



MEDIA RELEASE

BirdLife Partnership appeal to save the Sumava forest in Czech Republic

Brussels, April 18 – Today, 37 Directors of the BirdLife European and Central Asian Partnership signed an appeal to the Czech Prime Minister, Petr Nečas, to halt the imminent destruction of the Sumava, one of the last pristine forest areas left in Europe.

The Sumava forest has been affected by an outbreak of Bark Beetle, a periodic natural phenomenon, leading to mass tree die-out. Forestry authorities in the Czech Republic have seized this opportunity to try and push through commercial cutting of this strictly protected forest which has been until now under integral nature protection. Despite the area being protected as part of the EU-wide Natura 2000 network and being national park as well as Unesco World Heritage Site, it is now facing irreversible ecological damage which would be carried out without any nature impact assessment or concern for the many threatened species inhabiting the forest.

Angelo Caserta, Regional Director of BirdLife Europe commented : 'The logging operations would remove both deadwood which is crucial for the survival of species such as woodpeckers and wood borrowing insects and living trees, which would otherwise ensure the natural regeneration of the forest.' The logging would also cause disturbance to highly sensitive threatened species e.g. the Capercaillie for which Sumava provides the last refuge in the Czech Republic.

The wild Sumava forest, one of the natural treasures of Europe is part of a transboundary complex of protected areas stretching into Germany. It represents virtually the last significant expanse of high-quality forests left in Central Europe.

BirdLife's appeal is a last attempt to save a magnificent place and the host of endangered species from virtual annihilation. A case of environmental vandalism disguised as good forest management. The destruction of the Sumava forest would represent not only an attack on European common heritage but also a clear violation of EU legislation and of the international commitments signed by the Czech Republic.

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Notes for the editor

BirdLife Europe : BirdLife International is a global Partnership of conservation organisations that strives to conserve birds, their habitats and global biodiversity, working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources. The BirdLife Partnership operates in 116 countries and territories worldwide. BirdLife Europe supports the European and Central Asian Partnership for BirdLife International and is present in 45 countries and all EU Member States. <http://europe.birdlife.org>

Bark Beetle : The Bark Beetle is a natural part of forest biodiversity and the ecosystem. Outbreaks are events in which Bark Beetles proliferated damaging big numbers of trees. Healthy ecosystems have developed ways to respond to these sorts of outbreaks. In this way, they rejuvenate and become more resilient. The traditional forestry reponse which is clear-cutting the whole forest and replanting it lead to much bigger ecological damage and actually make the forest more vulnerable in the future.

International commitments of the Czech Republic : The Czech Republic is a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity and has recently signed up to the target of reversing biodiversity decline by 2020, both as part of the EU Biodiversity policy and and the CBD COP in Nagoya in 2010.

It is also signatory to the Unesco World Heritage Convention under which Sumava is classified and which obliges countries to ensure the conservation of such sites.

Natura 2000 is a unique ecological network of protected areas in the territory of the European Union. Natura 2000 sites are not fenced-off areas, but encourage sustainable and nature friendly land-use and business. They are established under the EU Birds and Habitats Directives, which are binding law for all EU Member States
For more information see <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature>

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