

Egyptian vultures extinct

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By Nicola Cowell

MALAGA'S last breeding pair of rare Egyptian vultures have been found dead, making the species extinct in the province.



The pair of Alimoche Vultures were found by the Guadalteba reservoir by environmental officers who had been monitoring the critically-endangered species for the last 12 years.

Andalucia's Association for the Defence of Nature is now looking into the cause of death of the birds, who have already disappeared from various other parts of Spain, including the Canary Islands.

Spokesman Consuelo Atencia said: "We are still waiting to find out the exact cause of death, but we believe the vultures may have been poisoned with chunks of meat containing pesticides.

"If the results show that the birds were poisoned, we will act accordingly."

It is believed that the installation of a new wind farm and new laws on animal waste may also have made it more difficult for the scavenging birds to find food.

"As well as the risk of them flying into the windmills, farmers are no longer allowed to leave animal waste or carcasses out for them," said Atencia. "They must incinerate them instead."

He continued: "This is in an area where there used to be lots of farms where vultures could feed on animal remains, but now they are going hungry."

Green group Ecologistas en Action is now calling for a temporary ban on hunting in the area until the cause of death is discovered.

Nine pairs of Alimoche have died in the province since 1998 and Europe's smallest vulture is dying out at an alarming rate.