



## SYMPOSIUM 'REINTRODUCING MIGRATORY BIRDS'

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REASON FOR HOPE  
LIFE+ Biodiversity

### **Socially involved hand-rearing and human led migration as key method for the reintroduction of the Northern Bald Ibis**

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The Northern Bald Ibis (*Geronticus eremita*) is a critically endangered bird species, occurring in the wild only in sedentary colonies in Morocco, Turkey and Spain. Since 2014, the European LIFE+ reintroduction project aims to reintroduce a migratory Northern Bald Ibis population, with breeding colonies in Austria and Germany and a common wintering area in Italy. The project is based on a 13-year feasibility study.

The major release method is the so-called human-led migration with human-imprinted juveniles. For that need, the offspring of captive zoo breeding colonies are taken to be hand-reared by human foster parents and trained to follow them in a microlight. After the singular journey to the wintering area the juveniles are released into the wild. During hand-rearing a strong social bond between the juvenile birds and their human foster parents is established. In the course of a 13-year feasibility study the method of so called socially involved hand-rearing was continuously improved. Meanwhile, two foster parents raise and train groups of up to 32 birds per year and lead them to the South with daily flight stages of up to 360 km.

The release population consist of more than 80 birds. Since 2011, an increasing amount of wild birds migrate, reproduce and lead the offspring to the wintering site, independent of humans.