

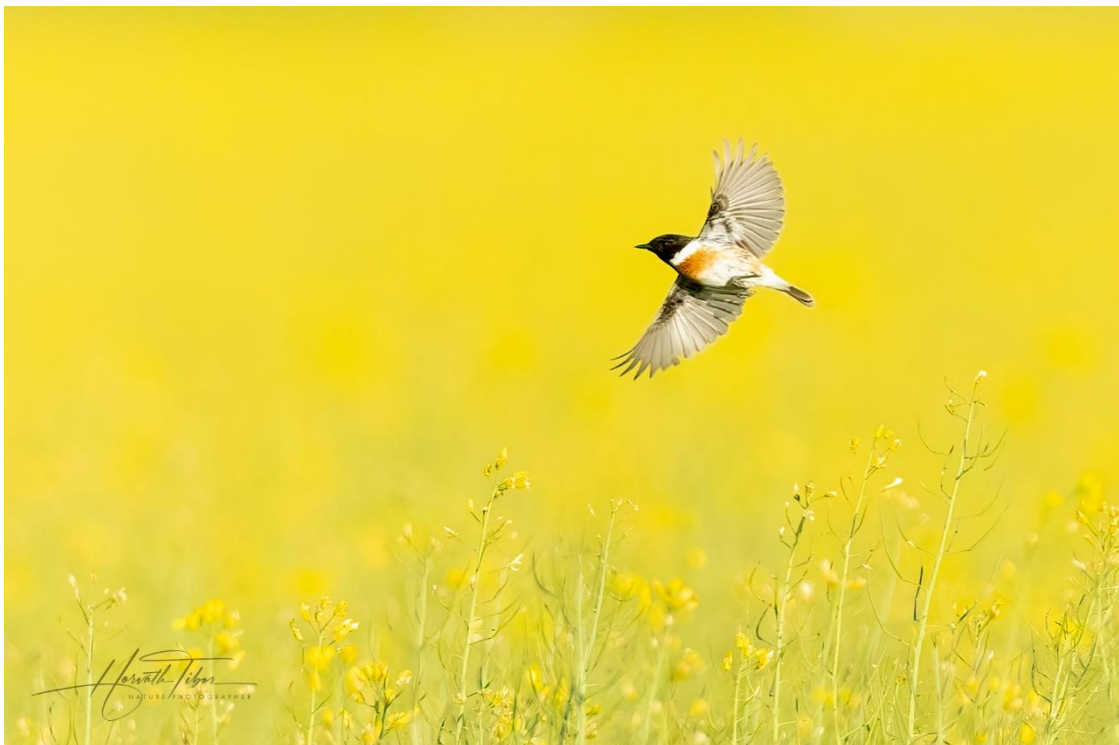


Wildlife Crime Newsletter

March-April, 2024

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

Record mass bird poisoning in Vojvodina, Serbia

In early March, members of the Bird Protection and Study Society of Serbia (BPSSS/ BirdLife Serbia) found more than 800 dead birds near Kikinda village, Northern Serbia. Among them were at least at least 434 Rooks and 373 Jackdaws, both protected species. All the circumstances point to mass poisoning, and this is possibly the largest single mass poisoning recorded in this part of Europe. Read more [here](#), or see the original [article](#) (in Serbian).



CABS' car destroyed by hunters in Zakynthos

The hunting of migratory birds is forbidden during spring, still it remains widespread on the Ionian islands in Greece (see [this article](#) for evidence). It often goes unpunished by the local authorities, therefore the Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) have started their anti-poaching operations for the second year in a row with an international team of volunteers. Within a few days, they reported dozens of illegal hunters to the authorities. CABS said that its teams on Zakynthos had been verbally abused and harassed by hunters on numerous occasions while trying to document illegalities in the field, but then they stepped over the line, and smashed all windows, headlights and mirrors on their car. (Read more [here](#).)

Malta opened spring hunting on Turtle-doves

Spring hunting season was opened for both Common Quail and European Turtle-dove in April. The vulnerable Turtle-doves can be hunted in Malta under derogation with an overall bag limit of 1,500 birds during the spring season, when they are returning to their breeding grounds. The Maltese Courts once again turned down a request for a warrant of prohibitory injunction by BirdLife Malta to stop the hunting. For more details, read the [full article](#) and visit the [hunting section of BirdLife Malta's website](#).

Despite hunting supposedly permitted only for Common Quail and European Turtle-dove, BirdLife Malta recovered several shot birds of different species such as a number of European Bee-eaters, a Squacco Heron, a Common Cuckoo, a Eurasian Hobby, a Western Marsh-harrier and several Common Kestrels. All these birds were certified as suffering from gunshot injuries. Watch the video [here](#).





