



LIFE EUROKITE CRIME REPORT

ILLEGAL PERSECUTION OF TAGGED RED KITES AND OTHER RAPTOR SPECIES IN EUROPE

PART 3 - COUNTRY SPECIFIC RESULTS - BELGIUM

First interim report on the results of the LIFE EUROKITE (LIFE18 NAT/AT/000048) project 2020-2024 with additional results from 2013 onwards

"Cross-border protection of the red kite in Europe by reducing human-caused mortality"



This company project report was compiled by TB Raab GmbH within the LIFE EUROKITE project (LIFE18 NAT/AT/000048) and was checked by the owner of the loggers and the representatives of the (cooperation) partners responsible for finding the dead birds.

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Cover photo: Poisoned red kite © LIFE EUROKITE Archive (Ján Svetlík)



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Structure of the Report

Due to the size of the report, it is divided in the following parts. Please see the other report parts for further information.

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1 Overall summary

The LIFE EUROKITE project (LIFE18 NAT/AT/000048) is a cross-border protection project for the red kite and other raptor species in Europe. Within the LIFE EUROKITE project the core idea is to use telemetry technology to identify the spatial habitat use of the target raptor species, quantify the key reasons of mortality of bird of prey species in the EU and reduce human-caused mortality, particularly illegal activities such as poisoning.

Between 2013 and 2024, 3,554 individuals of 7 raptor species (3,161 red kites, 97 black kites, 43 booted eagles, 52 honey buzzards, 79 imperial eagles, 22 ospreys and 100 white-tailed eagles) were tagged with solar-powered GPS satellite tags in 19 countries across Europe with the help of many project partners and cooperation partners. From this a total of 1,795 individuals (1,680 red kites, 37 black kites, 18 honey buzzards, 29 imperial eagles and 31 white-tailed eagles) were tagged within the LIFE EUROKITE project.

From the 3,554 tagged birds a total of 1,623 died so far. Of these, a total of 1,594 individuals (1,480 red kites, 13 black kites, 14 booted eagles, 17 honey buzzards, 32 imperial eagles, 8 ospreys, 30 white-tailed eagles) died in the respective country where we also detected bird persecution within our sample. The first results of the LIFE EUROKITE project show, that 320 (20.08 %) of the tagged birds (293; 19.80 % red kites, 3; 23.08 % black kites, 1; 7.14 % booted eagles, 2; 11.76 % honey buzzards, 12; 37.50 % imperial eagles, 1; 12.50 % ospreys, 8; 26.67 % white-tailed eagles) were victims of illegal activities in 24 countries (10/01/2025). Poisoning (n= 238; 74.38 % of illegal activities) was by far the most common illegal act that caused the death of these tagged birds. The most used poison was Carbofuran which is banned in the EU since 2008. The second most common illegal act that caused the death of these tagged birds was shooting (66 individuals; 20.63 % of illegal activities). Of the 320 birds that were tagged and illegally killed, only 8 cases resulted in a conviction for bird persecution.

When extrapolating the data on illegal bird persecution over the past five years (2020–2024), it is estimated that approximately 46.180 red kites have died as a result of persecution. This estimate is derived by scaling up known persecution rates of tagged birds to the entire European red kite population, based on published population size estimates, average annual mortality rates, and the proportion of mortality attributed to illegal killing. It therefore reflects a population-level extrapolation, not a direct count of detected cases.

Due to varying numbers of tagged individuals and differing red kite population densities across countries, the results may vary considerably. Consequently, these findings do not allow for conclusions regarding the statistical frequency of illegal activities relative to red kite density in any given country.

Bird persecution in Europe persists all over Europe. Effective conservation requires stronger law enforcement, public education, international cooperation, and better tools like GPS tracking to detect and prosecute offenders. Political commitment across countries is crucial, along with harmonized laws, stricter penalties, and national action plans with clear goals. Raising awareness through initiatives like the “European Day Against Criminal Poisoning of Wildlife” and systematic data collection can help inform both the public and policymakers. Finally, stronger cross-border collaboration and support for monitoring and reporting systems are essential to address bird persecution at a European level.

2 Introduction

The LIFE EUROKITE project (LIFE18 NAT/AT/000048) is a cross-border protection project for the red kite and other raptor species in Europe. Within the LIFE EUROKITE project the core idea is to use telemetry technology to identify the spatial habitat use of the target raptor species, quantify the key reasons of mortality of bird of prey species in the EU and reduce human-caused mortality, particularly from illegal activities such as poisoning.

Specifically, the red kite (*Milvus milvus*) can act as an indicator of anthropogenic mortality across broad extents (Donázar et al. 2016; Natsukawa and Sergio, 2022) due to its high individual variability in migration strategies (García-Macía et al. 2022) and its condition of good sentinel species for main threats to raptors (Mattson et al. 2022). As migratory behaviour is associated with different exposure and risk levels, understanding the causes of cross-border mortality in red kites can provide important warning signs regarding wider impacts of human activities on wildlife populations in Europe (Donázar et al. 2016; Natsukawa and Sergio, 2022).

In response to ongoing illegal threats to migratory birds, international conservation bodies have taken major steps toward unified action. Under the leadership of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and the Bern Convention, and with the involvement of numerous states, observers, and expert groups, a comprehensive framework was adopted: the *Rome Strategic Plan 2020–2030*. This plan outlines a joint commitment to halving illegal bird killings in Europe and the Mediterranean by 2030, using 2020 as a baseline (Council of Europe, 2019). By generating large-scale, cross-border evidence on mortality causes, the LIFE EUROKITE Crime Report plays a key role in tracking progress toward this ambitious objective.

The Article 12 of the Habitats Directive clearly defines that member states shall take requisite measures to establish a system of strict protection for the animal species listed in Annex IV(a) in their natural range, prohibiting, among others, all forms of deliberate capture or killing and shall establish a system to monitor the incidental capture and killing of specimens of these species in the wild (European Commission, 2021; Panter et al. under review).

Between 2013 and 2024, 3,554 individuals of 7 raptor species (3,161 red kites, 97 black kites, 43 booted eagles, 52 honey buzzards, 79 imperial eagles, 22 ospreys and 100 white-tailed eagles) were tagged with solar-powered GPS satellite tags in 19 countries across Europe with the help of many project partners and cooperation partners. From this a total of 1,795 individuals (1,680 red kites, 37 black kites, 18 honey buzzards, 29 imperial eagles and 31 white-tailed eagles) were tagged within the LIFE EUROKITE project (Figure 1 to Figure 7).

The first results of the LIFE EUROKITE project show that illegal persecution of tagged birds (shooting, poisoning, trapping) is one of the biggest threats for those species. To date (as of 10 January 2025), 320 tagged birds have been victims of bird crime (Figure 8).

This report will give an overview of tagged birds which died due to illegal activities in Belgium and will give a detailed inside of the status of investigations and legal procedure.

