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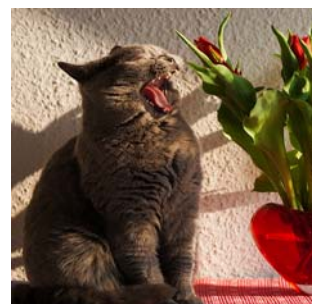
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Editorial: Welcome back Spring!

Dear Reader,

Finally, spring is here again, and for me it is always the nicest part of the year. Migrating birds are returning to Europe, birds are singing everywhere while preparing to give birth to the next generation, trees and flowers are painting the landscapes in beautiful colours. I am sure everybody enjoys spring every year. But would it be the same without singing birds and blossoming flowers? Sadly lots of evidence out there is showing that we are still losing biodiversity while the effects of climate change are more visible every day. As part of the International Year of Biodiversity, spring 2010 is somehow special for all the people who care for biodiversity and nature.

Therefore I am really glad that EU leaders are ahead of the world and, despite the missed 2010 target, were able to adopt a new biodiversity target for 2020. It represents a crucial milestone towards an ambitious global biodiversity target which is politically important for all who are trying to rescue our planet. However, in spite of the importance we attach to the need to preserve our nature, it seems that we all are more detached from it in relation to our ancestors. Why is this? Try to think about it the next time you will hear a nice bird song, enjoy a colourful spring flower or watch the endless flight of a bumblebee in your garden. Connect to nature and find out why it is so important for you to protect it.

In this issue of our newsletter you will learn more about BirdLife's contribution to the conservation of nature and I hope you'll get inspired and will join us in speaking up for our living planet. It really deserves it!

With best wishes,



Rastislav Rybanic
EU Nature Policy Officer
BirdLife International European Division

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The future of Biodiversity beyond 2010

On 15 March, as a reaction to the European Commission's Communication presenting 4 different options for an EU vision aiming to halt the loss of biodiversity beyond 2010, Environment Ministers adopted a new EU biodiversity headline target. In BirdLife International, we were hoping the Environment Ministers would be more ambitious than the Commission, making ecosystem restoration an overall obligation only limited by ecological conditions, and mentioning the already existing legal obligation to bring species and habitats to a favorable conservation status in the EU.

We were therefore pleased to see that the Environment Council voted for the strongest of the 4 options, which calls for "...halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restoring them in so far as feasible, while stepping up the EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss". Following the Environment Ministers' decision, on 26 March, European Heads of State and Government endorsed this target in their conclusions.

Now it is important for the EU to inspire other nations and negotiate a similar commitment at the global level to demonstrate leadership to the rest of the world, something it failed to do in Copenhagen.

For more information contact Rastislav Rybanic, EU Nature Policy Officer at Rastislav.Rybanic@birdlife.org

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Visions and Design: Securing a CAP for the future



On 9 March 2010, EEB, IFOAM, WWF, the European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism and BirdLife International presented their proposal for a new EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). After its first publication in December 2009, a consultation process was launched in order to engage other stakeholders in an open discussion about the future of the CAP. With five full endorsements and fourteen partial ones, the document has received a good response and the five NGOs are now looking forward to seeing their ideas being seriously taken into consideration by the European Commission, which is expected to be coming out later this year with its post 2013 CAP reform proposal.

The conference where the proposal was launched aimed at providing a platform for some of the most up-to-date thinking on the challenges facing agricultural policy in Europe. Among the speakers were Tamsin Cooper, Joint Head of Agriculture and Rural Development Programme at the IEEP. She stressed one of the results from the recently published study on the Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB), which estimates that the current loss to global welfare due to the the loss of biodiversity from terrestrial ecosystems, is 50 billion Euros (and will rise to 14 trillion by 2050). Dr. Corrado Pirzio-Biroli of the RISE Foundation made a forceful case for a CAP, rewarding farmers for the delivery of public goods such as clean water, as a pillar of Europe's response to the current global challenges.

