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# Wildlife Crime Newsletter

November-December, 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](mailto:wildlifecrime@birdlife.org).

Cover photo by [Tibor Horváth](#).

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## Featured news

### EC launches new infringement against Malta over finch-trapping

The European Commission has opened a new infringement procedure against Malta for reintroducing finch trapping under the guise of scientific research, in breach of the EU Birds Directive. The Commission found that the 2025 derogation repeats practices already ruled illegal twice by the EU Court of Justice and fails to



[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[meet key stakeholders, including genuine scientific purpose, lack of alternatives, and effective enforcement. \[Read more\]\(#\)](#)[Translate ▼](#)

## Autumn 2025 marks breakthrough in Cyprus' fight against illegal bird trapping

Autumn 2025 saw a [significant turning point in Cyprus](#), with enforcement authorities carrying out one of the strongest crackdowns in recent years against organised illegal bird trapping, following sustained advocacy and evidence-sharing by BirdLife Cyprus, CABS and their partners. Targeted police operations in key hotspots led to multiple arrests, the dismantling of large-scale trapping operations, the release of hundreds of live birds, and fines totalling over €157,000.

## “Bad week for birds” in Slovakia

Environmental groups in Slovakia have warned of serious failures in nature protection after two cranes were shot dead at the Senné Fishponds in December. The Slovak Hunting Chamber (SPK) condemned the case. At the same time, SOS/BirdLife Slovakia is challenging logging in another protected bird area that may threaten one of the country's last breeding colonies of the black-crowned night heron. Read [more](#).



## International Policy Updates

Several important year-end meetings were held in December to advance coordinated action against the illegal taking and trade of migratory birds (ITB).

[24 Nov - 5 Dec](#), the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC) marked its 15th anniversary at CITES CoP20 in Samarkand, showcasing through dedicated side events how coordinated enforcement, data-driven approaches and wildlife forensics are strengthening countries' capacity to tackle wildlife crime, including illegal trade affecting migratory species.

[On 10 December](#), an online workshop brought together stakeholders from across South-West Asia to support implementation of the Action Plan to Eradicate the Illegal Taking of Migratory Birds in South-West Asia (2024–2032). The workshop builds on the establishment of the South-West Asia Illegal Taking of Migratory Birds Intergovernmental Task Force, a key regional mechanism addressing ITB in Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and

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country-specific National Action Plans aligned with international best practice.

[From 15–18 December](#), the 8th Meeting of the Sessional Committee of the CMS Scientific Council (ScC-SC8) took place in Bonn, Germany, providing further scientific and policy guidance to support CMS implementation, including efforts [to address illegal killing, taking and trade of migratory birds](#) across flyways.

## Research & publications

### Woodcock decline on Scottish island linked to shooting activity

The research, recently published in *Scottish Birds*, warns that the breeding population on Colonsay, Argyll, has declined to the point of extirpation. Accordingly, the paper concludes by calling for a review of the extent, scale and intensity of shooting of Eurasian Woodcock in Scotland. Read the full article [here](#).



Figure 1. Annual maximum and median registrations of Woodcock on breeding season surveys on Colonsay, Argyll, 2013–25. An earlier count on 14 June 2002 noted 26 registrations; there was no count in 2020.



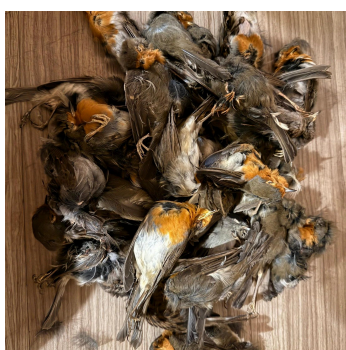
### New guidelines aid CSO - Law Enforcement cooperation on environmental crime

The [Nature Crime Alliance](#), with support from [United for Wildlife](#) and INTERPOL partners, has [published a new set of guidelines](#) to improve how civil society organisations share actionable information with law enforcement on environmental crime. Developed through extensive consultation, the guidelines address quality standards, verification, risk management and feedback, helping ensure that CSO intelligence effectively supports investigations and prosecutions. View the guidelines [here](#).

## More news

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On 30 October, a large-scale operation to combat the illegal trafficking of wild birds was carried out by the [Naples Provincial Police](#) after a lengthy investigation involving wiretaps, stakeouts and surveillance. The operation led to the arrest of seven people and the dismantling of an organisation dedicated to the capture and trade of wildlife, particularly goldfinches. Volunteer wardens from Lipu (BirdLife Partner in Italy) also took part in the bird identification activities. A total of 47 house searches were carried out and over 400 birds were seized, mainly goldfinches, but also chaffinches, greenfinches, serins and Italian sparrows.



[Operation "Pettiroso"](#) conducted by the Carabinieri Forestale with the active contribution of volunteers from CABS, LIPU, Legambiente, and WWF along the main migratory routes of the Lombardy-Veneto Prealps, resulted in 135 people being reported this year and the seizure of :

- 2,467 birds (both living and dead) belonging to huntable and protected species;
- 1,110 illegal hunting devices, such as traps, nets, and prohibited acoustic decoys;
- 135 firearms;
- 13,330 rounds of ammunition;
- 20 kits for counterfeit identification rings.

Among the positive developments was the dismantling of a network of "breeders" in Treviso who were capturing birds with nets and then attaching fake rings to their legs. The more than 1,500 illegally killed birds were destined for consumption or illicit trade in the restaurant industry.

["Operation Recall"](#), now in its tenth edition, was carried out between October and December of this year in various territorial areas of the province of Rome by the Carabinieri Forestale Group of Rome with the collaboration of the LIPU voluntary hunting guards.



