

In the area of Alcántara, north of Cáceres

## A new Egyptian vulture chick is born on a high-voltage tower in Extremadura

- This is the first Egyptian vulture couple in the world to nest and breed successfully on an electricity tower.
- The first chick of this pair was born last year around this time and on the same site, which consolidates this type of infrastructure as a support for the nesting and laying of these birds of prey.

Cáceres, 22 July 2021

A new Egyptian vulture chick has recently hatched on one of the pylons (electricity towers) of the high-voltage power line that runs through the area of Alcántara, to the north of Cáceres. This is still an extraordinary case, as there is no other known occurrence in the western world of Egyptian vultures nesting and procreating in a nesting site on an electricity support.

The case came to light at this time last year when another Egyptian vulture chick hatched in the same circumstances and was recorded as the first in the world. Now, the same pair of Egyptian vultures, according to experts, has repeated this natural event, confirming that this type of infrastructure is an optimal location not only for nesting, but also for the procreation of this unique bird of prey, which has been classified as an endangered species since 2007.

The chick, a female about thirty days old, has been banded by expert staff from the Ministry for Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge, as part of an effort carried out with the participation of environmental technicians from Red Eléctrica de España and from the Regional Ministry for Ecological Transition and Sustainability of the Regional Government of Extremadura. In addition to the identification band, a GPS receiver has been fitted in order to track the chick once it flies and begins its migratory stage.

For Fernando Crespo, head of the Environmental Department of Red Eléctrica de España, "our priority has always been to make the development of the transmission grid facilities, which are essential to ensure the electricity supply to the population, compatible with the protection of biodiversity, reducing their potential impact as much as possible. An event like this makes us particularly happy because it is a demonstration of the coexistence and adaptation of these birds of prey to electrical infrastructures", he concluded.

Experts also agree on this. For Víctor García, an official from the Ministry of Ecological Transformation who has carried out the banding and examination of the chick, "the fact that it has occurred for the second year in a row demonstrates that this is no coincidence. If the species continues to do this, it can expand its territory, and the electricity towers, far from being a threat, can become an opportunity for the Egyptian vulture in this area".

In fact, the pair of Egyptian vultures have not used the same nest as last year, but have built a new one, for which, in addition, they have chosen a different tower, which, according to García "reaffirms this unusual tendency in this species". The experts believe that this behaviour is due to the adaptation of this species to climate change, which forces it to look for new habitats, finding in high voltage towers a key element for its development.



---

There is currently no news of the migratory stopover of the chick hatched in June 2020, which was also banded and fitted with a device containing a GPS transmitter, although it is suspected that it may be in the south of the Sahara, the point at which contact was lost. "In any case, it is not likely to return to its place of origin for two years. If it is still alive, next spring we will see it flying again in Extremadura", explained Víctor García.

For the Regional Ministry for Ecological Transition and Sustainability, the tagging of this Egyptian vulture chick is part of the GPS tracking that the Junta de Extremadura is carrying out on endangered species, especially the Egyptian vulture, a species that shows a very peculiar migratory behaviour, probably related to climate change. Extremadura is the only region in Europe where a wintering population remains, which grows every year, exceeding 150 individuals, although the chick tagged in 2020 made its migration to central Africa, where it has remained since August 2020, together with another chick born in Monfragüe.

In this case, the importance of this nesting lies in the fact that an endangered species has expanded its distribution area by means of an electricity tower as a support for their nest, in a territory where there was no natural substrate (rocky cliffs), which is allowing REE and the Junta de Extremadura to develop an expansion plan for the Egyptian vulture, using high-voltage power line towers.