



Wildlife Crime Newsletter

March-April, 2026

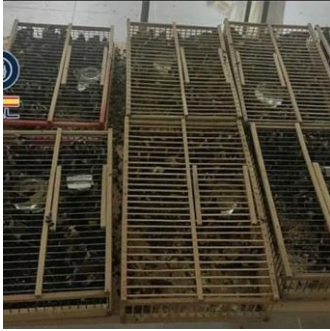
BirdLife's approximately bi-monthly newsletter: keeping you up-to-date with what's happening in the fight against the illegal killing of wild birds and other forms of bird persecutions in the African-Eurasian Flyway. Please, send us your feedback to wildlifecrime@birdlife.org.

Cover photo by *Tibor Horváth*.

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Featured news



400 Goldfinches seized in illegal trafficking attempt from Spain to France

Spanish police intercepted a vehicle in Orihuela carrying around 400 illegally captured European goldfinches, taken from Lorca and destined for sale in France. The birds were transported in extremely poor conditions, Two men were arrested. Read more [here](#) (in Spanish).

12 Cinereous Vultures poisoned in Dadia, Greece

A mass [poisoning incident](#) in Greece’s Dadia-Lefkimi-Soufli National Forest Park has poisoned a dozen Cinereous Vultures—around 10% of the region’s breeding population—alongside several other protected species. Occurring in March, during the breeding season, this devastating loss means a severe blow to the Balkans’ last remaining colony. NGOs [ask](#) the Greek authorities to consider this a priority case for investigation.



Widespread illegal hunting of Turtle-doves in Malta

Observations by BirdLife Malta reveal that around 72% of hunters during the first week of Malta’s spring season were [illegally targeting Turtle-dove](#) instead of permitted quail. [Evidence](#) points to systematic violations, including use of decoys, electronic callers, and coordinated shooting, with limited enforcement capacity enabling the activity to persist. The Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) has published about [similar observations](#) in the Times of Malta.

White Storks slaughtered in Lebanon during migration

Monitoring by the Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) in northern Lebanon recorded massive poaching incidents during the White Stork migration, including evidence of at least 24 killed birds and reports of an estimated mass shooting of over 300 individuals. Read more [here](#).



Largest illegal bird collection uncovered in Malta

Authorities in Malta have uncovered the largest known collection of taxidermized birds in the country, with a suspect facing charges including illegal trade and money laundering. The case involves protected species such as the European Turtle-dove and highlights links between wildlife crime and financial offences. Read more [here](#).

International Policy Updates

The Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) is the primary decision-making body for this international treaty, which meets every three years to set policies, budgets, and conservation priorities for migratory species. The **CMS COP15** was held in March 23–29, 2026, in Campo Grande, Brazil. Several new studies have been launched on IKB to inform the policy makers. Read our brief [here](#).

In 2026, the MIKT and Bern Convention countries will be requested again to submit the self-evaluation [Scoreboard](#) to assess progress against the [Rome](#)

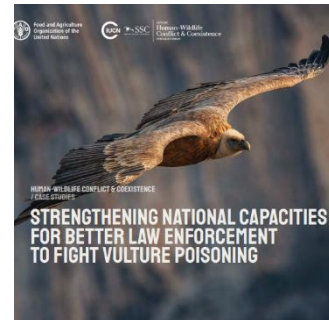
[Strategic Plan](#) objectives. This process is expected to be launched over the summer.

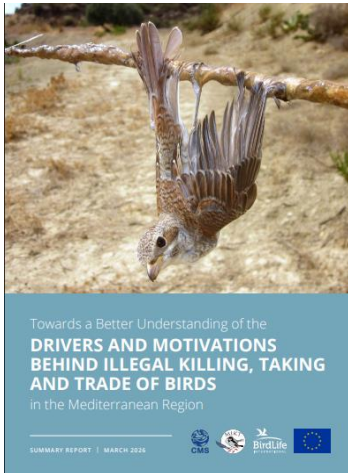
Currently an external consultant is carrying out the mid-term evaluation of the implementation of the Rome Strategic Plan, to be completed by the second half of 2026. This mid-term review is expected to help identify gaps, good practices and recommendations for the next implementation period.

Research & publications

New case study highlights ongoing poisoning crisis in the Balkans

A new case study on illegal poisoning was published by IUCN SSC Human-Wildlife Conflict & Coexistence Specialist Group in cooperation with FAO and the Vulture Conservation Foundation. This was developed in the framework of the BalkanDetox LIFE project, highlighting that illegal wildlife poisoning remains widespread across the Balkan Peninsula, posing a severe threat to vultures and other wildlife. Access [the study](#).