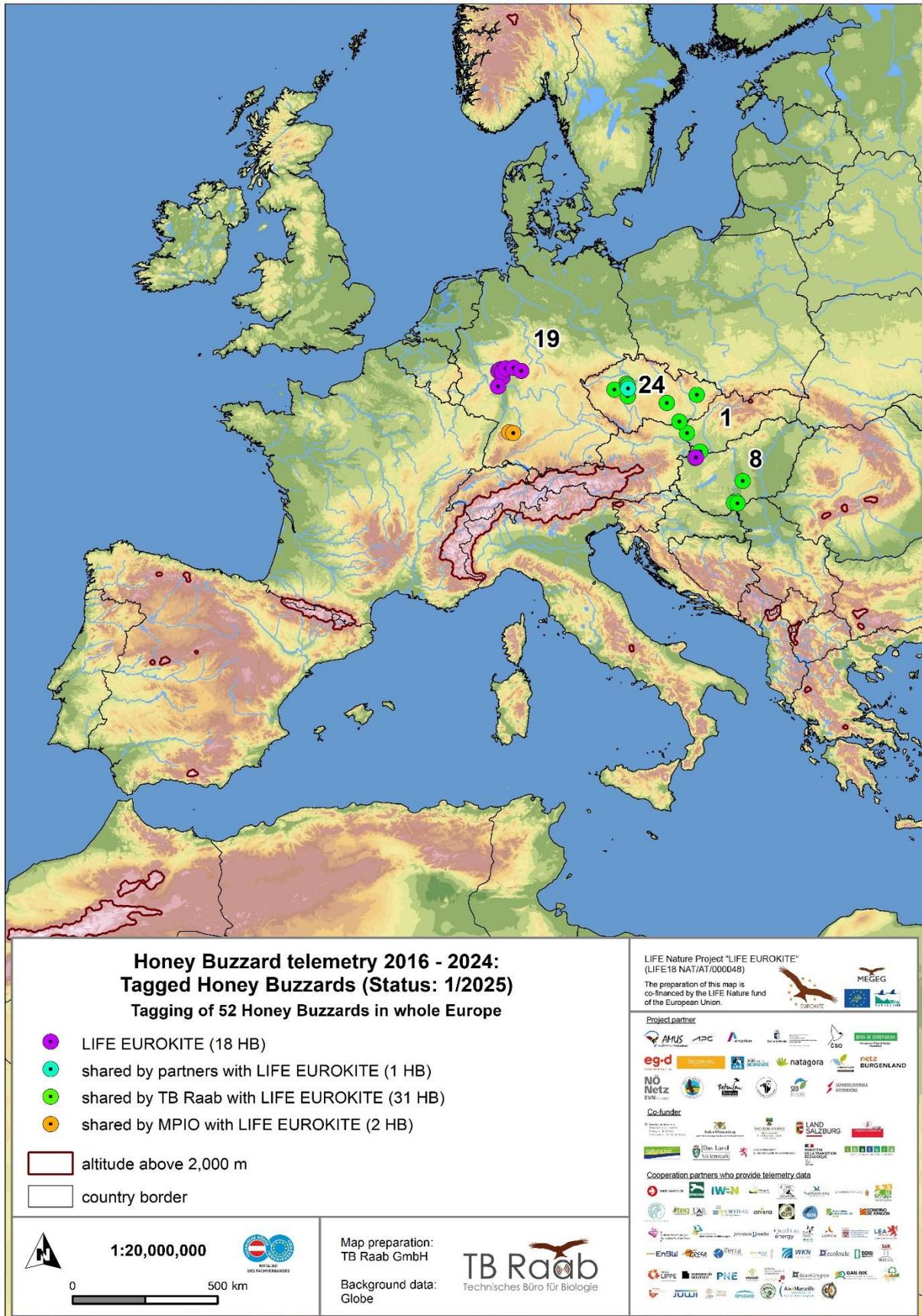


Figure 4: Tagging of 52 honey buzzards by the LIFE EUROKITE project and numerous cooperation and project partners across Europe in the years 2016-2024.

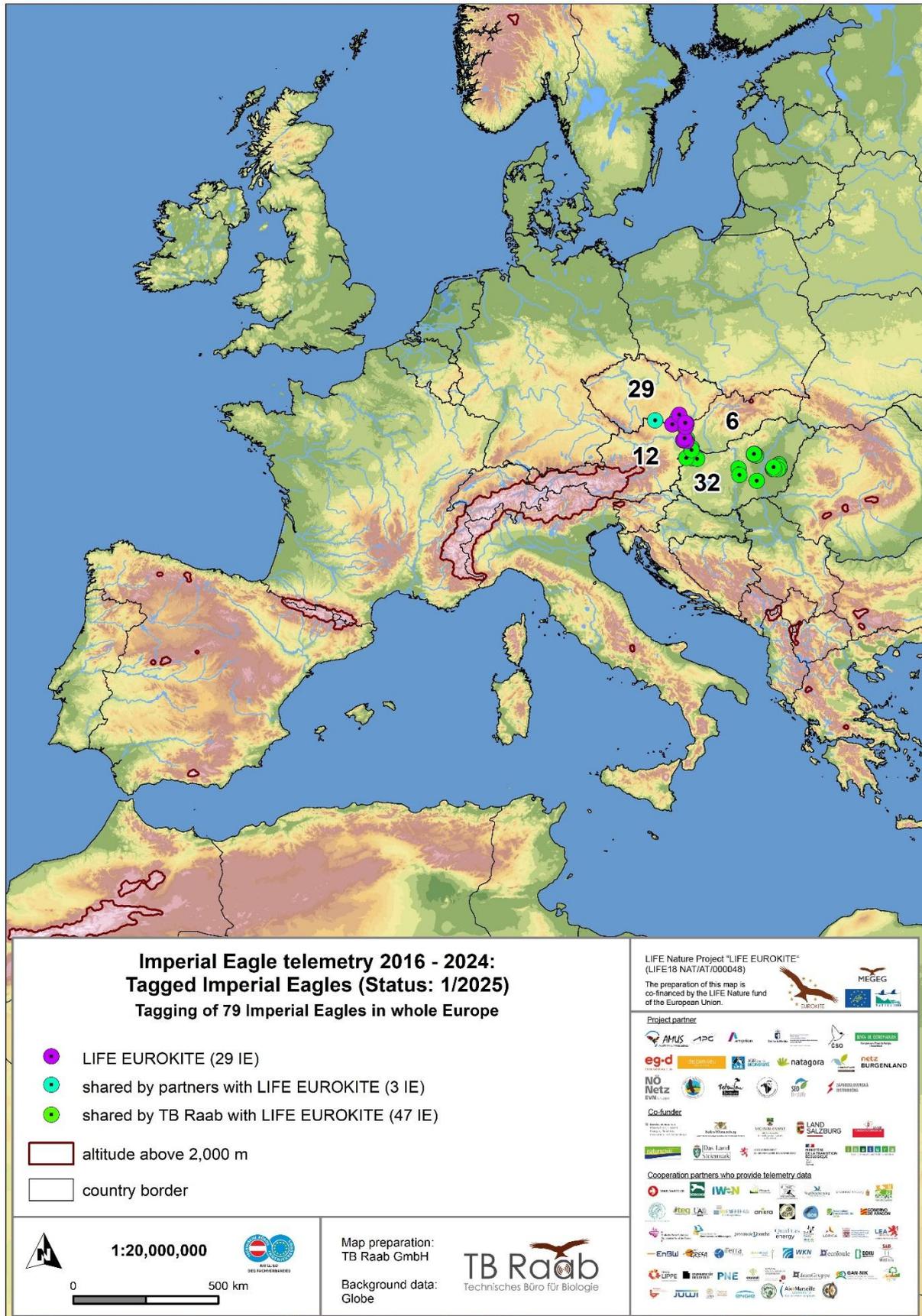


Figure 5: Tagging of 79 imperial eagles by the LIFE EUROKITE project and numerous cooperation and project partners across Europe the years 2016-2024.

