



Wildlife Crime Newsletter

July-August, 2023

BirdLife's 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

Italy: under EU's scrutiny for rampant poaching

Following complaints of Italian BirdLife partner, Lipu and other environmental NGOs, the EU officially opened the EU Pilot procedure n. 2023/10542 against Italy. The issues concern the failure to comply with the Birds Directive in terms of failing to implement the National Action Plan against the illegal killing of wild birds, and also with the European prohibition of using lead ammunition in wetland areas. Furthermore, the Commission recalls the obligation to comply with the pre-nuptial migration dates indicated in the Key Concept document. In Italy, there are 21 bird species that are hunted despite of their poor state of conservation, and for 17 of these there is no management plan. Read more [here](#) (in Italian).



Rome Strategic Plan updates

The [14th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties](#) to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals was postponed from the original date and will be organized in Samarkand, Uzbekistan from 12 to 17 February 2024 (COP14). The CMS Secretariat has prepared a [report on the progress of tackling IKB](#), which is available among the meeting documents. It also contains the draft amendments to Resolution 11.16 (Rev.COP13) and draft Decisions, to be adopted at the COP14 meeting. The Scientific Council held its meeting in July 2023 and their [comments on the IKB report](#) can be also downloaded from the website. The extended deadline (July 14th) for submitting the [Scoreboard](#) to assess the national progress in combating illegal killing, taking and trade of wild birds (IKB) for MIKT and Bern Convention countries has now passed. The governments can allow to have the reports published on the linked website of the Bern Convention, therefore the majority of the assessments will be available publicly.

More news



More satellite-tagged Hen Harriers go missing in the UK

Three more satellite tagged Hen Harriers have disappeared on private driven grouse moors in Northern England between August 9th and August 15th, on driven grouse moors, all within 6 days of the start of the grouse-shooting season. That's make an [awful list](#) of 101 confirmed "missing" or killed Hen Harriers since 2018. Read [more](#).

Poachers fined in Malta

Hunter fined €1,200 after being caught in the act of killing protected Eurasian Collared-dove during the spring hunting season of 2022. BirdLife Malta volunteers caught the hunter in question shooting and injuring the Collared-dove. The video evidence which showed the hunter chasing the bird and then finishing it off using his mouth, was part of the compilation of evidence presented in court against the hunter. His gun was also confiscated, and his hunting licence suspended for 2 yrs. Find out [more](#). Six more poachers in Malta were sentenced to partly heavy fines in July. The criminal court in Valletta considered it proven that the defendants were illegally trapping protected finches with clap-nets on various days in March 2023. The men were sentenced to fines ranging from 1,200 to 2,800 euros. In addition, the trapping equipment seized by the police, several dozen live decoys and an electronic decoy device were confiscated. Only in June, the same court had sentenced seven poachers reported by the Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) in the autumn of 2022 to similarly high fines. Read [more](#).





Bird trapping continues to decline in the British SBAs in Cyprus

According to last season's statistics, bird trapping since 2015 was reduced by 98.2 per cent overall at the British Sovereign Base Areas (SBAs) in Cyprus, with the use of mist nets down 98.4 per cent and lime sticks decreasing by 92 per cent. The SBA Police has said more investment in detection technology is on its way to reduce the number of illegally trapped wild birds in mist nets and lime sticks. Read more [here](#).

Illegal thrush trafficking into Italy

Italian hunters and their desire for 'live decoys' has evolved to kindle a large criminal trafficking network across Europe, funnelling chicks - stolen from their nests - towards Italy. The main source countries are France, Poland and Romania. The chicks are fitted with a false/manipulated aluminium leg rings. Following a tip-off from CABS staff, the latest case led to the arrest of 4 people (two Polish and two Italians) in Latisana, Friuli, while exchanging money and 576 song thrush chicks. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).



Cinereous Vulture released in Portugal after recovery from a gunshot wound

On 10 August, within the LIFE Aegyptius Return project, a Cinereous Vulture - named Gerês - was released backed to nature in Portugal after being rehabilitated from a shot on its wing. Gerês was found back in October 2022 with a fractured wing and multiple lead shots, had to undergo a surgery and several month of supportive treatment. Read [more](#).

