



Wildlife Crime Newsletter

May-June, 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

End of bird trapping in France

In May, 2024, the Conseil d'Etat (France's highest administrative court) annulled the last remaining decrees permitting bird trapping methods. This decision eradicates all legal references to these archaic practices in French law, marking a significant victory for biodiversity. Specifically, the court revoked the October 4, 2022, decrees that allowed the capture of skylarks using nets and cages in certain regions. These methods were deemed non-compliant with the Birds Directive. This recent decision is a critical step in protecting the skylark, a species that has suffered a significant decline in population. Read more [here](#) (in French).



Austria ends Turtle-dove hunting

Following suit of Burgenland earlier announcement, this May Lower Austria and Vienna have also announced to end the hunting of the highly endangered European Turtle-dove. This decision aligns Austria with the recommendation of the European Commission for "zero take" until the full recovery of the population. Advocates continue arguing for a comprehensive federal law to end inconsistent regional hunting regulations and better protect migratory birds. Read more [here](#) (in German).

International policy updates

The next Joint Meeting of the CMS Intergovernmental Task Force on Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean ([MIKT](#)) and the Bern Convention Network of Special Focal Points on Eradication of Illegal Killing, Trapping and Trade in Wild Birds will take place on **8-10 October 2024, in Istanbul, Türkiye**. The meeting will be held back-to-back with the 8th Meeting of the Bern Convention Group of Experts on the conservation of birds, scheduled to take place on 11 October 2024 in Istanbul, Türkiye.

MIKT, together with the Montenegrin Ministry of Environment is organizing a regional workshop on how to develop, implement and monitor National Action Plans on illegal killing, taking and trade of migratory birds (IKB). The workshop will take place in person from **2 - 4 September 2024, in Podgorica, Montenegro**. The workshop is addressed to Balkan countries only, specifically to experts from the following countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia, and NGO experts.

Research & publications

PECBMS's contribution to the Turtle Dove protection

The breeding populations of European Turtle-dove show an overall decline, and the species was classified as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List. The main threats are illegal hunting and trapping, unsustainable hunting levels, habitat loss and intensive agriculture. Therefore, the European Commission induced an International single species action plan for Turtle Dove protection. The task of the Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme (PECBMS) within this plan is to impute Turtle Dove flyway-specific indices. The data is also used to create models predicting the population's future development under various conditions. Read [more](#).



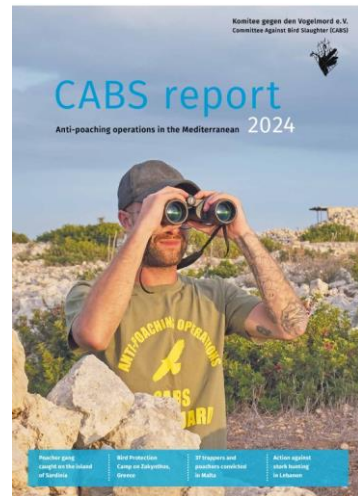
New paper on bird crime and governance of flyways

Dr. Teresa Lappe-Osthege and Prof. Rosaleen Duffy have [published](#) a paper titled "International Relations and the non-human: Exploring animal culture for global environmental governance" in the Review of International Studies. The paper combines political ecology and international relations to propose new approaches to global environmental governance. It draws on fieldwork in Italy and Cyprus, examining bird crime along migratory flyways. The authors argue that understanding avian cultures can enhance policy responses to wildlife crime and address scientific uncertainty in environmental governance. You can watch the video abstract [here](#) and read the article [here](#) (OpenAccess).

Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) - Spring Report 2024

In the first half of 2024, CABS carried out missions in eastern Spain, northern and southern Italy, Sardinia, Malta, the Greek island of Zakynthos, Cyprus and in Lebanon, with over 70 volunteers. As a result, the police have convicted 122 poachers and seized 249 traps, 153 nets, 19 hunting weapons, over 1200 rounds of ammunition and 53 decoys and rescued and released more than 400 live birds. Read the [CABS Spring Report](#).

The well-known animal welfare media company, the Dodo put together a short video highlighting CABS anti-poaching operations in Cyprus. The result shows rescuing and releasing migratory birds and other wildlife from the illegal traps and nets. Take a look [here](#).



More news



Expert opinion in the finch trapping case against Malta

The European Court of Justice has been advised that Malta's derogation scheme for capturing wild finches violates EU law. Advocate General Tamara Ćapeta concluded that Malta's Finches Project is flawed and does not justify the capture and disturbance of finches under the guise of research. Although her opinion is not binding, the court will make a final judgment. Trapping of birds in general is banned in the EU, but Malta claimed it was for scientific purposes just in order to continue this banned practice. Read more [here](#).

Spring Watch videos from Malta

The spring hunting season ran from 10 to 30 April in 2024 in Malta. BirdLife Malta organised its annual "Spring Watch Camp" to monitor the spring bird migration and any illegalities happening during the open hunting season. This [behind-the-scenes video](#) sums up the work carried out during the 2024 Spring Watch activities. [This other video](#) shows some of those 163 illegalities of this year's spring hunting season that were recorded by the volunteers of BirdLife Malta, exposing the failure of the derogation. From the point of view of a volunteer, you may watch [this](#) reportage by ARTE.