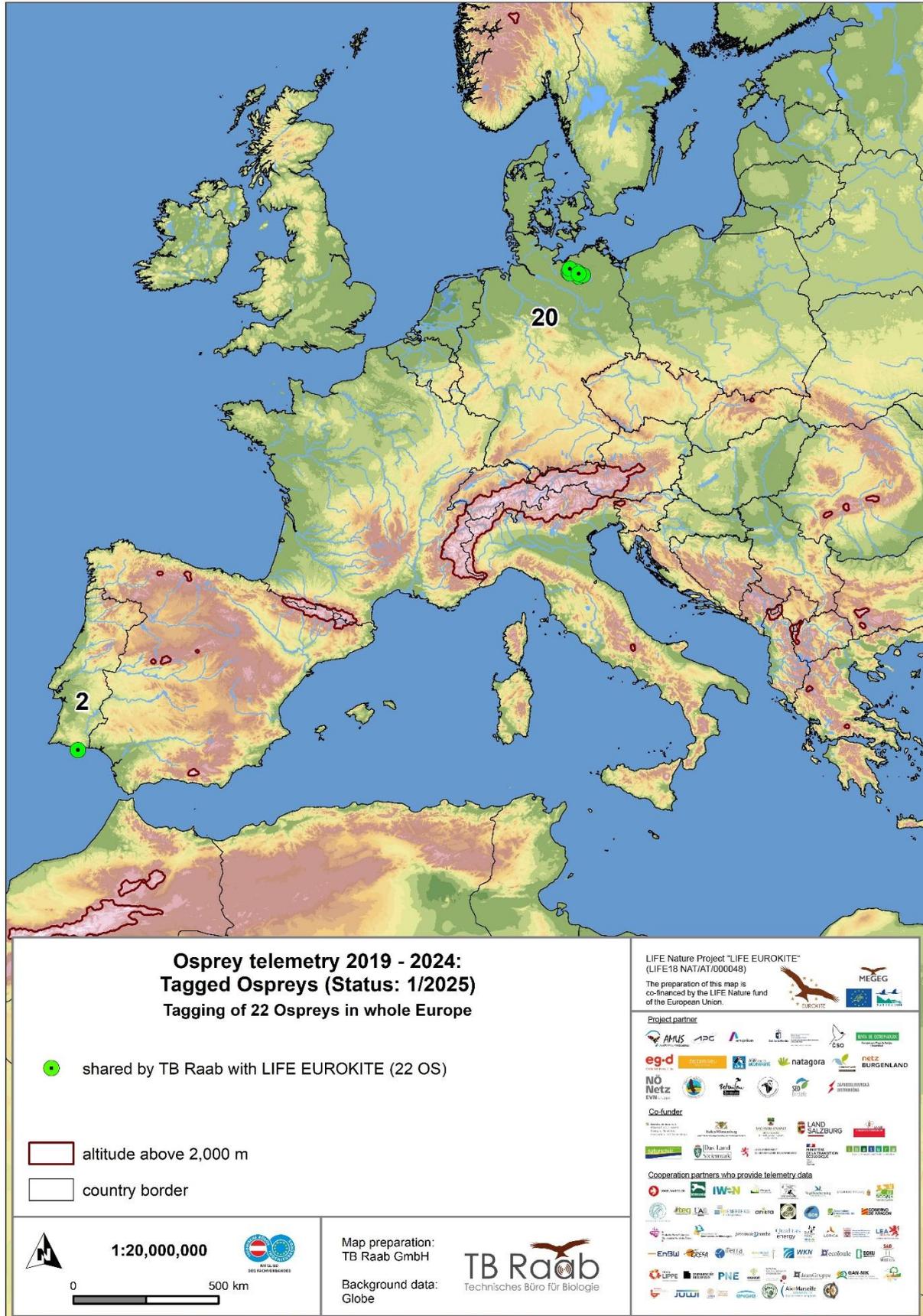


Figure 6: Tagging of 22 Ospreys by the LIFE EUROKITE project and numerous cooperation and project partners across Europe the years 2019-2024.

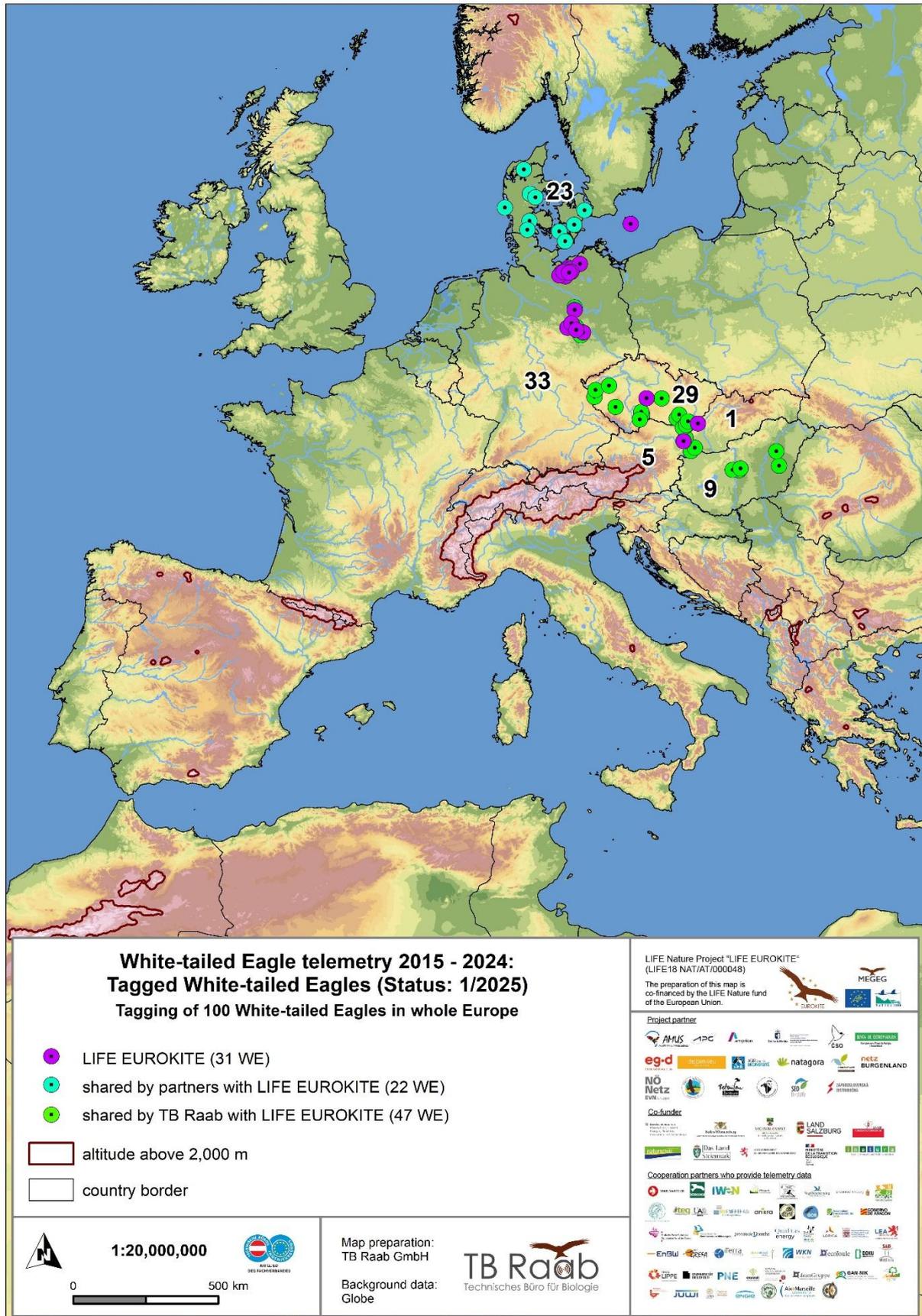


Figure 7: Tagging of 100 white-tailed eagles by the LIFE EUROKITE project and numerous cooperation and project partners across Europe the years 2015-2024.

