

## BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION MEASURES AT LUKOIL NEFTOCHIM BURGAS AD



LUKOIL Neftochim Burgas AD is located at two production sites. The main site is located within 20 km of the small (inner) Gulf of Burgas, and the port terminal is located on the Black Sea, in the so-called Gypsy Gulf - the southern part of the large Gulf of Burgas. The mild climate, the proximity of the sea and three lakes with various salinity levels, and the availability of wet zones contribute to a significant diversity of animal and plant species in the area.

The Via Pontica, one of the three main routes of migratory birds in Europe, passes over the west coast of the Black Sea, above both production sites. This route is used by many species of birds, including 78% of all white storks and the entire population of rosy pelicans in Europe, as well as the exceptionally rare Eastern imperial eagle and griffon vulture.

The Rosenets Port Terminal is partially located in the territory of the protected area Bakrylyka. Within the territory of the terminal, the reptile leopard snake (*Zamenis situla*), the spur-thighed tortoise (*Testudo graeca iberica*), and the Hermann's tortoise (*Testudo hermanni*) have been found. All three species are listed in the Red Book of the Republic of Bulgaria with the environmental status EN (meaning that the species is under threat of extinction).

LUKOIL Neftochim Burgas AD implements biodiversity conservation

measures. An Information Sheet was developed to describe the species of birds and sea animals living on the territory, the areas of their habitat, and the rules of conduct. The personnel of the plant and the port terminal, as well as representatives from external organizations operating at production sites, are acquainted with the document.

Should an employee find an animal in distress, the animal should be delivered to the Environmental Department of the plant for subsequent transportation to a rescue center through partners, i.e. the District Environmental and Water Inspectorate or a non-government environmental organization. Similar actions are also taken for city animals, i.e. cats and dogs, which are sent to local shelters. The enterprise plans to develop a guide for the steps to be taken upon discovering an animal in distress, which should increase the animal's chances of survival thanks to the timely help of LUKOIL employees.

Due to such measures, a number of rare species of birds can be rescued and even rehabilitated. In 2014, a bird in distress was found in the territory of the main site and was brought by the plant's employees to the rescue center. There it was identified that it was a lesser kestrel (*Falco naumanni*) - a species that was thought to have disappeared from the country in the 1950s. In Bulgaria, there is an international project dedicated to the revival of the lesser kestrel, as part

of which the Green Balkans adaptation center was created in the Sakar Mountains, where they have managed to establish a small colony of this species. All birds accepted and hatched in this center are marked. However, the lesser kestrel found at the plant was not marked, which meant it was a representative of a natural colony. A study was conducted at the place where the bird was found, and it confirmed the existence of a small group of birds.

For the conservation of the lesser kestrel, LUKOIL Neftochim Burgas AD developed an action plan, which was approved by the Chairman of the Management Board. Over the next few years, Environmental Department employees worked with the adaptation center on a project to restore the population of this bird. They identified exact nesting sites and performed observation work. In 2017 Green Balkans installed 10 wooden nests, and in May 2018 it was established that at least three artificial nests were being used by lesser kestrels.

One of the birds was marked and named Emma, after the daughter of one of the plant's employees. A transmitter transfers data on the location of the bird every 10 days. Based on the satellite data for August 20, 2018, Emma was found in Hungary. This is a precedent for the Bulgarian population of this species, and confirms that it is gradually reviving.