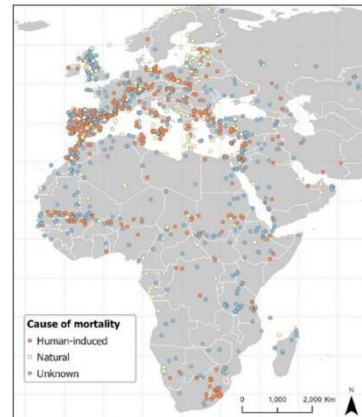
Scottish Parliament votes through grouse moor licensing

On March 21st, the Scottish parliament voted for the controls amid intense pressure from conservationists after decades of illegal attacks on birds of prey by gamekeepers. Grouse moors across Scotland will be required to hold licences and could face shooting bans as part of rational measures to combat bird of prey persecution. Read [more](#).

Research & publications

IKB remains one of the key threats to migratory landbirds

Recent study compiling data of many bird tracking research underlines the importance of energy infrastructure, IKB and poisoning as the most important causes of mortality of large-bodied migratory birds in the African-Eurasian flyway. The open access article can be found [here](#).



A review of good practices on preventing IKB in the EU

Last year, the Commission published a review document, titled [Combating the illegal killing, taking of and trade in birds in the EU – Review of good practices on prevention](#). This document is intended to replace the [EU Roadmap towards eliminating IKB](#) (2017), which provided a first overview of various initiatives across the EU to combat IKB and helped to facilitate the coordination of actions in the EU.

Organized trapping continues undeterred

The latest report on bird trapping by BirdLife Cyprus' and the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK) as well as the report by CABS (Committee Against Bird Slaughter) for autumn 2023 both show an increase in trapping levels within their survey area compared to the encouraging decline that was recorded in recent years. In particular, BirdLife Cyprus estimates that approximately 435,000 birds (including migratory and threatened species) were illegally trapped and killed in nets and on limesticks last autumn alone.

Read [more](#).



International policy updates

On 10th of April, CMS MIKT has held an online Consultative Group (CG) meeting. CG is an advisory group set up under the MIKT and the meeting was open to all members and observers. The presentations and agenda have been uploaded on the [Consultative Group dedicated page](#) on the MIKT website. The next *Joint Meeting of Bern Convention and MIKT* is planned to take place in Türkiye in October 2024.

On 19th of April, the European Commission organised a meeting for the *Task Force on the recovery of birds*. This Task Force deals with the conservation and management of quarry bird species that are in a non-secure conservation status in the EU. The European Turtle-dove has served as the model for establishing a mechanism to halt its decline. The main message is that for 2024 there is still a recommendation for ZERO take in both the Western, as well as for the Central-Eastern flyway for the European Turtle-dove. All the technical documents are publicly available [here](#). The fresh ones are under the latest folder of the [19 April Meeting](#).

More news

European Court awaits expert opinion in the finch trapping case against Malta

The controversial practice of [trapping protected finches](#) using cages and nets was effectively banned by the European Court of Justice in [2018](#). In [2020](#), the government opened the season again, claiming it was for a scientific study to ring birds and release them. For some years now trappers have been participating in this [smokescreen](#) "study" (see also BirdLife Malta's [video](#)). Infringement Proceedings against Malta on finch trapping were initiated in December 2020 with a Letter of Formal Notice sent by the EC. The case was filed in January 2023 and officially came to an end with this [hearing on March 7th](#). ECJ had requested an expert opinion by the Advocate General, which is expected to be delivered on May 30.



Actions against bird poachers in Malta

In March, reports and information gathered by the Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) have led the police to 27 trapping sites used for illegal trapping of finches and other protected birds [\[link\]](#). CABS has also released a [clip](#) about the spring operations in Malta in March 2024, showing several arrests by police acting upon the reported cases of illegalities. BirdLife Malta's Spring Watch volunteers have also been successfully uncovering illegal hunting and trapping incidents, such as [this](#) hunter, who had trapped a total of 21 European Turtle-doves and a Eurasian Collared-dove.

Griffon vultures poisoned in Israel

Two adult Griffon vultures were found dead from poisoning, which is especially sad during the nesting period. The vultures were tagged and were located after the inspectors recognized that they were not moving. The population is small and critically endangered, now only 190 Griffon vultures left in the wild in Israel. [\[original post\]](#)

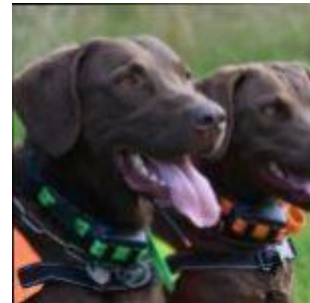


White-tailed Eagle shot dead in Ireland

The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) in Ireland has launched an investigation following the discovery of a White-tailed Eagle shot dead near Cranberry Lough in South Roscommon. The bird was part of the reintroduction programme and was released in 2022 with a satellite tag. Read more [here](#).

Poisoner arrested in the Czech Republic

The police caught a fifty-two-year-old man, who faces upto 6 years in prison for poisoning two White-tailed Eagles, two otters and other wildlife, with the banned poison: carbofuran. Since 2017, when CSO/BirdLife Czechia has installed its anti-poisoning dog unit in the frame of the LIFE PannonEagle project, the dog unit has documented and reported 160 cases to the police, of which over 500 animals became victims. Read more [here](#) (in Czech).