Laundering poached live decoy birds made easy in Lombardy

The north Italian region of Lombardy has passed a new law that makes it easier to possess birds which have been illegally taken from the wild. The new law - passed in July - now opens two loopholes: Firstly, hunters are now allowed to remove the closed rings from decoys at their own discretion and without a veterinary opinion, and replace them with larger, open rings if they believe the decoy does not tolerate the closed ring. Secondly, the rings may deviate from the standard size by up to 10% in the future. So, the birds can be simply marked with rings that are big enough to be put on and taken off at will. Read [more](#).



DNA found on carcasses identified the perpetrator

A pensioner has been sentenced over the deaths of five Goshawks, after being linked to their bodies through a DNA hit by Suffolk Police, UK. The part-time gamekeeper, pleaded guilty to 19 charges in connection with a raptor persecution investigation. He was sentenced to 12 weeks' imprisonment, suspended for 12 months, and ordered to pay £1,080 in compensation and £105 costs. Read more [here](#).

Quail poaching season started in Serbia

From the 15th of August, the quail hunting season begins and will last until 30th of September. During this period, about 50,000 quails are also killed illegally, with the use of electronic luring devices that are prohibited by law. If you add that on the top of the 40,000 legally hunted quails, it is clear that this small game bird is being massively exploited in Serbia. Found out more [here](#) (in Serbian).





Illegal goldfinch trade is still a problem in Spain

“Silvestrismo” is the traditional capture and subsequent singing training of finches. However, trapping the birds from the wild has become illegal and has been replaced by captive breeding. Between 2013 and 2018, Spain authorized the capture of 1,731,861 finches for breeding stocks. Since then, SEO/Birdlife believes that the number of illegal captures has increased. The only official figures on the illegal capture of birds go back precisely to 2018: the European goldfinch - the most sought-after species, - entered the Wildlife Recovery Centers in the period 2000-2018 with 11,639 records. On those records, from the top six most frequent species five are finches, accounting for about 70% of the total recovery center records. Read more [here](#) (in Spanish).

IKB incidents in July-August

Several individual incidents of illegal killing and trapping of birds have been reported in recent weeks to police all over Europe, which include [shot stork](#) and [songbirds poaching](#) in Italy, [dove poaching in Spain](#), finch trapping in Spain (like [this](#) or [this](#)), [shot sparrow hawk in the UK](#), [shot buzzard in Denmark](#), [goshawk trap in Germany](#), [songbird trapping in Greece](#), use of electronic calling devices in Serbia (like [this](#) & [this](#)) and also [in Bosnia and Herzegovina](#).



Research & publications



Illegal killing of curlews in summer 2022 identified through data loggers

The Eurasian Curlew is an endangered migratory bird benefiting from numerous conservation efforts, including the remote tracking of individuals to document habitat use and migration strategy. Formerly hunted in France, the species is subject to a hunting ban since 2020. By analysing the data collected by multi-sensor tags deployed on curlews, the authors were able to document four poaching cases of this endangered migratory bird. Using

geolocations, instant acceleration, temperature, battery charge and battery charging current, they determined the place and time where poaching occurred. This report is an illustration that the employing of remote multi-sensor tag monitoring has the potential to inform management projects on imperilled or harvestable species affected by illegal or cryptic sources of mortality. Read the full [article](#).

LIFE SWiPE European Summary Report

A new report called 'Uncovering the Invisible: Successes and Challenges for Wildlife Crime Prosecution in Europe' (SWiPE European Summary Report) presents an overview of 11 national reports, aiming to identify the main issues that represent hurdles for successful wildlife crime prosecution in Europe. Read the full report [here](#).



TRAFFIC urges African online platforms to take immediate action to address illegal sales

Together, the [Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime](#) (GI-TOC), [TRAFFIC](#) and the [World Parrot Trust](#) are raising concerns that platforms in Africa do not have policies regarding the sale of wildlife, and those that do are not ensuring that these policies are effectively enforced. If this situation is not reversed, the impact on wildlife populations and biodiversity across the region will be severe. Read [more](#).

Campaigns & events

Central Asia joining forces in the fight against wildlife crime

The Ministry of Natural Resources, Ecology and Technical Supervision of the Kyrgyz Republic, TRAFFIC and Fauna and Flora co-hosted a Regional Workshop on 4-6 July 2023. The event provided an important platform for exchanging experience and knowledge, as well as raising awareness about the scale and scope of illegal wildlife trade in Central Asia. Read more [here](#).



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