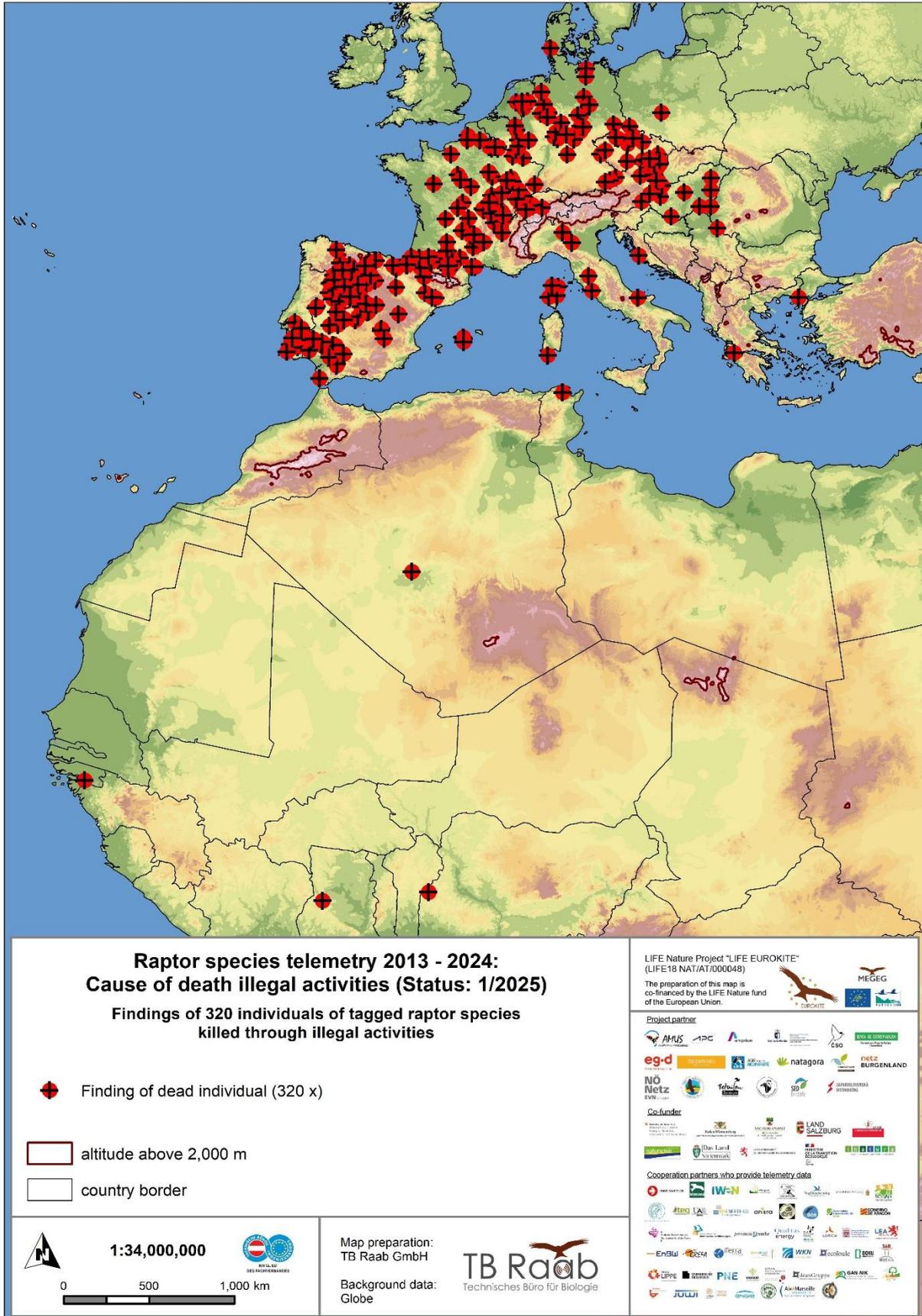


Figure 8: Interim results of 320 tagged birds which died due to illegal activities in the years 2013 to 2024 across Europe.

3 Belgian results

The subsequent section provides a detailed overview of the cases with illegal mortality reasons in Belgium. A total of 2 tagged birds have been confirmed as victims of illegal activities. Both died due to poisoning.

3.1 Tagged individuals that have been poisoned

The birds are listed in chronological order by date of death, commencing with the first recorded case.

RK_0160

General information about the bird

Name: Meyerode_02

Species: Red kite

Birth date: 17.05.2018

Place of tagging: Meyeroda, Wallonne, Belgium

Date of tagging: 17.06.2018

Age at tagging: 1. CY

Origin of bird: Juvenile from the nest

Ownership category: E_TBRAAB_1

Logger number: Ornitela 088 - 181090 kite

Ring number: H193000

Sex: No information

Bird crime information

Place of bird crime: St. Vith, Prov. Liège, Belgium

Coordinates: 50,2721670, 6,0868979

Date of bird crime: 17.09.2019, 7:02:19 PM (UTC)

Age at bird crime (Days): 488

Age at bird crime: 2. CY

Responsible organization for the investigation: Deltamilieu projecten / Natagora

Logger and/or bird found: Logger and bird found

Carcass state: Good

Bird crime: Poisoning- Anticogulants / Coumarin derivative

Certainty category: Certain

Additional information: The laboratory found Brodifacoum an Anticogulants.

Investigation information

Last editing: 08.01.2025

Investigation: No information received

Police and/or authority investigation: No information received

Legal proceeding: No information received

Conviction: No information received

If investigation stopped or no conviction was achieved, why?

No information received

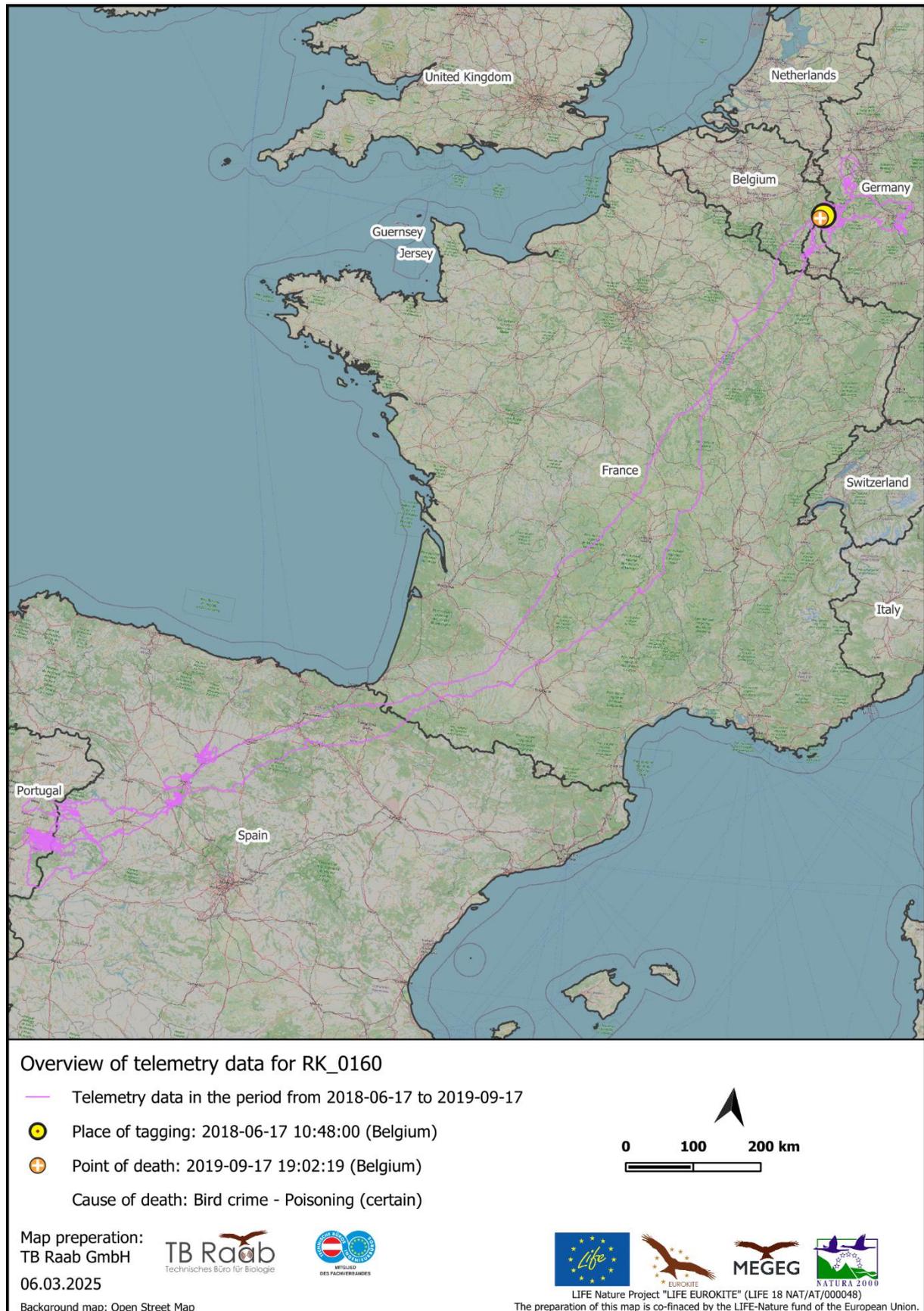


Figure 9: Overview of the telemetry data for RK_0160.