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In addition, two reports were filed for the killing of protected species, two for tampering with live decoy rings, and one for illegal possession of a firearm . A total of 18 rifles and related ammunition, nine illegal decoys, one trapping net , and 30 larks used as live decoys were seized . Illegally killed fauna was also seized: 23 larks, 17 song thrushes, two pigeons, and five blackbirds.

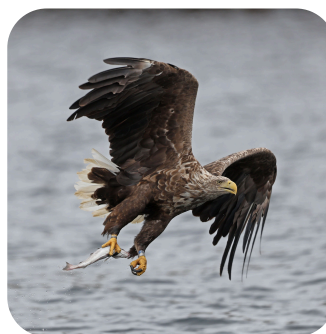


At the bird fair in Modena, northern Italy, a [CABS team](#) caught a Maltese poacher during an inspection in November. The man had exhibited numerous native bird species, including various songbirds and waders and even a hoopoe. During the inspection, it was discovered that four birds had been fitted with manipulated or false rings – a little stint, a black redstart, a bluethroat and a Sardinian warbler were seized by the police. Just a few days earlier, CABS experts had also found 39 songbirds with fake rings at a bird dealer in Palermo (Sicily) – 35 goldfinches and two each of siskins and greenfinches were confiscated.

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### White-tailed Eagles 'disappearing' in the UK

Police are investigating the disappearance of four White-tailed Eagles which had disappeared under suspicious circumstances- for two of them the satellite tags were found cut off. The RSPB (the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) has publicly offered a £10,000 reward for information leading to a conviction of anyone involved in the disappearance of these birds. Read more [here](#).



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### French minister pushes to defend bird trapping

Mathieu Lefevre, France's new minister for Ecological Transition, visited the Landes on 15 November to support the so-called "traditional" bird hunting methods, including mist-nets and glue sticks, despite EU regulations and court rulings prohibiting these practices. He plans to ask the French Council of State to seek a preliminary ruling from the European Court of Justice, challenging the interpretation of the Birds Directive that bans such non-selective trapping techniques. Read more [here](#) (in French).

### International mission supports vulture conservation in The Gambia

Following major wildlife poisoning incidents this summer, CMS Raptors MOU, the Vulture Conservation Foundation, and BirdLife International conducted a mission in The Gambia at the request of national authorities. The mission aimed to strengthen the capacity of local agencies and NGOs to respond to poisoning events and to discuss broader vulture conservation and monitoring priorities. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).



### Ransom for an Eagle?

A young Eastern Imperial Eagle, Feliks - hatched in Serbia last summer - was captured in Lebanon and sold to wildlife traffickers in Syria. His satellite transmitter was destroyed and its rings removed. BPSSS, the BirdLife partner organization in Serbia, contacted the smuggler, but refuses to pay a ransom and become part of this criminal network. Read the full post [here](#) (in Serbian).

## Events & campaigns

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lead is higher than ever level). Yet, 44,000 tonnes are dumped into the EU's environment each year from hunting, shooting, and fishing. BirdLife and its partners want a ban on lead ammunition and fishing weights in the EU. The [petition](#) will officially close at the end of January. Please, help us get to 50,000 signatures!



### Petition to "Stop Unregulated Hunting" in Italy

LIPU has launched the "No Caccia Selvaggia" petition, calling on citizens and institutions to oppose the revival and expansion of unregulated, indiscriminate hunting practices across Italy. The petition demands stricter regulation, greater enforcement, and safeguards to protect wildlife from illegal and destructive hunting. Sign the petition [here](#)!

### Campaign against criminal Poisoning of European Wildlife (CPEW)

The CPEW campaign calls on the European Parliament and EU institutions to turbo-charge efforts against illegal wildlife poisoning — the leading cause of red kite deaths and a hiddenthreat to many raptors. It demands a European-wide poison-incident database, recognition of a "European Day Against Criminal Poisoning of Wildlife" on March 1, and robust enforcement of the Rome Strategic Plan 2020-2030. With over 15,000 signatures so far, the campaign urges citizens to [sign the petition](#).



## Beyond our region



### Uncovering the live animal trade in Central Asia

In the first ever report looking into trade of live wild animals in Central Asia, TRAFFIC uncovered a large, illegal and apparently unfettered business of buying and selling endangered species. The team carried out 37 market surveys, both online and at physical markets across Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, between autumn 2024 and summer 2025, together with visits to

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## Tackling mist-netting: Lessons from China

Mist-nets are killing hundreds of thousands of migratory birds along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, with BirdLife research showing widespread and often indiscriminate use across Southeast Asia. China offers a promising example of progress through a multi-pronged approach combining strengthened law enforcement, community outreach, promotion of non-lethal deterrents, and restrictions on online mist-net sales. These measures demonstrate how prevention, education and regulation together can significantly reduce illegal bird killing and offer a model for other countries along migratory flyways. Read [more](#).

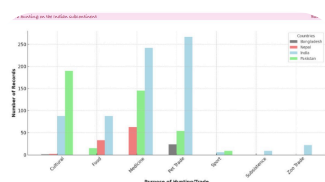


Figure 1. Comparison of bird use for different purposes across countries. The Chi-Squared test of independence revealed a highly significant difference amongst use categories.

## New study: Understanding the ethnozoological drivers and socioeconomic patterns of bird hunting in the Indian subcontinent

Bird hunting and trade pose major threats to avifauna in the Indian subcontinent. Bird poaching is driven primarily by demand from the pet trade, traditional medicine, and cultural beliefs. This study systematically reviewed literature on the socioeconomic and ethnozoological drivers of bird hunting, and trade across India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. You can freely access the article [on this page](#).

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