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Clarification. Griffon Vultures in the Pyrenees

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On the 14th of April 2013 a 52 year old woman had a mortal fall of 300 m in a snow couloir in the Pyrenees (Commune of Larrau).

The gendarmes of the high mountain platoon and a doctor of the SMUR arriving about two hours after the accident could only certify death. The saviours noted the presence of Griffon Vultures near the victim.

Human corpses, irrespective of the cause of death, lying around in the wild have always been eaten by wild or domestic animals that are total¹ or partial² scavengers. Nothing could be more natural and it even was a way of funeral practice in certain Asian religions.

Indeed, our customs are much different. But however shocking this may be to some, these animals are only capable of seeing dead bodies as available food without manifesting the least sign of predation.

Contrary to mammals, vultures like all other scavenging bird species make use of aerial space to move around and are thus capable of gathering quickly near carrion.

The media, anxious to present objective information, based themselves on the facts reported by the gendarmes and the doctor. These left no doubt whatsoever that death had occurred before the arrival of the vultures.

However some media with unscrupulous sensationalism distorted facts or saw them in a tendentious light by exploiting the misfortune of the victim and her loved ones for a dubious strategy, notably :

. The blog of a local agitator, obsessively hating wild fauna, and who was discredited long ago.

. An on-line hunting magazine made use of the incident by launching a personal attack against a vulture expert.

. And finally, the British tabloid press made use of all this to vilify once more the European Union.

There is no need to pay much heed to this accumulation of maliciousness and incompetence.

Scavengers, like Griffon Vultures, are present on all continents. The truth is that in an efficient and gratuitous way, they dispose of countless dead animals and other organic refuse.

In this way, they play an essential and indispensable role as natural skimmers.

The French Vulture Group

1 Vultures and some invertebrates

2 Raven, pies, kites, white-tailed eagles, foxes, wolves, dogs, wild boars, pigs etc.



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