



Wildlife Crime Newsletter

September-October, 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.

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

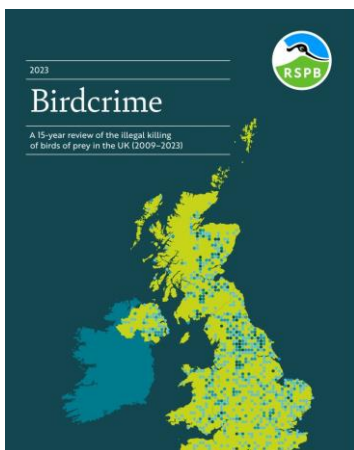
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Featured news

Urgent EU action is needed to stop illegal finch trapping in Malta

Despite that in September the [European Court of Justice's ruling](#) declared finch trapping in Malta illegal, the government has re-opened the trapping season again under the guise of “scientific research”. With nearly 3,000 trapping sites approved, (not counting the [illegal ones](#)) BirdLife Malta fears this season may surpass last year's estimated 51,400 finches kept in captivity. BirdLife Malta demands the Maltese government to respect EU law and urges the European Commission to suspend the finch trapping season immediately. Read [more](#).



RSPB's Birdcrime 2023 Report launched

The annual Birdcrime Report, which now reviews the past 15 years, reveals 1,344 birds of prey were illegally killed between 2009-2023, with crimes continuing to emerge. These criminal acts target threatened species including white-tailed eagles, hen harriers and red kites. The majority of incidents were associated with land managed for gamebird shooting. To read RSPB's latest Birdcrime Report [click here](#).

International policy updates

CMS MIKT, together with the Montenegrin Ministry of Environment organized a [regional workshop on how to develop, implement and monitor National Action Plans on illegal killing, taking and trade of migratory birds \(IKB\)](#) between 2-4 Sept., in Podgorica, Montenegro. The workshop was addressed to Balkan countries only, specifically to

representatives of the following countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia, and NGO experts.

The [Sessional Committee of the CMS Scientific Council](#) held its 7th meeting from 17 to 20 Sept. in Bonn, Germany. The CMS Scientific Council, working with the Secretariat has been asked to conduct a scientific review on illegal bird killing and trade across sub-Saharan Africa and Central Asia to guide priorities for addressing this issue, as well as to collaborate with other environmental bodies to contribute to a global report on the production and regulation of mist nets used for bird trapping, depending on resource availability.

Research & Publications

Global overview of wild bird trade

BirdLife scientists published the first-ever global review of the wild bird trade in a paper in *Conservation Biology*, showing that 45% of all bird species and 37% of globally threatened bird species are traded, including a high proportion of species among parrots, falcons, hawks, owls and hornbills. Read more [here](#).



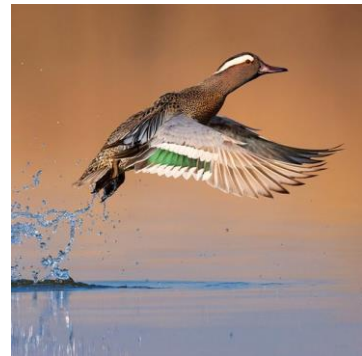
Decline of illegal trapping of ortolan buntings in south-west France

The illegal trapping of ortolan buntings in southwest France has been a longstanding issue, despite a ban since 1999. Between 2011 and 2018, teams from the Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) and Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux

(LPO) recorded 230 active trapping sites in the Landes region, using live decoy birds to attract ortolans into traps. These efforts led to the release of 408 decoy birds and the seizure of about 1,380 traps. Heightened enforcement and legal actions contributed to a significant decline in trapping over the eight-year study period, though a hidden level of ongoing trapping activity likely remains. Read the full paper [here](#) (in German).

New study reaffirms need to shorten hunting seasons in Italy

A study by Lipu (BirdLife in Italy) with the University of Milan, has strengthened the data behind Europe's "Key Concepts" for bird migration, confirming the timing outlined in the European Migration Atlas. Using millions of observations from the citizen science platform [Ornitho.it](#), the study identifies pre-breeding migration periods of 47 bird species, which should be fully protected under the EU Birds Directive. Key findings urge Italy to amend hunting calendars to ensure the protection of birds in pre-breeding migration. Read more [here](#) (in Italian).



