



Wildlife Crime Newsletter

January-February 2025

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

Rampant quail poaching by foreign hunters in the Balkans

Illegal electronic lures used by visiting European hunters are driving quail populations toward collapse in the Balkans. Weak enforcement and corruption allow thousands of birds to be unlawfully killed each year. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).



Commission refers France to the Court of Justice over its failure to protect wild birds

The Commission [stated](#) that France still allows the use of horizontal and vertical nets to catch certain bird species of the Columbidae family in five southwestern departments, directly contravening the EU Birds Directive. After repeated warnings, the European Commission is referring the case to court, citing non-compliance with the Birds Directive's protection regulations. Read more [here](#) (in French)

EU warns Malta once more over illegal finch trapping

The European Commission has formally warned Malta for ignoring last year's EU court ruling that banned finch trapping under the Birds Directive. Despite the ruling, Malta introduced a near-identical derogation to keep the practice alive, risking further legal action and potential financial penalties. Read more [here](#).



Research & Publications



Study exposes widespread illegal bird hunting in Lebanon

A new study reveals that 94% of 212 bird species hunted in Lebanon are legally protected, highlighting a major conservation crisis. Researchers analyzed over 1,800 social media posts, identifying more than 29,000 shot birds, including eagles, storks, and pelicans, prompting calls for stronger enforcement. Read more [here](#) or access the article [here](#).

Raptor poisoning in Europe between 1996 and 2016

A study across 22 European countries documented nearly 4,500 poisoned raptors from 37 species between 1996 and 2016. Eurasian Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*; 46% of 4437 raptors), Griffon Vulture (*Gyps fulvus*; 12%), White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*; 9%), Red Kite (*Milvus milvus*; 7%), and Western Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*; 5%) were the most frequently poisoned. Despite bans, toxic pesticides like carbofuran remain a major threat, endangering already declining bird populations and disrupting ecosystems. Access the article [here](#).





Law enforcement failure leads to surge in bird trapping in Cyprus

BirdLife Cyprus' autumn 2024 trapping report reveals an increase in bird trapping within the Republic of Cyprus, highlighting the failure of the Cyprus Police Anti-Poaching Unit to tackle organized trapping groups. The latest survey estimates that 620,000 birds were trapped and killed within the survey area in autumn 2024 alone. Find more information [here](#).

International Policy Updates

Mediterranean and Europe

The Joint Meeting of the Bern Convention Network of Special Focal Points (SFPs) on Eradication of Illegal Killing, Trapping, and Trade in Wild Birds, and the CMS Intergovernmental Task Force on Illegal Killing, Taking and Trade of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean (MIKT) will take place from 13-15 May 2025 at the UN Campus in Bonn, Germany. The meeting will be held in a hybrid format. Click [here](#) for the webpage of the event.

South-West Asia

The [1st Meeting](#) of the South-West Asia Illegal Taking of Migratory Birds Intergovernmental Task Force will be held on 20-21 May 2025 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. It aims to bring together representatives of all range states (Bahrain, Iraq, Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen) and observers.

More news



Smuggled flamingos rescued in Tunisia

Tunisian border control intercepted a smuggling attempt involving 10 Greater Flamingos (*Phoenicopterus roseus*) crammed into crates with their wings and legs bound. The rescued birds were safely released back into the wild. Read more [here](#).

Another mass poisoning of birds of prey in Serbia

Four White-tailed Eagles, two Common Buzzards, and two jackals were found poisoned in Sremska Rača, Serbia. The raptors were likely poisoned after feeding on toxic bait set for jackals. In the past 20 years, over 120 White-tailed Eagles have been poisoned in Serbia, yet no one has been held accountable. Source [link](#) (in Serbian).



Eight Northern Bald Ibises poached in Italy on autumn migration

Eight of the reintroduced, endangered Northern Bald Ibises (*Geronticus eremita*) were poached in Italy during the 2024 migration. In one case, GPS tracking alerted conservationists immediately, leading to the swift identification and arrest of one of the hunters. Illegal hunting remains a major cause of ibis mortality in Italy. Read more [here](#).

Illegal hunting of skylarks in Cyprus

The Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) reported that its staff have observed several incidents of skylark hunting after the hunting season ended on Feb 10th. Two poachers were caught, as they had not only shot larks outside the hunting season, but had also lured the animals with a prohibited electronic decoy. One weapon and the device were confiscated. Find out [more](#).



Trump Jr shot protected shelduck in Italy

Donald Trump Jr is facing accusations of illegally shooting a protected Ruddy Shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*) while hunting in the Venice lagoon in Italy. A [video](#) from Field Ethos, an outdoor publication he co-founded, reportedly shows him pointing out the distinctive orange bird among his kills, acknowledging it as “rather uncommon” for the area. Read more [here](#) or [here](#).

Three Golden Eagles found poisoned in Greece

A tragic wildlife poisoning incident has occurred in northern Greece in January, where a family of three Golden Eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*)—two adults and their offspring—was found dead near the Komsatos River in Xanthi. A specialized team, including trained sniffer dogs, located the dead birds, likely victims of secondary poisoning after feeding on a poisoned mammal. Read more [here](#) (in Greek).





Some more raptor prosecution cases...

- Two dead birds of prey 'found in suspicious circumstances' in Gwent, UK. Police is investigating [[link](#)].
- A two-year-old female White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*), part of Ireland's reintroduction program, was shot dead near in Westmeath [[link](#)]
- Hen harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) has disappeared under suspicious circumstances in County Durham [[link](#)]

Mass poisoning event - caused by legally applied pesticide - calls for reform in Israel

A mass poisoning event in Israel resulted in the deaths of 1170 Black Kites (*Milvus migrans*), and a few other species (Greater Spotted Eagle, Hooded Crow). Authorities suspect a legal agricultural pesticides as the cause. The Ministry of Agriculture and the Israel Nature and Parks Authority (INPA) have launched an investigation, collecting environmental samples and conducting post-mortem analyses. Experts urge stricter pesticide regulations to prevent such disasters in the future. Read more [here](#).



Campaigns & calls



Ban Lead Now

Lead is toxic at every level. Yet, 44,000 tonnes are dumped into the EU's environment each year from hunting, shooting, & fishing - poisoning both people and nature. EU Commission is [proposing](#) a ban on lead ammunition and fishing weights. Sign BirdLife's petition to get rid of lead in Europe: <https://banleadnow.com/get-involved/>

First European Day against Criminal Poisoning of Wildlife

This [LIFE EUROKITE](#) project consortium has launched a new campaign to combat against the illegal poisoning of wildlife by raising awareness about it. Support for a “European Day Against Criminal Poisoning of Wildlife” on 1st March to engage the public and decision-makers. More information on the campaign can be found [here](#). Support the petition [here](#).



Beyond our flyway



What's killing the vultures?

In this BBC Documentary - "The Flight of the Vulture" conservationist Sacha Dench travels to visit three different vulture species, each with an extraordinary story of persecution and survival. Listen to the full episode [here](#).

Illegal trade threatening Goldfinches in Afghanistan

Authorities in Bamyan have rescued 30 Himalayan Goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis paropanisi*) from hunters and released them back into their natural habitat. Hunting these birds is strictly prohibited in Afghanistan due to their endangered status. Despite this, the illegal trade of goldfinches has been growing in the country. Read more [here](#).



Webinar on illegal use of mist nets in Asia

A recent webinar, hosted by Oriental Bird Club and BirdLife International Asia, addressed the deadly impact of illegal mist nets on millions of birds annually. Speakers from Thailand, Vietnam, and China discussed the threat to bird populations in the East Asian-Australasian flyway. More details [here](#).

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