Ibis Symposium; Andalusia, Spain; poster.

Highlights:

International Northern Bald Ibis Symposium 2025

11.–13. März 2025 im Alcázar von Jerez de la Frontera (Andalusien, Spanien)

Figure 7: International Northern Bald Ibis Symposium in Jerez de la Frontera (Andalusia, Spain). (Photo: S. Peters)

An international symposium was organized by our team together with Proyecto Eremita and other partners. It brought together 66 participants from 14 countries and included 29 presentations and 9 poster contributions on key topics related to Northern Bald Bbis conservation.

An excursion to project sites in Andalusia took place on 14 March. The aim was to strengthen international cooperation, which was further consolidated through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Regional Government of Andalusia.

Expert Meeting on Wildlife Crime and Environmental Law – NBI Case Study

20 May 2025, Italian Chamber of Deputies in Rome (Italy)

Figure 8: Meeting on Wildlife Crime and Environmental Law (Rome, Italy). (Photo: L. Stefani)

An expert meeting titled "The Northern Bald Ibis as a Case Study: Combating Wildlife Crime in Italy through the Implementation of the EU Directive on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law" was held in the Italian Chamber of Deputies in Rome. The event, organized by Förderverein Waldrappteam and Waldrappteam Conservation and Research in cooperation with WWF Italy, Lipu, and LAV, brought together legal experts, magistrates, law enforcement authorities, researchers, and policymakers to analyse wildlife crime in Italy using the Northern Bald Ibis as an indicator species.

The focus was on shortcomings in the existing criminal justice system, challenges in prosecuting poaching, and opportunities arising from the implementation of EU Directive 2024/1203 on environmental crime. At the same time, planned reforms of Italian hunting legislation were also critically discussed.

Workshop on "Scientific Police Techniques Applied to Wildlife Crime"

10–14 March 2025 at the Carabinieri Forestry School, Training Centre in Ceva (Italy)

Figure 9: Workshop "Scientific police techniques applied to wildlife crime" (Ceva, Italy). (Photo: R. Peroni)

The course for officers of the Italian Carabinieri covered the investigation and criminal prosecution of wildlife crime. It provided fundamental theoretical and practical knowledge of crime scene work, evidence collection, forensic veterinary medicine, as well as the relevant legal frameworks.

The programme followed a multidisciplinary approach and combined contributions from experts in various fields with case studies and practical demonstrations. Among others, Roberta Peroni presented the Northern Bald Ibis project.

26th LIFE Platform, Schloss Rosegg

23–24 April 2025 at Schloss Rosegg (Carinthia, Austria)

Figure 10: 26th LIFE Platform, Schloss Rosegg (Carinthia, Austria)

The 2025 LIFE Platform was organised by Tierpark Rosegg and the LIFE Northern Bald Ibis project in cooperation with Austrian federal ministries and the FFG.

Around 50 experts participated. The programme included project presentations, field excursions, and exchanges with representatives of the European Commission to strengthen cooperation within the LIFE community.

Research for animal welfare

Research project on the aerodynamics of biologging devices

In 2025, a key focus of our fundamental research was the investigation of the aerodynamic effects of GPS transmitters. Under the supervision of Prof. Herwig Grogger, extensive data collection was carried out in the project's dedicated wind tunnel in Seekirchen am Wallersee. In addition, complex computational fluid dynamics (CFD) simulations were used to analyse in detail the effects of different housing shapes and attachment systems.

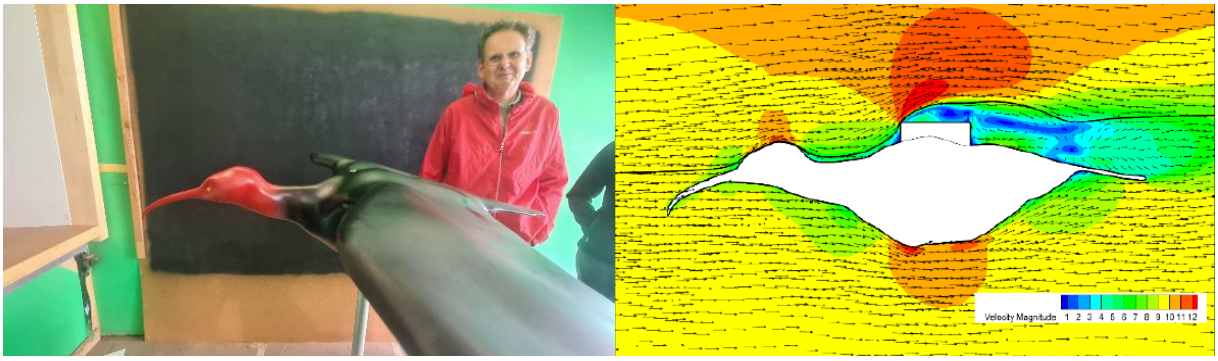

Figure 11: Left: Wind tunnel study with a Northern Bald Ibis dummy under the supervision of Prof. Herwig Grogger (photo: J. Fritz). Right: Computational fluid dynamics (CFD) simulation showing flow velocity; strong turbulence (blue) is clearly visible around a box-shaped transmitter housing on the bird's back.

The analysis of the data clearly shows that the aerodynamics of transmitters have a significant impact on the energy expenditure of tagged birds and thus on their flight performance. The findings make an important contribution to improving animal welfare and to the development of more animal-friendly research methods in line with the 3Rs principle (Replace, Reduce, Refine). Publication of the results is planned for 2026.

