



Wildlife Crime Newsletter

March-April, 2023

BirdLife's approximately bi-monthly newsletter: keeping you up-to-date with what's happening in the fight against the illegal killing of wild birds and other forms of bird persecutions in the African-Eurasian Flyway. Please, send us your feedback to wildlifecrime@birdlife.org.

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Featured news

Malta: Spring hunting season 2023

In Malta, the [recommendation to open a hunting season](#) on Turtle-dove (and Common Quail) had been made at the ORNIS Committee meeting in late March. The Turtle-dove has undergone a steep and continuous decline in the past decades and is already in a vulnerable conservation status. [BirdLife Malta took the Government to the Maltese Court](#) over the spring Turtle-dove hunt. On April 17th, [the Court rejected the](#)

[warrant of prohibitory injunction](#), and the Government therefore has opened the spring hunting season on the Turtle-dove for 2023, a shameful and short-sighted act.

Malta is currently facing open infringement proceedings at different levels because of its derogations allowing the trapping of Golden Plover and Song Thrush, the trapping of finches, and the spring hunting of Common Quail and Turtle-dove. It was only in February that the European Commission last sent an [additional Letter of Formal Notice](#) to the Maltese Government in relation to Malta re-opening a spring hunting season on Turtle-dove.

[BirdLife Malta](#) closely monitors the spring hunting season, with daily reports on the illegalities that include all sorts of protected species. See BL Malta's [Newsletter](#), [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) for regular news.

Rome Strategic Plan updates

The [Scoreboard](#) exercise to assess the progress in combating illegal killing, taking and trade of wild birds (IKB) for MIKT and Bern Convention countries has been launched. The countries are requested to report on their baseline IKB indicator values and the methodology of measuring the progress for achieving the minimum 50% reduction by 2030. The deadline for completion of the Scoreboard is 30 June 2023. This exercise is a multi-stakeholder process and governments are expected to reach out to all relevant stakeholders to consult on the reporting. CMS MIKT and the Bern Convention Secretariats jointly organized an [online workshop](#) to support the parties in filling out the scoreboards on 14 April 2023 (presentations are available via the link.)

More news

Northern Bald Ibis killed in Neretva Delta

"Gipsy", a Northern Bald Ibis died violently in the Neretva delta on March 5th. The bird belongs to a species which is extinct in Europe but is being reintroduced in Central Europe. The bird was most likely hit on the head by an object, unless it was poisoned, which is why it could have been disoriented and thus could collide with an obstacle. Read [more](#).





Protected birds of prey poisoned in Hungary

A farmer reported to have found several dead birds of prey in Mórahalom, Hungary. With the help of the dog detection unit of the Kiskunság National Park Directorate, altogether ten carcasses were found: 3 Common buzzards, 6 Western marsh harriers, 1 Magpie, as well as poison baits applied on chicken parts. Find out [more](#) (in Hungarian).

Illegal shooting of an owl family in Upper Austria

A witness observed and photographed three men shooting at something in a fruit tree in Pram. He found an adult and three young long-eared owls were dead. The three hunters are suspected - they have been temporarily banned from using weapons. Read [more](#).



Raptor persecution case in Germany

In early April, a Common Buzzard was reported to be shot in Ahlen (district of Warendorf/North Rhine-Westphalia). A veterinarian confirmed that the bones of the right wing were completely shattered by the gunshot. Unfortunately, the birds had to be euthanised. Read more [here](#).

UK Raptor Persecution: Red Kite found shot on grouse moor in County Durham

An X-ray revealed the bird's entire body was peppered with shot including pieces that had broken its wing. Find out [more](#).

The grouse shooting industry is clearly responsible for persecuting raptors on grouse moors across the UK. A summary is freshly available about the Hen Harrier victims [here](#) and a story about one of them, called "[Anu](#)".

However, there are consequences. In March, a [gamekeeper pleaded guilty](#) to shooting Sparrowhawk, and was fined £1500. He is the 56th gamekeeper to be convicted of raptor persecution offences in Scotland since 1990.

Do you want to know how investigators track down the raptor killers? Then [read this blog](#).

RSPB Scotland is calling for urgent implementation of the [Wildlife Management and Muirburn Bill](#) which will bring in grouse moor licensing, and is aimed at stopping crimes against birds of prey.



Lawsuit victory in Lombardy

[Lega Abolizione Caccia \(LAC\) Brescia](#) and [Committee Against Bird Slaughter \(CABS\)](#) won lawsuit against bird hunting ordinance in Northern Italy. Last autumn, the region of Lombardy passed a series of laws and regulations with the aim of promoting bird hunting, including the regulation stipulated that live decoys for songbird hunting no longer have to be marked with closed rings if a veterinarian certifies that the animals have an intolerance to the rings. As a result, it would have been impossible to verify whether the birds had been illegally taken from the wild or legally captive bred.

Massacres of White Storks in Lebanon

This spring Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) teams have documented the true scale of these atrocities first-hand, often under dangerous circumstances, particularly in the north of the country: more than 700 poachers killed several hundred storks in just one day. Anti-poaching operations are carried out in cooperation with MESHCA Anti-Poaching Unit and the Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon resulting in several arrests (such as [this](#) or [this](#)), but “this genocide against migratory storks is completely out of control”. The issue needs international attention and the Lebanese government need to urgently step up the fight against the ecocide happening on their doorstep, [says CABS](#).



4 years in prison for fatally poisoning 50 vultures in Guinea-Bissau

In Guinea-Bissau, a man was sentenced to four years and two months in prison for poisoning and killing 50 Hooded Vultures in 2021. He used poison to kill the animals and removed their heads and feet to sell on the black market in Senegal for purposes of black magic. This is the first conviction for an environmental crime in Guinea-Bissau, making it an unprecedented case. Read [more](#).

Campaigns & fundraising

World Migratory Bird Day 2023

[World Migratory Bird Day](#) is an awareness-raising campaign highlighting the need for the conservation of migratory birds and their habitats. World Migratory Bird Day 2023 will focus on the topic of water and its importance for migratory birds. This spring World Migratory Bird Day will fall on **13th of May**. Grab your binoculars and go out for bird watching! [Stay tuned](#) on our social media channels.





Stop the slaughter campaign

BirdLife and its partners are actively tackling wildlife crime in the Mediterranean. We must fight together to demand that governments act on illegal killing of birds, and we must work with communities to protect vulnerable species. You can support our work [here](#).

Outlook

The Intergovernmental Task Force to address The Illegal Hunting, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (ITTEA) was launched in March 2023. Check out its Program of Work and more [here](#).



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wildlifecrime@birdlife.org

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