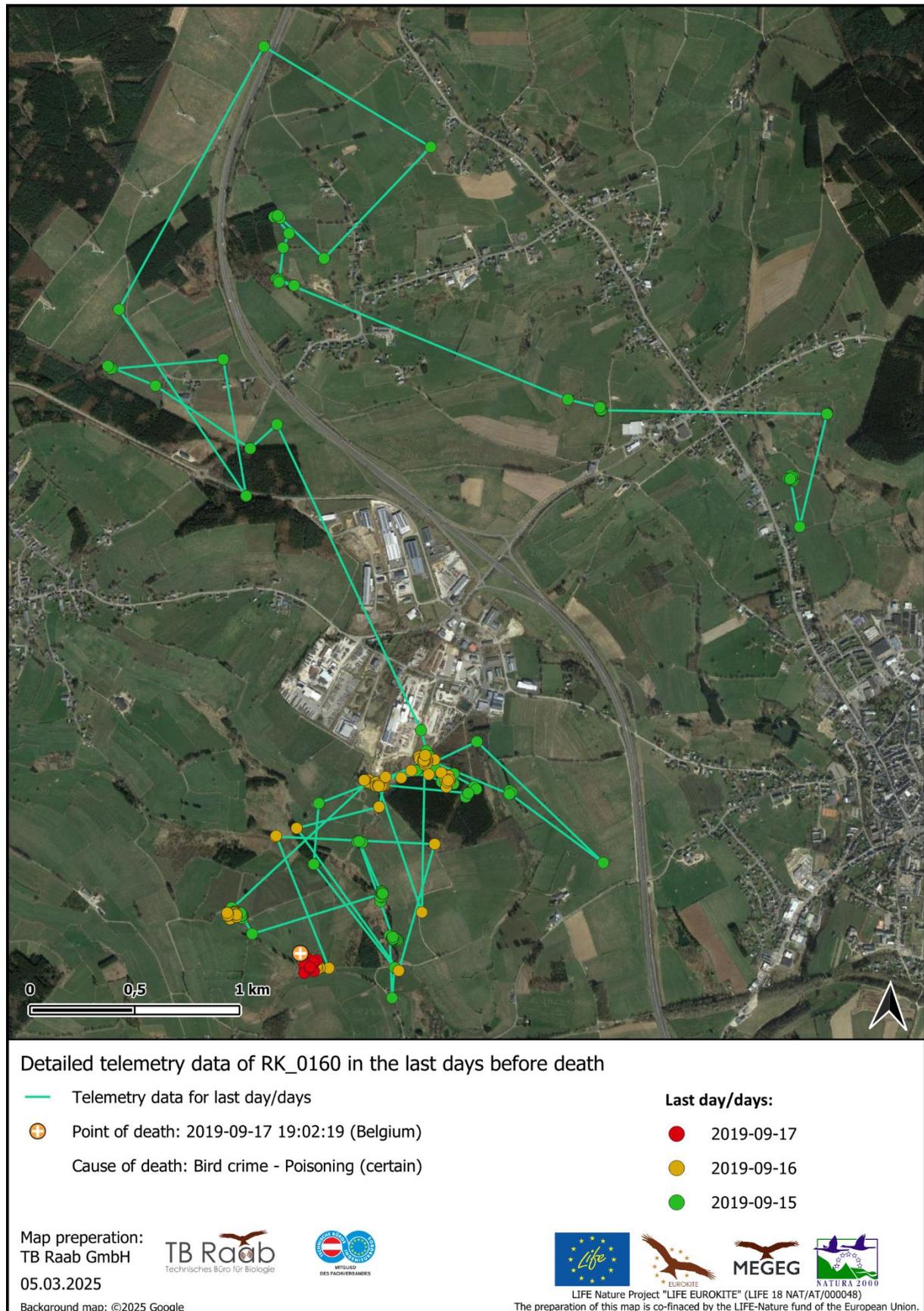


Figure 10: Detailed telemetry data of RK_0160 in the last days before death.

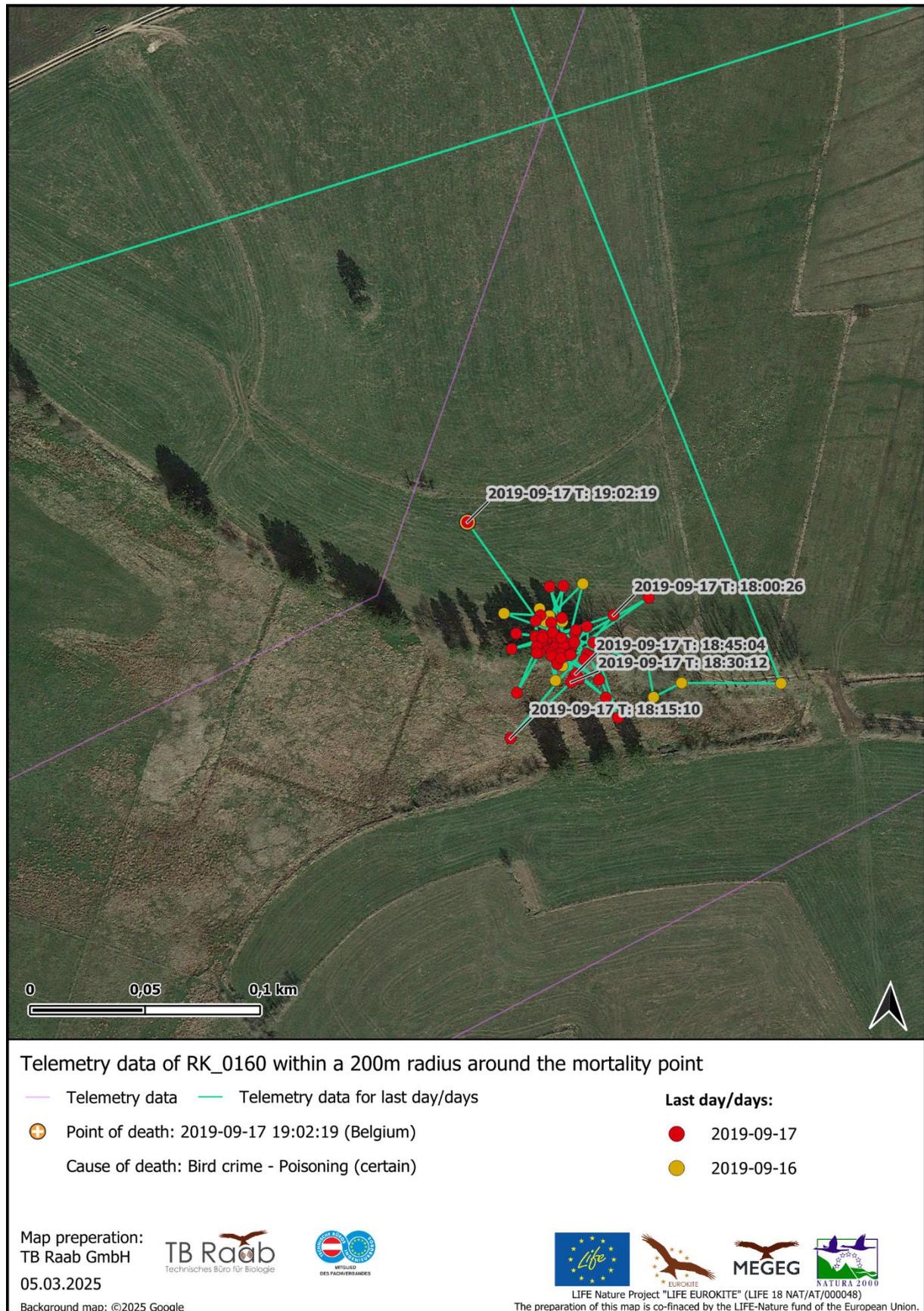


Figure 11: Telemetry data of RK_0160 within a 200m radius around the mortality point.

RK_1378

General information about the bird

Name: Valkenburg_03

Species: Red kite

Birth date: 13.05.2019

Place of tagging: Valkenburg, Zuid-Nederland, Netherlands

Date of tagging: 20.05.2021

Age at tagging: 3.+ CY

Origin of bird: Captured with trap

Ownership category: C_StefVanRijn

Logger number: 212206

Ring number: 6193897

Sex: Male

Bird crime information

Place of bird crime: Dilsen-Stokkem, Prov. Limburg, Belgium

Coordinates: 51,014294, 5,7503019

Date of death: 15.05.2022, 09:09:13 AM (UTC)

Age at death (Days): 1098

Age at death: 4. CY

Responsible organization for the investigation: Deltamilieu projecten / Natagora

Logger and/or bird found: Logger and bird found

Carcass state: No information received

Bird crime: Poisoning

Certainty category: Probable

Additional information: Expert assumption (Deltamilieu projecten).

Investigation information

Last editing: 08.01.2025

Investigation: No information received

Police and/or authority investigation: No information received

Legal proceeding: No information received

Conviction: No information received

If investigation stopped or no conviction was achieved, why?

