Please do not disturb!

Seen as a ferocious beast that would not hesitate to steal children, when it was not suspected of being a demon, the bearded vulture was hunted and persecuted by man throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. This, together with its low rate of reproduction, the transformation of the landscape and the gradual disappearance of its food supply, led to its virtual extinction in the Alps.

It was not until the 1980s that a vast international programme of reintroduction brought it back through the release of birds bred in captivity. The population is currently being built up again and numbered 49 reproductive pairs in the Alps in 2019, 17 of which were in the French Alps, 14 with fledglings.

In an extension to the reintroduction programmes, protection plans were rolled out to limit disturbance from human activities (signboards, markers on electric cables and ski lifts...). Goal: to favour reproduction and reduce the risk of adult mortality due to collision, electrocution or intoxication.

The expert’s answers

1/ TRUE. Thanks to its highly acid digestive juices and after dropping them while flying to break them into smaller pieces.

2/ TRUE. It regularly takes mud baths in red and orange coloured mud containing iron oxides. We think that this is to mark its territory better.

3/ TRUE. Because, even if the 2nd egg hatches, the bearded vulture only raises one chick.

4/ FALSE. Although it can live to an age of 45 in captivity, its average lifespan in the wild is only around 20 years.
TRUE OR FALSE?  Answers on the back page

1/ The bearded vulture can swallow bones up to 25 cm long.
2/ The bearded vulture puts make up on before going out.
3/ The bearded vulture is in favour of the one child policy.
4/ The bearded vulture goes through a midlife crisis.