More IKB news

- On March 21st, a young Imperial Eagle was found dead near Mola (Bačka, Serbia). There are also dead hooded crows on site, so it is certain that it is poisoning. Police is investigating the matter. [\[original post\]](#)
- Burning down the rookery in Serbia: Someone burns and destroys Rook nests in patch of black locust tree near Banatski Dvor. Members of BPSSS/BirdLife Serbia have repeatedly reported these acts of vandalism to the Environmental Protection Inspectorate and the police. [\[original post in Serbian\]](#)
- Case discontinued against gamekeeper/illegal trapper in the UK [\[link\]](#)

Illegal Wildlife Trade news

Joint forces against organized bird poaching in Twente, the Netherlands

In March, a 'Blue Tile' was laid in front of the town hall in Tubbergen, as a symbol of the joint fight by police and game wardens against illegal trade in wild birds. The Tile is a recognition for the authorities' successful collaboration, dating back to November 2021, when they had arrested an illegal bird trapper operating mist nets in the outskirts of the municipality to catch wild and protected bird species such as goldfinches, siskins and bullfinches. During two searches, 96 live (decoy) birds, 100 meters of mist nets, 40,000 euros in cash and firearms were found. This investigation led to other environmental investigations, which led to new suspects and capture locations. [\[link\]](#)



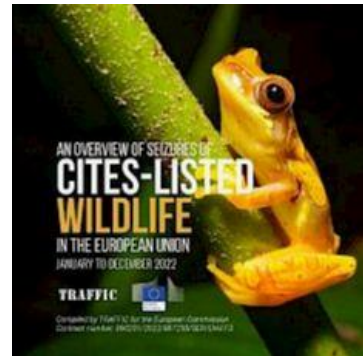


Ten organisations unite to combat illegal wildlife trafficking in global supply chains

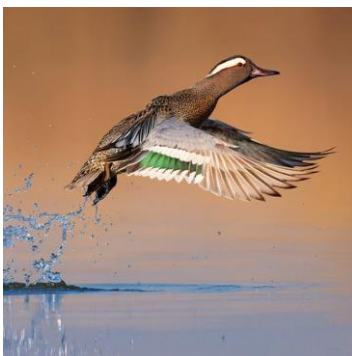
Recognising the severity of this issue, 10 organisations have joined forces to combat illegal wildlife trafficking through increasing awareness and vigilance across global supply chains. Combatting illegal wildlife trafficking is a shared responsibility that requires collaboration across international containerized supply chains. Read [more](#).

Overview of seizures of CITES-listed wildlife in the EU in 2022

A new TRAFFIC report analyses over 3,600 EU wildlife seizures in 2022 reported by users of the EU-TWIX enforcement platform. A growing concern is an increasing trend in exotic pet ownership. In 2022, the total seizure of 1,886 live animals were all assumed to be destined for the pet trade. Parrots, birds of prey, turtles and tortoises were among the species seized. Download the report [here](#).



Campaign & events

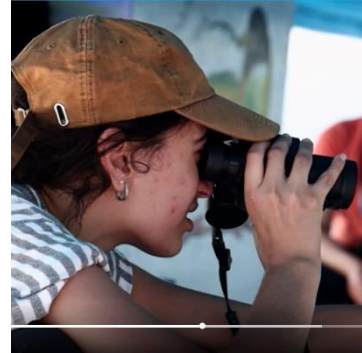


Let them fly in peace!

The Italian government is trying to restart spring hunting, facilitate more the use of live decoys, allow hunting 7 days a week, lengthen the hunting season beyond the current limits, etc. Much of it in blatant violation of EU law. Read the [article](#) and please sign the [petition](#) of Lipu / BirdLife Italy!

Protecting migratory birds with green tourism in Egypt

Countless migratory birds fall victim to hunters and trappers in Egypt each year. Nature Conservation Egypt (NCE), the local BirdLife partner organization is trying to protect birds and help hunters put their skills to better use by leading bird-watching vacations. Deutsche Welle published a video report about this alternative livelihood initiative on Lake Burullus. Watch it [here](#).

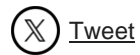


Regional Workshop in Amman Addresses Illegal Bird Trade & Take

A regional workshop tackling illegal bird trade and hunting in the Middle East was held on 25-26 April in Amman, spearheaded by BirdLife International partnership, in collaboration with the International Fund for Animal Welfare. The 2-day workshop addressed the multifaceted challenges posed by illegal bird trade and hunting in the region. Read more [here](#).



Please, help our new Wildlife Crime e-newsletter to reach its audience by sharing it with colleagues and stakeholders, who may be interested in this topic.



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This newsletter is a joint initiative of BirdLife International's African Eurasian flyway team: Stichting BirdLife Europe - BirdLife Middle East - BirdLife Africa. Stichting BirdLife Europe gratefully acknowledge financial support from the European Commission's LIFE programme through the NGO operational grant.