The NGOs vision and consultation responses are available on <http://www.cap2020.ieep.eu/vision/>

The conference presentations and conclusions are available on <http://www.cap2020.ieep.eu/>

Listen to the interview of Ariel Brunner on the CAP reform at <http://capreform.eu/cap-reform-conversations-ariel-brunner-birdlife-international/>

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How sustainable are biofuels? – Environmental NGOs challenge the Commission to release all information to its citizens.

In early March, BirdLife International together with ClientEarth, Transport & Environment and the European Environmental Bureau filed a lawsuit at the European Union's General Court, asking the European Commission to stop withholding key studies pointing at the unsustainability of biofuels. The four NGOs undertook this action after being denied access to the documents, in violation of the EU legislation on the freedom of information. Shedding light on the impacts of biofuels is crucial and urgent.

In December 2008, European leaders agreed on a Renewable Energy Directive which asks Member States to comply with the target stating that by 2020 10% of transport fuels should come from renewable sources, mostly biofuels. However, many scientists and environmental NGOs have been very concerned about the sustainability of biofuels. Evidence is gathering that biofuel production results in massive deforestation and increased use of sensitive wetlands, and has impacts on food security through the replacement of food crops by energy crops. Another alarming problem is the uncertainty whether biofuels is helping to reduce carbon, or is actually increasing emissions.

At the heart of such concerns lays the issue of indirect land use change (ILUC), caused when agricultural land is diverted to biofuels production and food production is displaced into new areas. The European Commission is under legal obligation to address this problem and carried out several studies to assess it. The NGOs action was triggered by the fact that results showing high risk of biofuels leading to increase emissions are being kept out of the public domain. Following the legal action, the Commission started to release some of the studies, which indeed confirm the likelihood of perverse outcomes of the current policy.

The hope is that all relevant documents will be released and that the Commission will find the courage to revise its policies on the basis of evidence rather than keep trying to look for evidence that could justify its misguided past choices.

For more information contact Trees Robijns, EU Agriculture Policy Officer at Trees.Robijns@birdlife.org

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Slow Spring 2010 - Nature and photography event in Italy



From 1 April to 30 May 2010, DELTA 2000, a local Italian environmental organisation, with the support of LIPU (BirdLife in Italy), will organise 'Slow Spring 2010', an initiative which aims to promote the Po Delta region and its nature. It will include several events such as photo exhibitions, sport and ecotourism activities. The 5th International Po Delta Birdwatching and Nature Tourism Fair will play a central role in Slow Spring 2010 and will open its doors on 30 April 2010.

The event reinforces its position as one of the main ecotourism events in Italy. It will host leading companies from the optics and photography sectors, as well as manufacturers of clothes and specific tools for environmental education.

Furthermore, several wine, food and sport initiatives will 'invade' Cervia's old town centre and the Channel Port, with exhibitions and sales of organic products, plants and gardening tools in the 'Organic-market'. Numerous walks, biking and boat trips will allow people to discover the region and its great biodiversity.

"Slow Spring is a great initiative which helps people get closer to nature and learn more about how to respect and protect biodiversity", commented the Director, Angela Nazzaruolo.

Visitors will be able to choose among the various activities organised, such as seminars and talks, photographic workshops and educational workshops. LIPU will take part in the organisation of several activities, such as delivering birdwatching lessons and education activities for children and teenagers.

This event is completely in line with the aim of the International Po Delta Birdwatching and Nature Tourism Fair, supported by LIPU and BirdLife International since 2004. The initiatives intend to promote the Po Delta region through activities and field trips. Due to the collaboration with LIPU, Delta 2000 decided to support the BirdLife Preventing Extinctions Programme, which focuses on threatened species and supports the work on the ground needed to save them.

The Po Delta is one of the most important European wetlands and classified as Important Bird Area (IBA), as it is a key site for wintering waterbirds and for colony-breeding waterbirds.

More information about the fair can be viewed at http://www.podeltabirdfair.it/2010/index_en.htm

More on the BirdLife Preventing Extinctions Programme at <http://www.birdlife.org/extinction/>

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FAME for Atlantic Seabirds



On 22 February, the INTERREG Project "Future of the Atlantic Marine Environment, FAME" was launched in Lisbon on a public event hosted by SPEA (BirdLife in Portugal). The project is the result of joint work by 5 BirdLife Partners in Ireland, United Kingdom, France, Spain and Portugal, and will run over the next 3 years.