More news



Authorizing bird trapping again in France under the pretext of experimentation

The Prefects of Landes and Pyrénées-Atlantiques have reauthorized the trapping of skylarks using pantes (nets) and matoles (cages) to "test selectivity". This decision disregards previous EU and French court rulings deeming these methods illegal due to their non-selective nature. Three decrees issued on October 15 permit the capture of up to 18,000 skylarks in these regions by November 20, 2024. LPO, the BirdLife partner in France appeals to halt the trapping. Read more [here](#) (in French).

Austria protects the European turtle-dove all year around

In a significant victory for conservation, Vienna has become the last federal state in Austria to grant year-round protection to the endangered European turtle dove. This decision comes after ongoing advocacy and press efforts of BirdLife Austria, particularly following a recent surge in awareness about the species' decline and EU-level recommendations for its recovery. The new ruling protects these birds from hunting throughout the year. See original post [here](#).





Spike in illegal bird trapping in Cyprus

The Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) reported a dramatic rise in illegal bird trapping in Cyprus this September, a critical migration period. CABS found 71 active trapping sites—a 90% increase from last year—and alerted authorities. This led to the conviction of 25 poachers and the seizure of 883 limesticks, 51 nets, and multiple illegal bird callers. A record-breaking 552 trapped birds, mostly blackcaps along with other protected species like owls and shrikes, were freed in joint operations with police and game wardens. Read [more](#).

Hunter banned for life for shooting protected eagle

In a recent case a 40-year old Maltese hunter was given a lifetime hunting ban and a €5,000 fine after pleading guilty to shooting a short-toed eagle in Malta. The poacher was identified and reported by BirdLife Malta, who's staff had captured the [incident](#). The court chose not to impose jail time, acknowledging his early guilty plea. Read more [here](#).





Big Brother contestant faces charges for keeping protected bird

A 37-year-old actor and TikTokker in Big Brother VIP, has been criminally charged by Shkodër police for keeping a common buzzard at home under bad conditions. The case was reported by the Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania (PPNEA), - the BirdLife member organization in Albania - leading to an investigation based on social media footage. The bird is now under the care of veterinary specialists. See the original article [here](#) (in Albanian).

Heavy fines imposed for illegal bee-eater hunting in Antalya

In Kaş, Antalya, two individuals were fined a total of 84,014 Turkish lira (cc. 2260 euros) for illegally hunting 45 European bee-eaters. Following a tip, local wildlife officers discovered the individuals in possession of the birds and an unlicensed hunting rifle, which was confiscated. Find the original article [here](#) (in Turkish).



Conviction for poisoning white-tailed eagle in France

A fish farmer and his employee in the Ardennes were sentenced for the intentional poisoning of a white-tailed eagle. The autopsy showed the eagle had ingested fish laced with the banned insecticide: carbofuran. The court issued suspended prison sentences of eight and four months for the fish farmer and his employee,

respectively, and fined their fish farming company €40,000, with €20,000 suspended. Additionally, the defendants must jointly pay over €32,000 in ecological damages and €5,000 to civil society groups. Read [more](#) (in French).

More news about illegal killing of birds in Southern Europe

Malta: Many protected species have been killed or injured as shown in this [video compilation](#) by BirdLife Malta. A highly protected [black stork](#) was also shot recently.

Spain: [Committee Against Bird Slaughter \(CABS\)](#) Bird protection camp in eastern Spain completed. In cooperation with SEPRONA, the results are: 9 poachers convicted. 13 nets, 32 bird traps, 7 electronic decoys and no less than 2000 limesticks were seized. Read more [here](#).

Italy: authorities from the Naples Carabinieri Forestali, in collaboration with Lipu (BirdLife in Italy), apprehended two individuals engaged in illegal hunting activities. They seized firearms, ammunition, and electronic bird calls, as well as a live and several dead song thrushes, issuing fines exceeding €700. Source [here](#) (in Italian)





Standard Operational Protocol for wildlife poisoning cases adopted in North Macedonia

In August 2024, the State Environmental Inspectorate in North Macedonia officially adopted the Standard Operational Protocol for handling wildlife poisoning cases. This protocol was developed as part of the [BalkanDetox LIFE](#) initiative and proposed during a meeting of the National Anti-Poisoning Working Group. Read more [here](#).

Campaigns & calls

Call for volunteers - Spring Watch 2025 in Malta

Recruitment call for volunteers to join next year's SpringWatch camp which will monitor illegalities during the spring hunting season. The dates will be from April 9th to 23rd. If you want to monitor the spring migration, the hunting season, and wildlife crime, send an email to Alice Tribe <alice.tribe@birdlifemalta.org>. Visit BirdLife Malta's website to read more on volunteer opportunities [here](#).



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

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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.