No information received

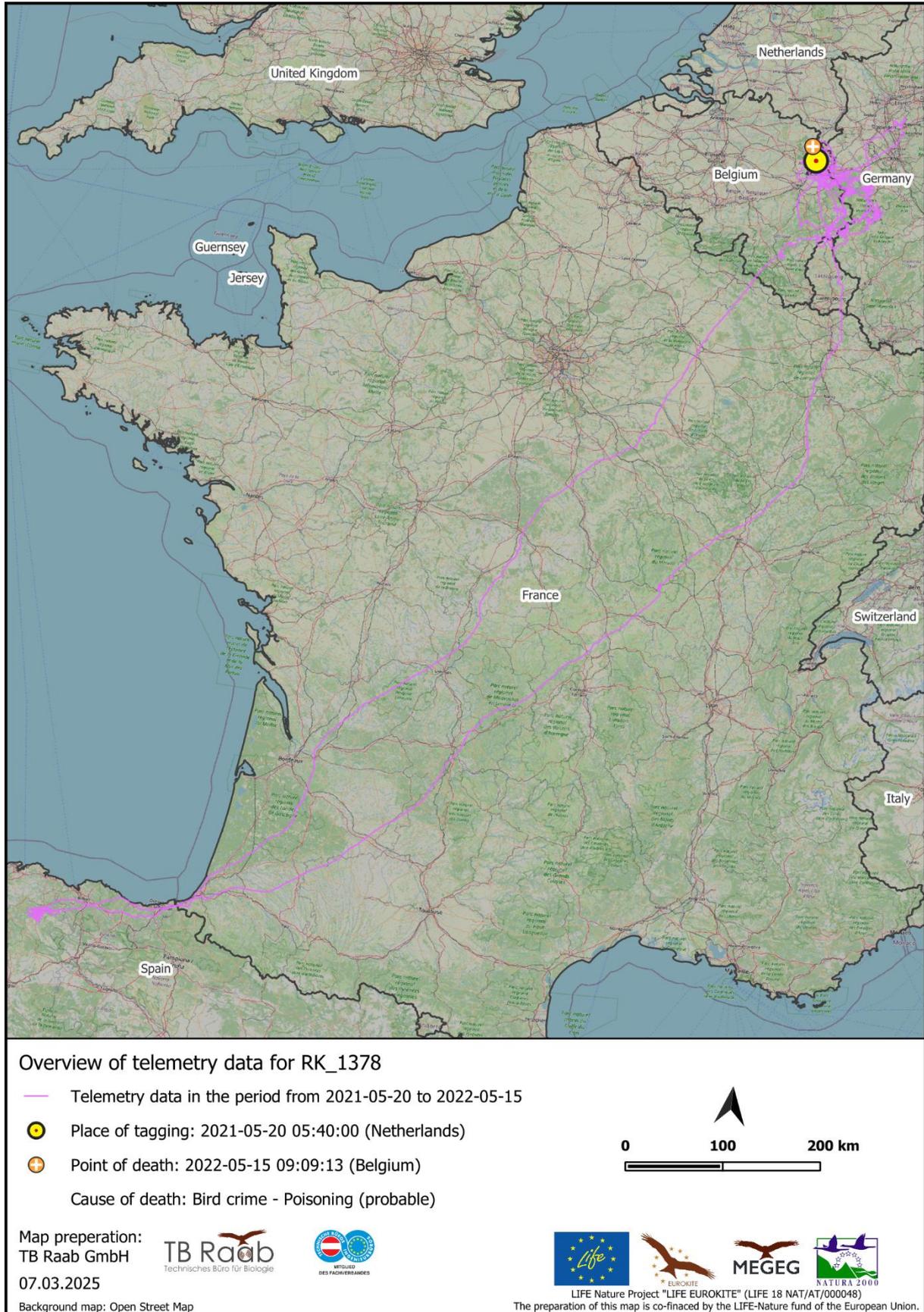


Figure 12: Overview of the telemetry data for RK_1378.

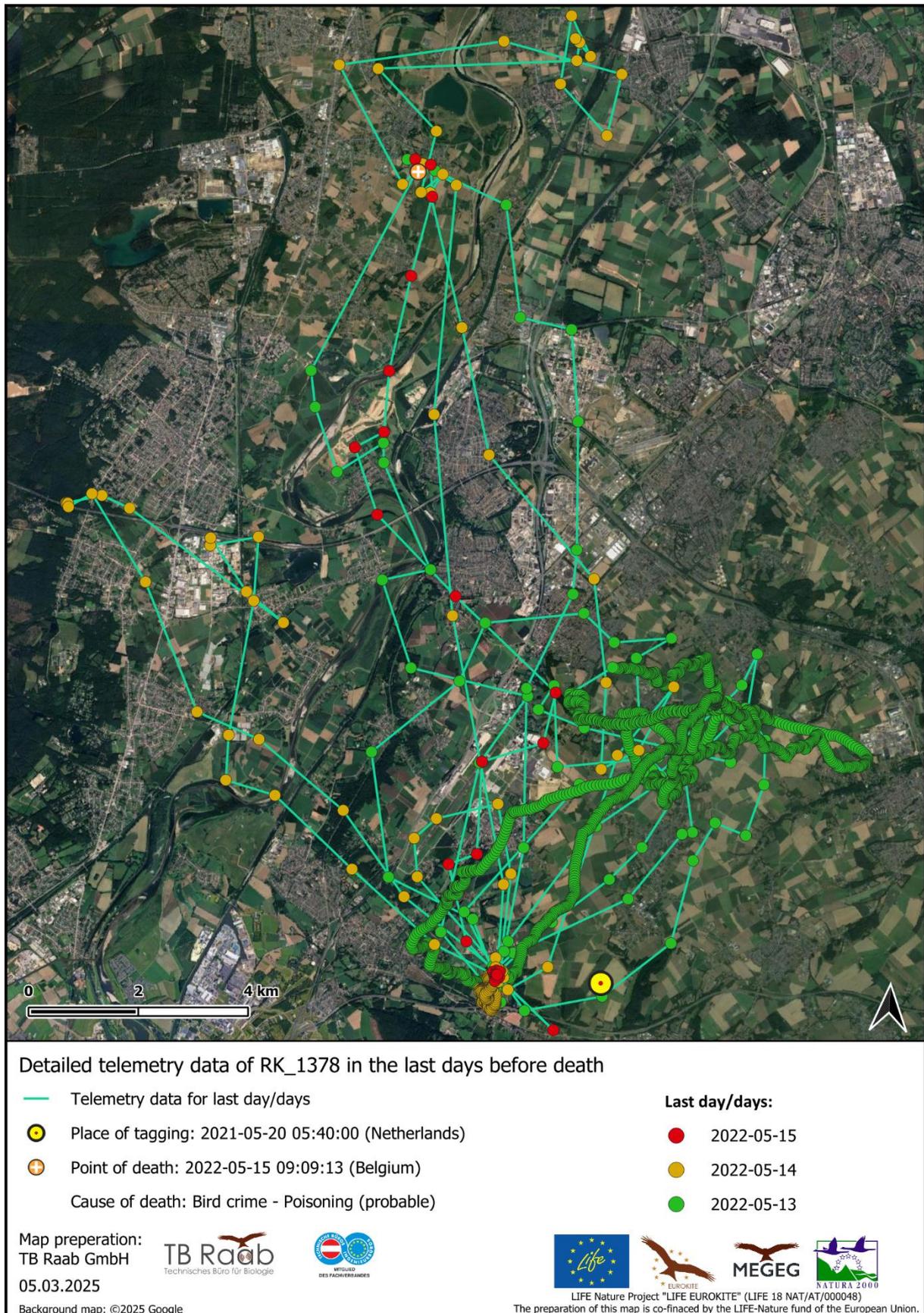


Figure 13: Detailed telemetry data of RK_1378 in the last days before death.