This project, coordinated by the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK), will study the breeding ecology and migration movements of some of the most important seabird species that occur in the European Atlantic seas. The data obtained will later be used for the definition of Marine IBAs, the drafting of Management Plans for existing ones, recommendations for fisheries management and especially for guidelines for the implementation of renewable marine sources, such as offshore wind farms and wave energy

plants.

Iván Ramírez, European Marine Coordinator of the BirdLife European Division, believes that this project represents "a very good example of what the Birdlife Partnership can achieve when working together towards a common goal in marine research; I believe FAME partners will soon set the standards for further seabird and marine-funded projects under the INTERREG scheme".

For more details please contact Iván Ramírez, European Marine Coordinator at ivan.ramirez@birdlife.org

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How are Spanish birds doing?



One of the highlights of the EBCC Conference in Cáceres, Spain, in late March, was the launch of an impressive new publication by SEO/BirdLife (BirdLife in Spain) on "The Conservation Status of Birds in Spain in 2010". This detailed and beautifully illustrated report summarises the status and trends of groups of species associated with Spain's major habitats, drawing heavily on the results of monitoring by SEO/BirdLife and its collaborators over the last decade. The report was launched by Dr. Eduardo de Juana, the President of SEO/BirdLife and Elena Espinosa, the Spanish Minister of the Environment, who support the publication.

The report's headline message was that Spain, like all other European Union countries, has failed to meet the target of halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010. This reflects a lack of will to properly enforce the existing legislation, and considerable delays in developing and implementing the main conservation strategies and plans for protected areas. The report shows that 23% of Spain's bird species are at risk of extinction, and

that 74% of the Important Bird Areas (IBAs) are in an unfavourable conservation status.

Worryingly, data collected over the past decade show that 20% of Spain's common birds are in decline, indicating that some important habitats have been altered dramatically and that urgent action is needed to restore them. Among the most threatened groups, SEO/BirdLife identified waterbirds, steppe birds, seabirds and farmland birds. On the positive side, some common forest birds have increased since the 1990s, and some rare raptors like the Spanish Imperial Eagle *Aquila adalberti* have responded to ongoing conservation efforts.

Download the publication at http://www.seo.org/media/docs/aves_2010_english1.pdf

For more information, contact Carmen Fernandez, Communication Officer at SEO/BirdLife: prensa@seo.org

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BirdLife Partners call to save the Wadden Sea



The Wadden Sea is one of the last remaining true wilderness areas in Northwest Europe. Characterised by vast mudflats, it stretches over three countries: Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands and is a complex of Important Bird Areas (IBAs) which are threatened by human activities. In response, three BirdLife Partners - DOF, NABU and Vogelbescherming Nederland (BirdLife Partners in Denmark, Germany and The Netherlands respectively) - have joined forces to fight for the conservation of this area and have published an ambitious report entitled the: 'Wadden Sea Vision - A vision for the conservation of a Natural Heritage'.

The Wadden Sea is important for millions of birds. Species such as Red Knot *Calidris canutus* and Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* stop in the Wadden Sea area to rest and refuel on their migrations between the Arctic and West Africa. The site is also important for species like Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*, Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* and Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avoetia* which breed on the salt marshes, beaches and islands found around the Wadden Sea.

Unfortunately, the Wadden Sea is threatened by human activity. Industrial developments, large scale fisheries, growing mass tourism, military activities, intensive farming, and the effects of climate change are damaging this dynamic ecosystem. The numbers of some bird species for which the Wadden Sea is of international importance have dropped significantly since 1987. Regular monitoring shows that Common Eider *Somateria mollissima*, Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* and Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* have declined significantly. These birds are highly specialised species which depend on the healthy functioning of the Wadden Sea's uniquely varied ecosystem of intertidal mudflats, salt marshes and sand banks. Their plight is a reliable indicator of the declining condition of the Wadden Sea.

DOF, NABU and Vogelbescherming Nederland have now joined forces to fight for the conservation of this area and have presented a new Wadden Sea vision at the 11th trilateral Wadden Sea conference in Germany, presenting their aspirations and ambitious conservation goals.

