



Protocol for the **International Observation Days**

1) Dates Selection:

The date for the International Observation Days (henceforth *IOD*) will be first suggested by the Steering Committee during the previous year's Annual Meeting. This date can be rearranged, if necessary, to a new suitable date which should be decided and accepted by the majority of Partners. No answer from a Partner will be understood as agreement to the general decision. The final date will be fixed at least 3 months prior to the event.

The *IOD* are divided in **focal date** and **buffer period**. The focal date is the main day chosen for the event, which should comprise the vast majority of the observations. The buffer period encompasses the days before and/or after the focal date, which would only be used in case the weather conditions during the focus day are highly unsuitable. It should be emphasized that due to the high mobility of the Bearded vultures, only the dates +/- 1 day from the focus day can be used for statistics, so the rest of the observations will be less valuable in terms of census of the Bearded vulture population.

2) Sites distribution:

The *IOD* were intended to cover the whole Alpine range (~188.000 Km²), although in practice there are some regions that are less surveyed, due to the difficult access or for being scarcely populated. The event is coordinated on the local level by the local Administrators (see list on the homepage of the IBM, <http://www.gyp-monitoring.com/>, section → Monitoring), who shall indicate the positions for the observation posts and distribute the observers to span the maximum area possible. It is of high importance to try to keep the same observation posts year after year, in order to detect possible changes in the population of Bearded vultures.

It is strongly recommended that each observation post should be given a specific name and/or number and should include their coordinates to facilitate the use of the same post in following years. The observation posts should be located in elevated sites with a wide observation range.



3) Tasks for the Coordinators:

The IBM Administration will provide any information and documents necessary for the *IOD* in advance, as well as any kind of logistic support when possible, but it is a duty of the local administrators and coordinators to spread the information among the collaborators using as many ways as possible (mailing lists, get in touch with the government of the region, inform local media like newspapers or TV, use of social networks, etc.). Likewise, it would be very interesting for the project to extend the network of observation sites to new areas if the number of observers increases from one year to the next; on the contrary, if the number of observers decreases, it is up to the coordinator to decide which observation posts should be kept and which can be skipped. The coordinators should preferably be experienced in, and familiar with, the topography and accessibility of the mountains in the area to select the best points (in case they were not used in previous years) and therefore optimize the work.

→ There is a list of documents to provide the observers in advance or during the event itself. Some of them can be downloaded from the IBM webpage (www.gyp-monitoring.com) and others should be provided by the Administration beforehand:

- Bearded vulture identification guide (available in French, German and Italian).
- Latest marking patterns (from up to 3 years)
- *IOD* Registration form.
- Tasks for the Observers (**section 4** of this document)
- Maps of the region (optional, provided by the local administrators)

→ The coordinators should stay in touch with the observers as closely as possible while the observation period, whether it is by direct contact (ranging from site to site) or by radio; this second option is specially recommended to exchange information in real time.

→ When working with coordinates, the IBM uses the **World Geodesic System, 1984 (WGS84)**, see <http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/WGS84> for information). Google Earth uses WGS84 Web Mercator and can be also used. The most efficient action would be to get the coordinates in the field directly in this format, but in any case the coordinates must be sent to the IBM Administration in **WGS84**. The transformation from other formats is always problematic and even insurmountable, leading to an important loss of time and eventually also of information when the harmonising is not possible. Coordinates of all observation posts should be provided even when there were no birds observed in the site.

→ The information gathered should be sent to the IBM Administration within a period of **1 month** after the event via e-mail to the address gyp-monitoring@fiwi.at. The information should be sent in excel format according to the guidelines of the **Annex C (IOD registration form for coordinators)**; in this file there are some columns that are obligatory (with grey background) and others that can be left blank in case the observers didn't submit the requested information. Contact information of at least one person of each observation post should be provided to the Administration as well in case of there's any doubt about the observations.



4) Tasks for the Observers:

- To take part in the International Observation Days (*IOD*) it is recommended to have availability to stay in the indicated observation post specified by the coordinators for a period of **at least 4 hours or more** in the morning (e.g. 10:00-14:00) if the weather is suitable. Likewise, the observation posts shouldn't be left unattended for long time while the observation period.
- The coordinators shall provide the observers with some documents to help the identification of the animals:
- Identification guide,
 - Marking pattern of released birds of the year
 - Map/s of the area
 - Registration form to note down the requested information.

In case of observations, please note down the next information, which would be of high value:

- Coordinates of the observed animal/s, which are not the same as the coordinates of the observation post. In case of not having a GPS, please note down the position of the animal/s in the map (as accurate as possible).
 - Behaviour of the animal/s (e.g. Two adults flying together carrying branches) and direction of flight (e.g. flying direction North-west)
 - Any distinctive feature of the animal/s** (e.g. some white feathers in the right wing and tail). If possible, take pictures of the animal/s; if not a schematic drawing could also be useful. This point is especially important (!)
- List of material needed for the *IOD*:
- Optical equipment: Binoculars and terrestrial telescopes (if possible). The equipment characteristics should be noted down and provided to the coordinators with the rest of the information.
 - Some papers and a pen to write.
 - It is highly recommended to **bring a camera and take pictures** of the observed birds, and provide them afterwards (with the name of the photographer) to the coordinators. Regardless of the quality of the camera, all pictures will be useful.
 - A watch or other device to control the time (NOTE: it is important to be aware of the time change between summer/winter to set the time accordingly in case it takes place in the same day of the *IOD*).
 - Warm clothes and a raincoat in case of rain; likewise, it's also advisable to bring something to protect against the sun (caps, hats, etc.) and sunscreen to avoid getting sunburned (typical in mountains).
 - Big amounts of water, and also food).
 - (optional) A GPS device and radio to stay in touch with the other observers.
- Note down the presence of any other big bird species, such as eagles and other vultures (recommended to use as a reference in the identification of suitable places for Bearded vultures, as well as differentiate between areas without Bearded vultures and those with monitoring deficiency), and other interesting



observations such as deer or chamois (source of food for the vultures that might indicate suitable areas)

These are the silhouette of a young Bearded vulture (with some bleached feathers), a young Golden eagle, a Griffon vulture and a raven, animals with which the Bearded vulture can be mistaken. It is important to look at the tail (longer and conical in Bearded vulture), the shape of the wings (more rounded in Golden eagle, more “rectangular” in Griffon vultures) and the size (silhouettes in proportion). The bleaching of the young released Bearded vultures might be mistaken with the with patches in the wings of young Golden eagles.



Bearded vulture



Griffon vulture



Golden eagle



Raven

- The Observation day might be cancelled due to bad weather conditions, in which case a new date will be chosen and provided by the coordinators.
- Send all the information gathered to the local administrators (preferably by e-mail) within a week after the observation day. Later on, report of the *IOD* with information of the whole Alps will be prepared by the IBM (International Bearded vulture Monitoring) in the following months and will be provided to the observers by the coordinators; local reports might be prepared as well and likewise will be sent to the observers.



5) Annexes:

Download from www.gyp-monitoring.com

- A) Bearded vulture Identification help (.pdf)
- B) Marking Pattern of the current year and at least 2 years before (.pdf)
- C) *IOD* Registration form for Observers (.pdf)
- D) *IOD* Registration form for Coordinators (.xls)

