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Editorial: Reducing CO2 Emissions and protecting biodiversity are not incompatible

News from the EU



- [Stunning Albatross exhibition increases MEP awareness on bycatch issue](#)
- [Green NGOs and GRID operators sign a joint declaration on nature conservation](#)
- [Environmental Focus Areas is not set aside](#)

News from the BirdLife Partnership



- [Western Balkan NGOs are successfully closing activities under EC Wings Across the Balkans project](#)
- [Local Groups deliver successful conservation of Italian IBAs](#)
- [SEO/BirdLife in Spain denounces the killing of over 4 million birds a year in Spain by illegal hunting methods](#)

From the Conservation point of view



- [Nature restoration of the Western Scheldt estuary still going nowhere](#)
- [Natural habitats of the Lake Sevan restored after 50 years](#)
- [BirdLife Europe looks to improve the Yelkouan and Cory's Shearwater situation](#)

25/11/2011

BirdLife on the move



- [Music and Migration II: a musical appeal to stop illegal bird killings in Malta](#)

What's more



- [A new dawn for reporting under the Birds Directive](#)

Events



- [International Events](#)

Editorial: Reducing CO2 emissions and protecting biodiversity are not incompatible

Renewable energy production needs to be urgently and hugely ramped up if we are to curb the greenhouse gas emissions that are driving rapid and dangerous climate change. That is a fact.

It is also a fact that large scale energy infrastructures, including windfarms and the new grid expansion needed to serve them can produce negative impacts on birds and other biodiversity, through direct collision mortality or habitat destruction.

It has become something of a fashion among the enemies of biodiversity conservation, usually motivated by the interests of much dirtier sectors, to present nature conservation as an obstacle on the way to a low carbon economy.

At BirdLife Europe we are deeply convinced that there is no fundamental need to choose between tackling climate change and saving biodiversity. Doing both is both an imperative and a feasible option.

BirdLife Europe has been working for many years on solving the problem of truly sustainable renewable energy development. We now have a huge body of science and technical expertise showing how this can be done.

If biodiversity concerns are taken into consideration seriously, and at the right geographical scale, most problems can be solved. Often the simple choice of location can reduce impacts by over 90%. On the other hand, ill-conceived development risk doing real harm, and tarnish the image of a green industry that will need all the public support it can get if it is to overcome the entrenched interests of the powerful "fossil industry".

This month BirdLife Europe has launched the report "[Meeting Europe's Renewable Energy Targets in Harmony with Nature](#)", charting the way for the development of an energy sector that is low on carbon but high on environmental quality. (See event section)

We also signed, with other NGOs and some of Europe's main electricity operators, a [common declaration on Electricity Network Development and Nature Conservation in Europe](#). (See event section)

These initiatives show that if all stakeholders engage pragmatically and positively on a science based cooperation, needless conflicts can be avoided and objectives can be achieved.

Ariel Brunner,
Head of EU Policy in BirdLife Europe

[-> Top](#)

Stunning albatross exhibition increases MEP awareness on bycatch issue



In the week of 18th October, BirdLife Europe and LPO/BirdLife in France, with the support of various organisations amongst which VBN/BirdLife in the Netherlands, organised a remarkable photo exhibition "Albatrosses, legendary birds" in the European Parliament. The sixteen giant photos demonstrated the spectacular beauty of those majestic birds and their needless deaths through bycatch in the course of longline fishing operations.

Jacques Perrin, French actor, filmmaker and the producer of beautiful wildlife documentaries, including the famous "Microcosmos", "Winged Migration" and "Ocean" supported the BirdLife Europe call on decision makers for an urgent and ambitious action to save seabirds, and opened the reception by an inspired speech. According to him, "Albatrosses are an ideal indicator of the health of our oceans, and we know they are being destroyed by short term fishing policies and exploitation practices by our nations."