The BirdLife Wadden Sea vision calls for the implementation of seven conservation measures, to ensure a biologically rich Wadden Sea, where birds and people can prosper together. These measures also include protecting biodiversity by restoring a strong food web based on healthy biogenic structures like shellfish banks and grass fields, restoring the unique natural landscape along the coast, letting natural processes have free reign again and guaranteeing undisturbed breeding places and high tide refuges for birds.

"Because of its strategic location on such a busy crossroad for migratory birds, focused conservation work by the three countries has a truly global impact for conservation", said Boris Barov – BirdLife's European Conservation Manager.

"With 2010 being the International Year of Biodiversity, it makes even more sense to emphasise again how crucial the Wadden Sea is in saving countless species, including migratory birds" said Fred Wouters - Director of Vogelbescherming Nederland. "Furthermore, some of these measures would allow the area to adapt to sea level rise and other threats posed by climate change"

"We are alarmed by the threats the Wadden Sea is facing", said Leif Miller - Executive Director of NABU. "We recently decided to reinforce our long-term activities for the protection of the Wadden Sea". NABU started applied research on threatened wader species in the Wadden Sea in order to develop adequate management measures.

"Over recent years DOF has strongly lobbied the European Commission and its national Government to increase the protection of the Wadden Sea and its species in accordance with the EU Birds Directive", said Christain Hjorth - Chairman of DOF. "Both local and national groups are mobilising the press to raise awareness for this crucial area".

During the last 15 years, Vogelbescherming Nederland has successfully managed to minimise the damaging effects of shellfish fisheries and a new agreement with the Dutch Government, nature organisations and the mussels sector is now in place, which includes a management plan to restore the Wadden Sea ecosystem.

Download The Wadden Sea - A vision for the conservation of a Natural Heritage at <http://www.birdlife.org/eu/pdfs/Waddenvision.pdf>

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Dr Archibald's Crane in Armenia



Traditionally, taxonomists recognized only two subspecies of the Common Crane *Grus grus* which differ from each other in their plumage colouration and body size. Nonetheless, after some detailed research and studies by the Russian scientist V. Ilyashenko and ASPB (BirdLife in Armenia), scientists discovered that Armenian cranes are morphologically different from the subspecies of the Common Crane which had been described and documented to occur and breed in Armenia.

The new subspecies clearly lacks a red patch on the back of the head, has black skin papillae that stretch from the base of the bill to the top of the head and has a different eye colour. Clear distinctions are also evident in the eggshell patterns, plumage coloration and body size of newly hatched chicks as well as a number of other traits.

At present, this recently discovered subspecies of the Common Crane *Grus grus archibaldi* is known to breed only in the northern regions of Armenia occurring in waterlogged meadows and wetlands adjacent to Lake Arpi, in the Javakheti region in Georgia and in the Kars district in Turkey. It was given its scientific name, *Grus grus archibaldi*, in honour of the world renowned biologist and distinguished conservationist Dr. George W. Archibald, who has dedicated his life to the research and conservation of cranes.

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Monitoring, indicators and targets: the 2010 EBCC Conference in Spain



From 22 to 26 March 2010, more than 250 ornithologists from 40 countries came together in the historic city of Cáceres in Extremadura, Spain, for the 18th Conference of the European Bird Census Council (EBCC). As befitted a conference held in the International Year of Biodiversity in the country holding the rotating EU Presidency, the theme of the conference was monitoring, indicators and targets. Expertly organised by SEO/BirdLife (BirdLife in Spain), participants included staff from many other European Partners, as well as Greg Butcher from National Audubon (BirdLife in the USA), who gave a plenary on birds as indicators of environmental health in the USA.

Other plenary speakers included Micheal O'Briain from the European Commission, who described the contribution of biodiversity monitoring to conservation, and Ian Newton, who outlined the challenges facing migrants and the factors affecting them. Christiaan Both demonstrated the impacts of climate change on the phenology and population trends of birds, using the example of Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*, while Richard Gregory (RSPB, BirdLife in the UK) explained how data from the EBCC/BirdLife Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme (PECBMS) have contributed to the development of a novel climate change impact indicator.