EU project visit 2025

4–5 June 2025: evaluation of project progress and excursions to project sites (Burghausen, Germany)

Figure 12: EU project visit, inspection of bird protection measures in Hochburg-Ach; left to right, back row: Johannes Fritz, Stefan Wenzl, Johannes Reitsammer, Wolfgang Denk, Felix Bergmann, María-José Aramburu, Regina Kramer; front row: Barbara Steininger, Corinna Esterer, Oliver Habel (photo: B. Gönner)

In June 2025, a two-day visit by the European Commission took place in Burghausen as part of the LIFE project. Ms María-José Aramburu, representing the European Commission (CINEA), and Mr Felix Bergmann from the LIFE monitoring team (ELMEN EEIG) met with the project team and project partners to evaluate the progress of the Northern Bald Ibis reintroduction project and to discuss the ongoing measures in detail.

In addition to the technical coordination, excursions to key project sites were a central focus, including the training camp for human-led migration in Taching am See, the breeding colony at Burghausen Castle, and measures to secure medium-voltage power poles in Upper Austria. The visit was accompanied by a press event and highlighted the positive interim results of the project as well as the close cooperation between international partners and the European Commission.

10. PUBLIC RELATION AND DISSEMINATION

In the past year, we published **21 newsletters in four languages** each and **10 press releases.**

There was again strong media interest (Table 2). Since we do not conduct systematic media monitoring, we are certainly only capturing a portion of the media coverage. In particular in France and Spain, there is extensive media reporting on the human-led migration, which we only record to a limited extent.

A continuing media highlight is the collaboration with a US film crew, which followed the project in 2024 from chick collection in Rosegg to arrival in Andalusia. The extensive footage was edited this year; publication is planned for 2026 and 2027.

Table 2: Media productions 2025

Mediatypes	
TV and Cinema	10
Radio, Poscast & Social Media	8
Printmedia	127
Talks	6
Events	4

Country of Publication Printmedia	
Austria	26
Germany	55
Italy	15
Spain	7
France	3
other	21

Abbildung 13: TEDx Talk in Mantua, Italien. In diesem Rahmen wurde auch Jane Goodall gewürdigt, die im Oktober 2025 verstorben ist. (Foto: T. Gaugler)

Another highlight was the TEDx talk by Johannes Fritz in Mantua in October 2025, which presented the Northern Bald Ibis project as a compelling example of how innovation, commitment, and international cooperation can save a species from extinction.

At the same time, the increasing challenges posed by climate change were addressed, delivering a clear message of hope: through joint action across borders, sustainable conservation successes can be achieved. The talk will be distributed worldwide via TED platforms.

11. REPORT OF THE CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING GROUP

Total annual mobility in 2025 amounted to 64,975 km, resulting in emissions of 34,045 kg of CO_2 equivalents (Table 3). This represents an overall increase of 35% compared to 2024.

Table 3: Annual total kilometres and corresponding CO_2 equivalents for four mobility categories; difference compared to 2024 (%) in the right-hand column.

	km	CO2 equ. (kg)	difference to 2024
e-car	29.401	2.528	-34%
car	13.848	3.005	-69%
microlight plane	1.911	1.166	-52%
airplane	49.216	29.874	+146%
TOTAL	**64.975**	**34.045**	**+35%**

The increase in emissions is solely attributable to scheduled flights, which **rose by 146%** compared to the previous year. The main reason for this was in particular eleven flights related to the symposium in Andalusia.

In contrast, emissions from vehicles and ultralight aircraft were **reduced by 58%** in the past year (Table 3, Fig. 14). However, 2025 was an exceptional year due to the shortened migration, which already ended in Catalonia, and is therefore only partially comparable with previous years.

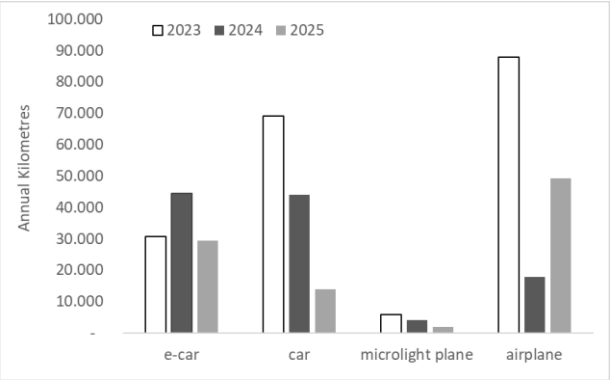

Figure 14: Comparison of the annual total kilometres in 2025 with the previous years 2023 and 2024.

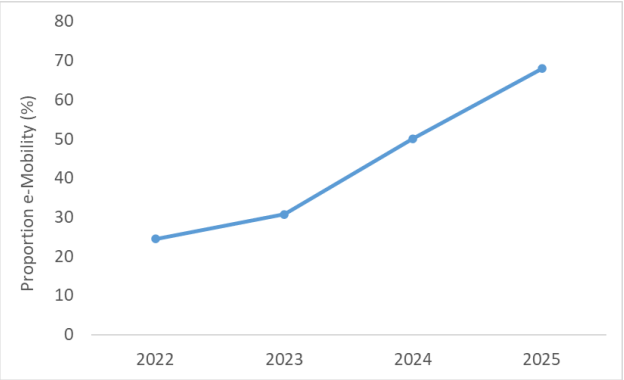

Figure 15: Share of e-mobility in total motor vehicle mobility from 2022 to 2025.

The ongoing trend towards increased e-mobility in the vehicle sector has been very successful. The share of electrically travelled road kilometres rose from 25% in 2022, the start of the current LIFE project, to 70% in 2025.

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* For data protection reasons, only an excerpt of persons and institutions is mentioned.

We want to thank

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