Drivers and motivations behind IKB in the Mediterranean

A new assessment commissioned by CMS and prepared by BirdLife international explores the social, cultural and economic drivers behind IKB across 18 Mediterranean countries. Using the COM-B behavioural framework, the study highlights that weak enforcement, social norms and persistent motivations continue to fuel IKB. Explore more [here](#).

Widespread impact of using nets for IKB

A new study by BirdLife International highlights the extensive use of nets for hunting and trapping birds across Asia and the Mediterranean, affecting at least 375 species, including many of conservation concern. Developed under the CMS framework, the report reveals major knowledge gaps and weak regulation, with netting practices posing a significant but underestimated threat to migratory birds. Read more [here](#).



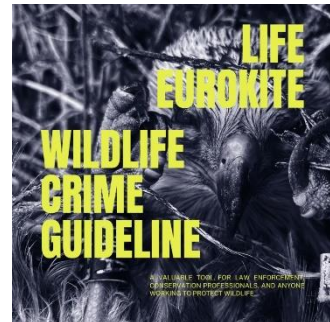


New review exposes scale of bird consumption threat across Africa-Eurasia

A new review commissioned by CMS reveals that overexploitation for food is a major driver of decline for migratory birds across the Africa-Eurasian region, with around 70% of CMS-listed species affected. The study highlights widespread illegal and unsustainable take, weak enforcement, and significant ecological consequences, including disrupted ecosystems and increased disease risks. Read the review [here](#).

New guidance for wildlife crime investigations

The LIFE EUROKITE project has released a new [guideline](#) to support authorities and police in tackling crimes affecting birds of prey. Combining key knowledge with practical investigation tools, it provides valuable guidance for law enforcement and conservation professionals working to combat wildlife crime. The Wildlife Crime Guideline is available in [English](#) and [German](#).



[More news](#)



Hundreds of goldfinches rescued in Italy

Volunteers from Lipu (BirdLife partner in Italy) supported police in Caserta during an operation that uncovered around 200 illegally held Goldfinches intended for sale in a private home. Read [more](#) (in Italian). In another case in Caserta, authorities uncovered less Goldfinches, but blinded with the cruel practice of needles for enhancing their [songs](#). Read [more](#) (in Italian).

In another instance in March, Lipu's volunteers in Caserta caught a poacher illegally hunting during a general hunting ban. Read more [here](#) (in Italian).

Protected songbirds trapped with anti-mice glue in Hungary

Authorities in Hungary uncovered the illegal capture and trade of 22 protected finches, which were being held for sale. The operation, led by the Hortobágy National Park Directorate, revealed the use of cruel trapping methods such as glue-coated sticks and live traps. Read more [here](#) (in Hungarian).





Court overturns illegal hunting derogations in Lombardy

The Regional Administrative Court in Milan has annulled exemptions allowing the hunting of Chaffinch and Starling in Lombardy, reaffirming that EU derogations cannot be misused without strict justification. The ruling followed legal action by conservation groups including WWF Italia and Lipu. Read more [here](#) (in Italian)

Scottish gamekeeper convicted for beating a Goshawk to death

Covert footage from the RSPB has contributed to the successful prosecution in a case in Scotland where a gamekeeper admitted killing a Goshawk. Read more about the case and the fine [here](#).





Hunting tourism-linked illegalities receive more attention in Egypt

Last year a 15-month investigation by Mongabay revealed widespread illegal bird hunting in Egypt, driven partly by European hunters exploiting weak enforcement and regulatory gaps. Following the findings, Egypt introduced hunting ban in two key regions: the New Valley and Lake Nasser, showing how investigative journalism can directly influence conservation policy. Read more [here](#).

Mass wildlife poisoning incident in Italian National Park

Authorities in Abruzzo, Lazio and Molise National Park are investigating a mass poisoning, likely caused by bait laced with toxic substances. The incident killed at least 21 wolfs, three foxes and a bird of prey. A criminal investigation is underway in one of Italy's most important protected areas, home to vulnerable species like the Marsican brown bear. Read more [here](#) (in Italian).



Beyond our region



Decade of data reveals scale of illegal wildlife trafficking in Vietnam

A [new study](#) published in the Journal for Nature Conservation analyses a decade of illegal wildlife trade in Vietnam, documenting over 900 cases involving 45 species, including mammals, reptiles, and birds. The findings reveal persistent trafficking networks, widespread use for food, traditional medicine, and trade. Despite numerous prosecutions, gaps in enforcement and legal frameworks continue to hinder efforts to combat wildlife crime.

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