

Tim Birch
Director of Nature's Recovery
Derbyshire Wildlife Trust,
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Dear Tim,

I am writing to you now regarding the Bearded Vulture that has been spending some time – and attracting a lot of attention, on the moors in the Upper Derwent valley.

First, thank you very much for all your hard work in managing the considerable amount of people that has travelled to Peak District National Park, and for also managing and helping with all the media enquiries.

Bearded vultures are indeed unique and spectacular, and the conservation program for this species in Europe, that includes reintroduction projects to the Alps (where now there is a thriving and growing population of 55+ pairs), Andalusia (4 breeding pairs and growing) and also Grands Causses/Massif Central (France) and Maestrazgo massif (in Spain).

It is a great pleasure to see the attention that this bird is eliciting. This is certainly a wild bird originating either from the Alps or the Pyrenees, doing a rather common dispersive phase.

Although the Bearded Vulture population has been growing in Europe due to all the considerable conservation investment, the species is still rare and threatened. There are less than 1000 Bearded Vultures in western Europe, so this individual is in itself important, and so it is crucial for this bird to be given all the chances for it to thrive, and eventually continue its dispersive trip.

You have been managing well the potential disturbance from members of the public – while it is important for everyone to witness first-hand this spectacular bird, it is also important they give space for it to forage and roost. The bird is looking healthy and feeding and flying well. Disturbance of the bird during the day or at its preferred roost site has been minimal. Thank you for this!

We are however concerned about the risk this bird faces from persecution and poisoning in the area it is predominantly feeds and roosts, in particular:

Lead poisoning: Vultures in general, and Bearded Vultures in particular, are very prone to suffer from lead poisoning when they ingest dead animals shot with lead ammunition. We have evidence that several Bearded Vultures have died because of lead poisoning – we estimate that that accounts for 13-17%

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of the species mortality in Europe when the cause can be determined. If this bird now staying in the Peak District eats a shot hare or fox, or an animal trapped in a snare, it may ingest a toxic amount of lead. In particular, the "stink pits" which are used by gamekeepers to attract foxes to snares in the area pose a considerable problem, not only due to potential exposure to lead ammunition but also from becoming trapped in snares. These "stink pits" do pose a risk to the vulture – and we would like to ask you to try to close down, at least temporarily, any "stink pits" in the immediate vicinity of the roosting and foraging areas regularly used by this bird.

Grouse shooting season (starting on the 12th August). While this bird may move from the current location anytime, we need to prepare and anticipate. If it stays for another month then it will be foraging over several grouse moors at the time the shooting season starts. While we understand that most hunters are responsible and able to identify the quarry species, it would be a disaster if the bird would be shot. It would be good if grouse shoots and the Peak District National Park could engage and discuss the situation so as to find a win-win solution that does not put in jeopardy the long term survival of this individual.

Thank you for your attention,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'José Tavares'.

José Tavares

Director

Vulture Conservation Foundation