The consequences of seabird bycatch are dire. About 100.000 albatrosses are killed every year around the world, and as a result, 17 out of the 22 albatross species are in danger of extinction. Moreover not only albatrosses are suffering from this practice, but also hundred of thousands of birds in the European seas.

At the launch reception the European Commission confirmed their intention to adopt the EU Seabird Action Plan – the EU blueprint for tackling seabird bycatch- by the end of the year. According to Lowri Evans, Director General of DG Mare, the text will contain monitoring and mitigation measures that will reduce seabird bycatch in both European and international waters.

BirdLife Europe is encouraged by this positive news, but wants to highlight that this is just a first step in our efforts to improve the European Fisheries and put in practice technical solutions which proved to work in several parts of the world. To be effective, the Action plan will need to be translated into the ongoing CFP reform and be accompanied by research, development of technical mitigation solutions, awareness rising within the fisheries sector and collaboration with fishermen for the development and the implementation of sustainable fisheries behaviours.

For more information, please contact [Tatiana Nemcova](#), Senior EU Advocacy Officer at BirdLife Europe

[-> Top](#)

Green NGOs and GRID operators sign a joint declaration on nature conservation



On 10 November ten green NGOs, including BirdLife Europe, and nine national electricity grid operators signed the 'European Grid Declaration on Electricity Network Development and Nature Conservation in Europe'. The declaration aims to ensure Europe develops the power networks it needs for renewable energy expansion while avoiding impacts on biodiversity.

The declaration was signed at a well-attended event at the European Parliament, and was handed to DG Energy Commissioner Oettinger.

The European Commission estimates that 140 bn Euros of investment in electricity networks will be required in Europe over the next 10 years. In his keynote speech the Commissioner explained the need to secure this investment and also to "keep the high standards for the preservation of biodiversity and the environment, of which Europe can be proud."

The signing NGOs are BirdLife Europe, Deutsche Umwelthilfe, Friends of the Earth Europe, Friends of the Earth Scotland, Germanwatch, Global Nature Fund, Greenpeace Europe, Natuur en Milieu, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), WWF. The grid operators are Elia (Belgium), National Grid (UK), REE (Spain), RTE (France), Statnett (Norway), Swissgrid (Switzerland), TenneT (Netherlands), Terna (Italy), 50Hertz (Germany).

The declaration can be downloaded at www.renewables-grid.eu.

For more information please contact [Ivan Scrase](#), Senior Climate Change Policy Officer/ report lead editor at the RSPB / BirdLife in the UK

[-> Top](#)

Environmental Focus Areas is not set aside



One of the key aspects in the Commission's 'greening proposal' for the CAP is the introduction of Environmental Focus Area (EFA). Many label this instrument as a 'new set aside' which is absolutely wrong and confusing.

While set aside was put in place as a measure to reduce production by taking land out of production, the new EFA is set up to ensure the sustainability of farming, and hence Europe's long term production capacity.

EFA requires a minimum of 7% of green infrastructure on the farm. As proposed in the Direct Payment Regulation, these areas include: land left fallow, terraces, landscape features, buffer strips and afforested areas.

Researchers from the Institute of Agroecology and Biodiversity estimate that, in Germany, farmers already have between 2 and 6% of landscape elements.

This would lower the extra land requirement to between 5 and 1% in Germany.

As landscape elements are already protected under the current rules, but not all countries have registered these landscape elements, this percentage could be even lower.

The debate should now move into a more honest direction. EFAs are not put in place to reduce agricultural production in Europe, rather to ensure the health of our productive landscapes so that our farming can become less vulnerable to pest, less dependent on pesticides, less harmful to biodiversity and more stable in the long run.

For more information, please contact [Trees Robiins](#), EU Agriculture and Bioenergy Policy Officer at BirdLife Europe

[-> Top](#)

Western Balkan NGOs are successfully closing activities under EC Wings Across the Balkans project



Seven bird conservation NGOs from five Western Balkan countries have increased their bird conservation capacity significantly in the frame of a "Wings Across the Balkans" project, funded by the European Commission and led by BirdLife International and DOPPS-BirdLife Slovenia.