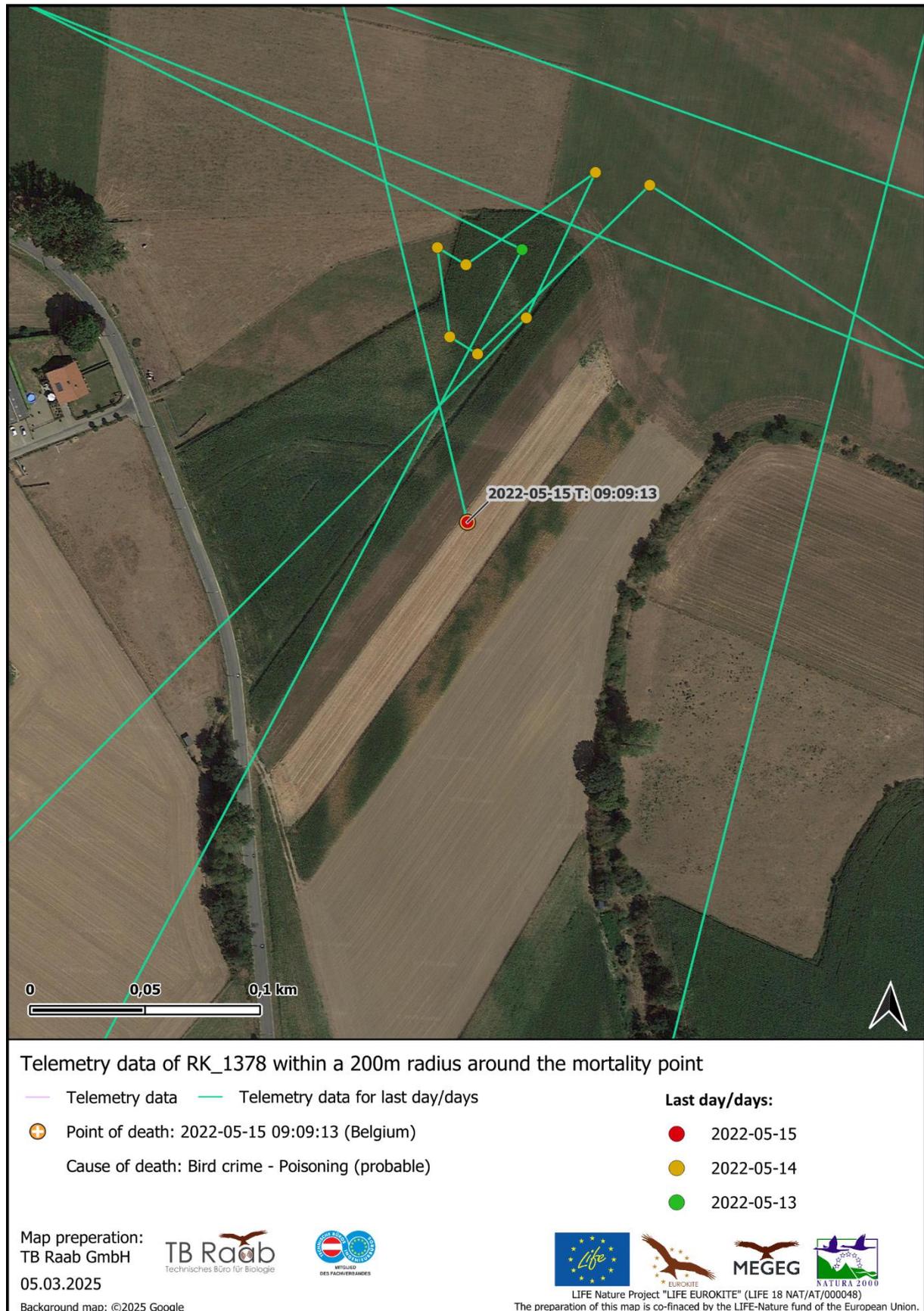


Figure 14: Telemetry data of RK_1378 within a 200m radius around the mortality point.

3.2 Summary of the Belgium results

Please note, that due to different number of tagged birds per countries and especially the different density of red kites per country the results can differ significant per country. Therefore, these results do not provide any information about the statistical frequencies of illegal activities in the respective country.

The interim results of the LIFE EUROKITE (LIFE18 NAT/AT/000048) project 2020-2024 with additional results from 2013 onwards show, that a total of 16 tagged birds died in Belgium. Of those, 2 individuals died due to illegal activities. Both tagged individuals died due to poisoning. (Table 1 to Table 2 & Figure 18).

Table 1: Overview of the numbers of tagged birds which died due to bird crime in Belgium.

Mortality reason	Red kite	Total
Bird crime - Poisoning	2	2
Total	2	2

Table 2: Overview of the districts where tagged birds died due to bird crime in Belgium.

Federal State	Bird crime - Poisoning	Total
Liège Province (Prov. Liège)	1	1
Limburg Province (Prov. Limburg)	1	1
Total	2	2

Detected substances

Brodifacoum was detected in 1 poisoned bird (Figure 15), while the other poisoned bird was either not toxicologically analysed, or the detected substance was categorised as unknown.

Among the compounds identified was the rodenticide Brodifacoum. Under Regulation (EU) 528/2012 (BPR), the Brodifacoum is approved as active substance in the European Union, even though it is strictly regulated (European Parliament and Council of the European Union, 2012).

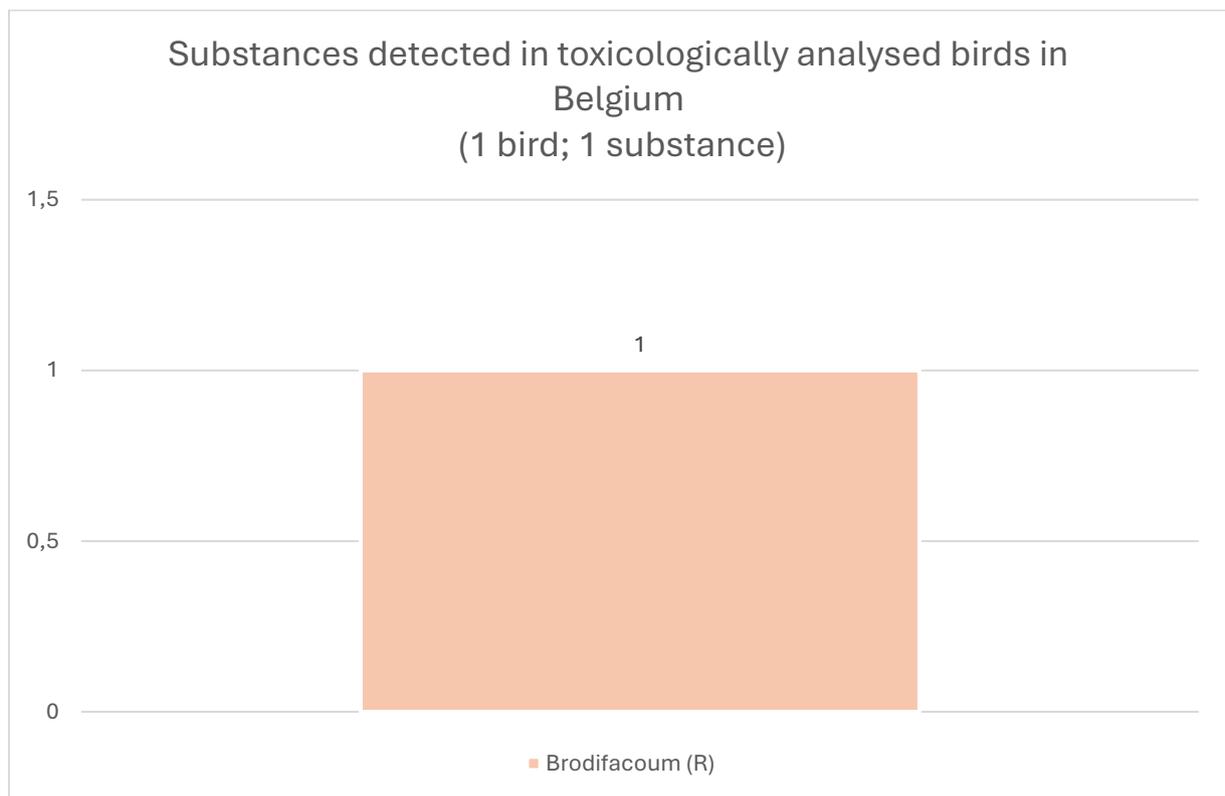


Figure 15: Substances detected (1 substances) in poisoned birds (1 toxicologically analysed birds with detected substance). In total, 2 birds were classified as poisoned based on field evidence and GPS data. Toxicological analyses were available for 1 individual. The detected substance is classified into the following chemical groups: (R) rodenticides.