Spring poaching in the Ionian Islands

Spring poaching of migratory birds, including the endangered Turtle-dove, is rampant in several Ionian Islands such as Paxos, Antipaxos, and Zakynthos. Despite state promises to curb this illegal activity, local authorities and the Hellenic Ornithological Society (BirdLife partner in Greece) have received numerous complaints about continuous poaching. Activists and residents confirm the absence of patrols, and efforts to enforce Local Action Plans have been insufficient. The poaching targets thousands of migratory birds, severely impacting their populations. Read more [here](#) (in Greek).

Norwegian police uncover a big, illegal egg collection network

Norwegian police, coordinated by Økokrim (the Norwegian National Authority for Investigation and Prosecution of Economic and Environmental Crime), have uncovered what they believe to be a network of illegal egg collectors. A significant seizure included over 56,000 bird eggs. Many of the eggs are from critically endangered species. Sixteen people have been charged. The case, considered one of the most serious in Norway regarding egg collection, could lead to severe penalties. Read more [here](#) (in Norwegian).





Serial egg collector in Norfolk sentenced to suspended jail

Daniel Lingham, a 71-year-old repeat offender from Norfolk, has been given a suspended 12-week jail term for illegally amassing nearly 3,000 wild bird eggs, including endangered species. Caught on camera stealing nightjar eggs from a nature reserve, Lingham admitted to five offences and was also found with thousands more eggs at home. Despite previous prison sentences in 2005 and 2018, he continued his illegal activities. Alongside the suspended sentence, he must comply with a 12-month mental health treatment program and pay fines. Find out more [here](#).

Peregrine falcon families poisoned in Germany

Several peregrine falcon families killed in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. In May, 4 adult birds were found dead at two breeding sites. A young bird that was still alive was taken to a vet with symptoms of poisoning, where it also died shortly afterwards. In mid-April, a female peregrine falcon was found poisoned at another breeding site in Hagen. The banned insecticide carbofuran, was detected in all 6 falcons and in the remains of a racing pigeon found at the breeding site in Lünen. Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) are also offering a reward of 5000 euros for information leading to the identification of the perpetrators. Read more [here](#).



Several convictions for IKB in Belgium

Ten defendants (mostly between 70 and 80 years old) faced charges for illegal catching/killing of birds, as well as for illegal sale of birds, illegal possession of birds, violations of hunting legislation and illegal possession of weapons. The investigation, spurred by nature inspectors and anonymous tips, revealed illegal weapons, traps, large sums of cash, and thousands of dead birds such as starlings and finches. The East Flanders Court handed down sentences to 7 of them on the 28th of June. They

received suspended prison terms between three and six months and fines up to 8,000 euros. Read more [here](#) and [here](#) (in Dutch) or find the convictions [here](#).

Campaign & events



LIFE Nature Guardians among the winners of the Natura 2000 Award

During the EU Green Week, the prestigious European Natura 2000 Awards were presented, highlighting exceptional contributions to nature conservation across Europe. Among the celebrated [winners](#) was the [LIFE Nature Guardians](#) project, which clinched the [LIFE Citizens' Prize](#), a special award determined by public vote. The [LIFE Nature Guardians](#) initiative stands out for its dedicated efforts in combating environmental crime in Spain and Portugal. Congratulations to the project team.

International conference on wildlife crime in Cyprus

From May 22nd to May 24th, 2024, the international conference "Wildlife Crime: Achievements and Challenges" was organized in Cyprus for the first time by BirdLife Cyprus and the Vulture Conservation Foundation. It gathered over 70 participants from 12 countries from the Balkan and the Mediterranean regions. Participants represented various sectors including environmental organizations, law enforcement, Europol, the judiciary, and governmental departments. Read more [here](#).





Fighting wildlife crime in Sardinia

[LIFE Safe for Vultures](#) project organised an international conference and a workshop about wildlife crime joining forces with experts from all over Europe, including some of the project key partners. The events saw the participation of the project leader, the Department of Veterinary Medicine of the University of Sassari, and its main partners: Forestas Agency, the Forestry and Environmental Surveillance Corps, Experimental Zooprohylactic Institute of Sardinia, Junta de Andalucía, and Vulture Conservation Foundation (VCF). Read more [here](#).

Anti-Poisoning Seminar in Dadia, Greece

On May 16, 2024, a seminar on managing wildlife poisoning incidents was held in Dadia, organized by the Hellenic Ornithological Society and the Society for the Protection of Biodiversity of Thrace. Part of the [LIFE BalkanDetox](#) project and the "Alliance for Wildlife" initiative, it was attended by 42 employees from forestry services, the police, and hunting federations. The seminar included theoretical and practical training on investigating poisoning cases, collecting evidence, and legal procedures to prosecute offenders. Read more [here](#) (in Greek).



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