Close to the end of the two-year project, the project-partner NGOs from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia, met in the town of Shtip, in Macedonia at the project wrap-up workshop between 9th and 12th November 2011.

There, they agreed that concrete actions had been taken to improve biodiversity conservation in the region and that most of the project activities were implemented.

NGOs from Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia focused on identifying inconsistencies with EU nature protection laws in national legislation documents and communicated them to the relevant authorities.

In all the countries, existing or potential IBAs were selected and protection proposals for seven of them were written and communicated by the Balkan NGOs.

This has led to a better understanding of the importance of IBA network in the region and to valuable experience in conservation and in project management for the project partners, especially thanks to a good sharing of experience and know-how among the organizations.

A significant effect of the project has been more intensive cooperation between BirdLife International and seven conservation non-governmental organizations from Western Balkans of which only one is a partner affiliate and the rest have no status within the BirdLife network.

As the final outcome of this process, four organizations from four Western Balkan countries are expected to join the BirdLife family in the near future, closing substantially the partnership gap in this part of Europe.

A spontaneous additional output of the workshop was a Shtip Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation where participant organizations declared they will support each other and act jointly wherever suitable in common efforts to improve the conservation of birds, their habitats and biodiversity in their countries and overall the region of Western Balkans.

There are many issues that BirdLife International and all the other organizations presents at the workshop try to tackle in a similar way in this region, as for instance illegal hunting and wind farms construction which frustrate the Adriatic Flyway and key sites that lie along it. Concrete joint activities were proposed within submitted and proposed funding opportunities and common ground for a set of actions has been identified by all the parties that already cooperate with each other.

Hopefully the joint energy of all participant organizations that is already evident in concrete legal and on the ground conservation actions and incorporated in many concrete cross-border and regional initiatives will make Western Balkans a safer place for migrating European birds and ensure that the unique diversity of this part of Europe

remains a legacy that our children will be proud to inherit from us.

Borut Rubinić, Partner Development Officer for the Balkans, Ukraine and Baltic at BirdLife Europe

[-> Top](#)

Local Groups deliver successful conservation of Italian IBAs



LIPU, BirdLife in Italy has been very active implementing the BirdLife Important Bird Areas (IBA) programme. Following the successful identification and designation of IBAs as protected areas under EU and Italian legislation (covering >70% of the IBAs) LIPU focused its efforts on monitoring and conservation work on the sites, relying on Local Conservation Groups (LGC). LGCs not only monitor bird populations and threats to them in IBAs, they carry out different conservation actions and the success stories are there to judge.

Currently, 32 Local Conservation Groups, mainly composed of LIPU volunteers, are active in Italy, ranging from the Alps to the extreme southern tip of Sicily. Here are some examples of their successful activities:

Near Parma, where LIPU headquarters are located, the LCG is involved in a European project supporting the the most important Italian population of the Near-threatened Red-footed Falcons *Falco tinnunculus* by providing and maintaining nest boxes.

In Sicily's "Pantani" IBA, LIPU volunteers succeeded in the designation of a Nature Reserve that provides refuge from hunting in this area.

In Piedmont Region six LIPU groups monitor more than 10 Natura 2000 sites, otherwise neglected by the local institutions.

"We love to carry out practical conservation action near our homes", says Giorgia Gaibani, LIPU's IBA and Natura 2000 officer. "But being part of a global programme makes our work even more valuable and exciting".

[-> Top](#)

SEO/BirdLife in Spain denounces the killing of over 4 million birds a year in Spain by illegal hunting methods



The first week end of October, SEO/ BirdLife in Spain launched its campaign 'Against the illegal hunting of migratory birds in Spain,'

Over 4 million birds a year are killed in Spain, sometimes for fun, sometimes for consumption. The illegal trapping and killing takes place mostly during the breeding season or during the migratory passage, which clearly inflicts damage upon the affected bird populations.