Substances confirmed as lethal

Toxicological analyses confirmed the presence of toxic substances in 1 bird, whereas in 1 case poisoning was suspected but the responsible substance remained unknown. Toxicological analysis reveals that the bird is confirmed to have died as a result of poisoning, with toxicological threshold values enabling the lethal substance to be clearly identified. The bird is confirmed to have died from rodenticide exposure (Figure 16).

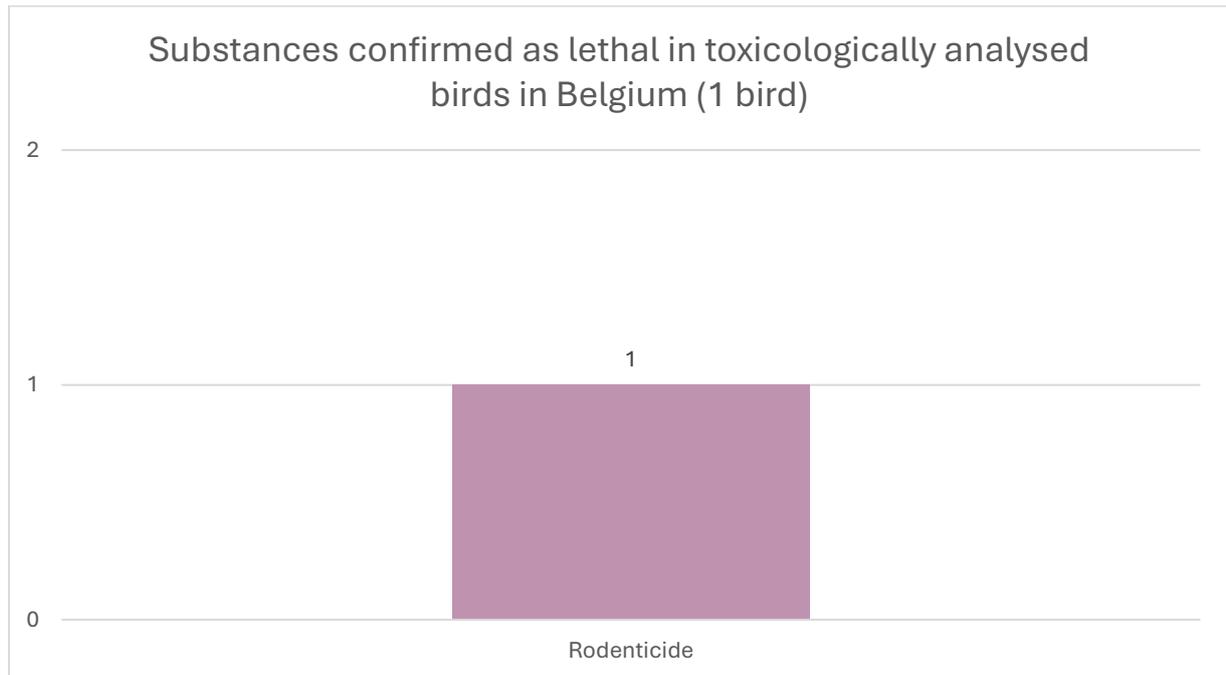


Figure 16: Toxic substances confirmed as lethal (1 substance) in poisoned birds in Belgium. In total, 2 birds were classified as poisoned based on field evidence and GPS data. Toxicological analyses were available for 1 bird, which was confirmed to have died as a result of poisoning, with toxicological threshold values enabling the lethal substance to be clearly identified.

Assessment of intentional poisoning

Poisoning cases were evaluated using toxicological findings together with field observations. Birds were classified as intentionally poisoned when evidence clearly indicated deliberate poisoning, such as detection of substances banned in the European Union, discovery of poisoned bait near the carcass, the presence of multiple dead birds at the same site or when the perpetrator had been identified. When available evidence did not allow a clear determination of intentional poisoning, cases were classified as undefined. This group includes birds exposed to substances that are legally permitted in the EU (e.g. rodenticides, metaldehyde or cadmium), cases of secondary poisoning, birds recovered from landfill sites, and birds without toxicological examination. It also covers cases in which a detected substance was banned at the time of analysis but remained legally authorised when the poisoning event occurred. Overall, both of the 2 poisoned birds were classified undefined.

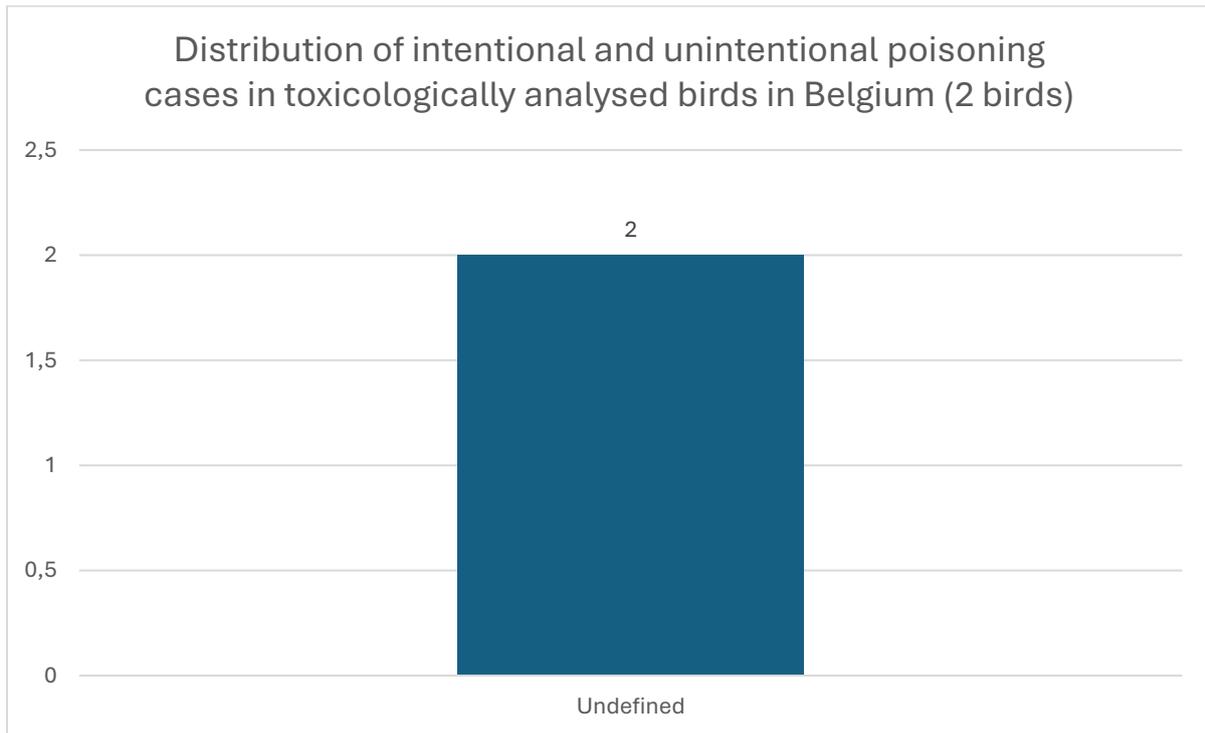


Figure 17: Number of poisoned birds classified as confirmed intentional poisoning or as cases with undetermined intent. Confirmed intentional poisoning includes cases involving toxic substances prohibited in the European Union, the presence of poisoned bait, multiple birds found dead at the same site or instances where the perpetrator has been identified. Cases with undetermined intent include birds exposed to legally permitted substances, secondary poisoning, landfill-related cases, or birds without toxicological analysis. Of the 2 poisoned birds in Belgium, both were classified as undetermined intent.

Results of the investigation

No information available.

4 References

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5 List of tagged individuals which died in Belgium

Red kite

RK_0160..... 11
RK_1378..... 16



CPEW
Campaign against criminal poisoning of European Wildlife

**POISONING
IS THE DIFFERENCE.**

**THESE CRIMES MUST STOP.
SIGN OUR PETITION NOW.**

<https://chng.it/zCZhxGhQSy>

www.stopwildlifepoisoning.eu

Coordinating beneficiary



The TB Raab GmbH was commissioned to implement the LIFE EUROKITE project after a pan-European public tender.



Project partner (Associated Beneficiary)



Co-financier



This project is co-financed by the LIFE Nature Programme of the European Union



Cooperation partner



This project is co-financed by the LIFE Nature Programme of the European Union