Amongst dozens of fascinating talks and posters, several workshops were held to discuss particularly topical issues. These included plans for a new European Breeding Bird Atlas (to update the first EBCC Atlas, published in 1997), and the EBCC's involvement in a newly-funded EU funded research project (SCALES), which will model bird distributions spatially, using monitoring data. One session considered how to make the most of the information gathered by the increasing number of web-based data collection systems (e.g. www.worldbirds.org), while another discussed how partnerships between countries can improve bird monitoring schemes in Europe.

All in all, it was an inspiring week in a great location. Extremadura has more Special Protection Areas (Natura 2000 sites for birds) than almost anywhere else in Europe, and the city of Cáceres holds an important colony of Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*. The conference venue itself hosted several breeding pairs of White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*, whose nest-building activities were particularly entertaining.

For more information about the conference and the EBCC, see www.ebcc.info or contact Ian Burfield, European Science and Data Manager at ian.burfield@birdlife.org

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Storks on the road!

You can now follow the adventures of Stork Hobor while he is migrating from Africa to Europe. Read his travel diary at <http://www.nabu.de/aktionenundprojekte/weissstorchbesenderung/10876.html> And follow him on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/storchenreise>

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New staff in the BirdLife Partnership

Trees Robijns has joined the BirdLife European Division in Brussels as the new EU Policy Agriculture Officer, while Borut Rubinic is our new Partner Development Officer, based in Ljubljana.

You can contact them at:

Trees.Robijns@birdlife.org

Borut.Rubinic@birdlife.org

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Meet the BirdLife European Partnership

In every issue you have the chance to meet a staff member from the BirdLife European Partnership and learn more about their key priorities and favourite projects

For this issue, we've teamed up with Claus Mayr, Director of European Affairs at NABU (BirdLife in Germany)



My name is Claus Mayr, and since 1992 I am working for NABU (BirdLife in Germany). I started my work in NABU as IBA officer, but already with a broader focus on European and international biodiversity policies and Conventions, namely the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), also known as the "Bonn Convention".

Since 2007 I am working as NABU's Director of European Affairs, based at the BirdLife European Division in Brussels. My main responsibilities are networking between NABU, the Division and other European BirdLife Partners, keeping my colleagues in Germany informed of what happens on the Brussels scene and improving NABU's relations with the European Commission, German MEP's,

and with the permanent representations of the Federal German Government and the representations of the sixteen German Federal States in Brussels.

Having grown up in the "three countries triangle" on the border between Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands, I have been fascinated by migratory birds and interested in their protection since the very beginning, when as a schoolboy I became member of the German Society for Bird Conservation (DBV, the predecessor of NABU). So I followed the implementation of the EU Birds Directive from the start, when I was confronted with the capture of songbirds in the Belgian Ardenne mountains. Consequently, I studied biology and ecology at the Aachen University and engaged voluntarily in the work of DBV/NABU both at the local and regional level.

In 1992, only a few weeks after having started my professional career at NABU Headquarters, I had the opportunity to co-organise the conference which paved the way to the creation of BirdLife International, which was born in 1994.

Looking back at these many years spent conserving nature and biodiversity and at the many events which marked them, I feel proud and a little bit sad at the same time. With the implementation of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives and the Natura 2000-network, today covering more than 26.000 sites and 17 percent of the land

surface of the EU, we have surely achieved a lot. On the other hand though, up to 80 percent of the habitats and species are still not in a favourable conservation status, we are missing adequate management plans and financing for the network, and failing the 2010-target clearly shows that we are still far away from the integration of biodiversity conservation in other policies, namely the European agricultural and fisheries policies. Therefore in the coming years I will focus on achieving the new, ambitious 2020-target, working together with all of you engaged colleagues in this fascinating network of BirdLife!

Contact Claus at Claus.Mayr@NABU.de

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Events

International events

- January-June 2010: Spanish Presidency of the European Union

- July-December 2010: Belgian Presidency of the European Union

- 7-11 September 2010, Victoria, Canada: 1st World Seabird Conference - Seabirds: Linking the Global Oceans
www.WorldSeabirdConference.com

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