



## Wildlife Crime Newsletter

July-August, 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](mailto:wildlifecrime@birdlife.org).

Many thanks for the cover photo to: *Tibor Horváth*.

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Featured news

## Quail hunting season highlights illegal practices in the Balkans

Quail hunting season has started across the Balkans, where illegal methods like sound lures are frequently used to attract migrating quails. This practice poses a severe threat to the already dwindling quail population, with around 160,000 birds killed illegally each year only in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia. EuroNatur and its partner NGOs are advocating for stricter enforcement against these illegal methods. Read more [here](#).



## Signs of recovery for European Turtle-dove amid conservation efforts

The European Turtle-dove, long facing a significant decline, is showing encouraging [signs of recovery](#), particularly in its western flyway. Key conservation efforts, including the implementation of a zero-take hunting policy recommended by the European Commission, have led to the highest population size since 2011 along the western migratory route. Despite the encouraging signs, the population have not yet reached the necessary conditions for the lifting of the hunting ban. In [Portugal](#), the government announced maintaining the moratorium until the 2026-2027 hunting season. In [France](#), the suspension on hunting the Turtle-dove was renewed, but for one year only. The regions of Spain have also extended the moratorium for the next season.

Challenges remain in the central-eastern flyway, where enforcement of hunting restrictions has been inconsistent, resulting in continued population decline.

## International policy updates

CMS has announced the postponement of 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 IKB. The meeting was scheduled to take place in October 2024 in Istanbul, Türkiye, but due to procedural issues, it will be re-organized at a later date.

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 takes 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.

## More news

### Social media fuels mass killing of birds in Lebanon

In Lebanon, 2.6 million migratory birds are estimated to be illegally killed each year, often for social media likes. Despite laws banning hunting, enforcement is weak due to political and economic crises. Hunters, some using military-grade weapons, post videos of their kills on platforms like TikTok. Conservationists warn this trend is devastating bird populations. Read more [here](#).





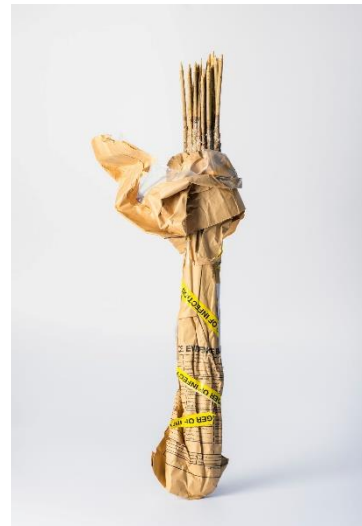
### **Czech hunter sentenced for poisoning birds of prey**

A 52-year-old hunter in the Czech Republic has been conditionally sentenced to two years, with a three-year probation, and fined 250,000 CZK (cc. 10,000 EUR) for poisoning wildlife near. The hunter used fish bait with the banned poison, carbofuran, resulting in the deaths of two White-tailed Eagles and 6 other animals. This marks the third conviction for wildlife poisoning in the country. [Original article](#) (in Czech).

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### **Fighting against the poaching mafia in Cyprus**

An article by National Audubon Society, our US partner, chronicles the fight against illegal bird trapping in Cyprus and the dedicated individuals risking even their physical integrity to end this inhumane practice. The article is accompanied by striking photos by [Silvio Rusmigo](#) that capture the efforts being made by Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) and BirdLife Cyprus as well as the authorities responsible to crack down on this crime against wildlife. Read the [full article](#) and make sure to watch also the 18-minute documentary video about the connected art project at the end of the article.





### **Anti-Poaching operation in Italy seizes hundreds of illegally captured birds**

Italian authorities, alongside Lipu and CABS volunteers, have conducted a large-scale anti-poaching operation targeting illegal bird trafficking across multiple regions. Over 760 live birds, including blackbirds and thrushes, were rescued, and 164 dead birds were found. The birds were being trafficked for use as live hunting decoys, often fitted with counterfeit rings. Authorities also seized €140,000 in cash and poaching equipment. Lipu, the BirdLife partner in Italy calls for stronger laws to end this illegal and cruel practice. Read the [original article](#) (in Italian).

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### **Customs confiscate 130 dead songbirds at Lake Constance Airport**

Customs confiscate 130 dead songbirds at Lake Constance Airport in southern Germany: Customs officials discovered and confiscated more than 130 frozen blackcaps, quails and more than 100kg of meat from a group of travellers returning from the Middle East at the end of June. Subsequent investigations revealed that the birds were illegally taken from the wild with nets or limesticks during migration. Experts from the [Committee Against Bird Slaughter \(CABS\)](#) assisted the authorities in categorising the find. One suspect from the tour group must now pay a hefty fine of 20,000€ for illegal import and possession of wild birds as well as veterinary offences.







### **Gozo Ministry to spend €1 million on further bird studies amid EU finch trapping ruling**

The Gozo Ministry is investing €1 million in wild bird migration studies as Malta awaits a final ruling from the European Court of Justice (ECJ) on its controversial finch trapping practices. The research aims to update Malta's reporting under the Birds Directive, with findings potentially used to support future trapping derogations. The ECJ's decision, expected in September, could end finch trapping, a practice Malta has defended under the guise of research, despite EU laws prohibiting it. Read more [here](#).

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### **Thousands of rare bird eggs seized in Australia after a European operation into the illegal trade**

Australian authorities have seized 3,404 rare bird eggs in Tasmania, valued at up to A\$500,000, as part of a broader investigation into the illegal bird trade. The eggs, likely from endangered species, were most likely directed toward Europe to be sold for collectors. The 62-year-old suspect is under investigation and could face severe penalties under Australian law for his involvement in illegal trade. Read [more](#).



**Campaigns & calls**



### Website launch of the wildLIFEcrime project

As a new, transnational EU LIFE project, wildLIFEcrime is actively committing to the protection of wild animals in Germany and Austria. In cooperation with 13 partners, they aim to achieve a lasting reduction in wildlife crime. Learn more about their mission on their website in [English](#) or in [German](#).

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### Join the Campaign Against Criminal Poisoning of European Wildlife

This autumn the [LIFE EUROKITE](#) project consortium is going to launch a new campaign to combat against the illegal poisoning of wildlife by raising awareness about it. If you would like to support the campaign and have videos, pictures, or stories to share, please contact [Slavka Urbanova](#).



**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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[wildlifecrime@birdlife.org](mailto:wildlifecrime@birdlife.org)

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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.