The main illegal techniques used by the Spanish bird poachers are parany or barraca (luring bird with decoys to limed twigs arranged trees or bushes), silvestrismo (capturing and caging of songbirds) contrapasa (stand-hunting

during the northerly migration of birds returning to their breeding grounds), and pardeleo (robbing nests of Cory's Shearwater).

SEO/BirdLife in Spain is systematically denouncing and fighting against those illegal practices, as well as other illegal hunting and poaching methods spread among the country.

Nicolás López, Conservation Officer of SEO/BirdLife stated that "The law must be enforced; poachers and illegal hunters can no longer be allowed to get away with it due to the authorities turning a blind eye."

The parany hunting method has been explicitly prohibited by the European and Spanish Courts of Justice in 2004 and 2005. Nevertheless, every autumn over 2 million thrushes and hundreds of thousands of small insect-eating birds are caught in limed-twig traps.

Act now and denounce this death trap

SEO/BirdLife in Spain's campaign website offers information, documentation, images and resources on these illegal techniques and invites users to add their names online to a formal protest against the parany.

"This allows the public to bring this illegal hunting method to wider notice, and register their formal protest against this grave problem" said Mario Giménez, SEO/BirdLife's Valencia Officer.

At the present time, 1600 citizens already sent their protest against the parany.

For more information please visit "Against the illegal hunting of migratory birds in Spain" website www.cazailegalaves.es

or contact Olimpia García, Press Officer at SEO/BirdLife in Spain.

[-> Top](#)

Nature restoration of the Western Scheldt estuary still going nowhere



The Western Scheldt is the only remaining important estuary in North Western Europe and it is of major importance for migrating birds who stop to feed there on their way to Africa.

In 2005, the Belgian region Flanders and the Netherlands signed the "Schelde Treaties", with an action plan aiming to ensure nature restoration, needed after the dredging of the Western Scheldt for the needs of the port industry. Unfortunately part of the agreement was attacked by Dutch politicians from the province of Zeeland, and the Dutch government halted the implementation of the planned restoration actions.

In June 2011, the Dutch Secretary Henk Bleker presented an alternative plan contrary to the numerous scientific studies which said that nature restoration only will only be effective if the estuary is allowed to 'take over' part of the drained land.

On October 13th, the European Commission addressed a scathing letter to Secretary Bleker, qualifying his project as "totally insufficient" to which Mr. Bleker replied that the Government "has to do more scientific research."

Paralyzed by the Dutch Government no conservation or restoration action could be taken in the estuary, whereas urgent actions are needed in order to slow down its fast deterioration, which may soon become irreversible.

Vogelbescherming Nederland, BirdLife in the Netherlands, has asked the European Union to enforce the necessary and urgent restoration measures planned in the Schelde Treaties and needed to avoid an irreversible and unwanted deterioration of the estuary. The Dutch Environmental NGOs also started a legal process against the state of The Netherlands in June 2011 regarding the non-action concerning the Western Scheldt.

The decision of the Court is expected in early 2012.

[-> Top](#)

Natural habitats of the Lake Sevan restored after 50 years



The Lake Sevan – the greatest inland waterbody in South Caucasus- has always attracted the attention of ornithologists because it used to provide crucial habitat for thousands of migratory and breeding waterbirds in Armenia.

The Lake Sevan is recognized as an Important Bird Area (IBA) of global significance (with over 270 bird species recorded). It is an important stop-over site for great numbers of migratory birds, including the globally threatened species such as the Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* or the Near-threatened Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*. Therefore the lake has been designated as a Ramsar site - a wetland of international importance.

Unfortunately, during the Soviet period, a hydro-engineering plan was implemented that caused a collapse of the original water level of the lake with devastating changes to its ecological values.

Later, the contemporaneous governments have been trying to build tunnels and redirect rivers in order to feed the lake and restore its water level but it has not been possible, due to the continuing unsustainable levels of water use.

As a consequence for nearly 50 years, the Lake and its surrounding wetlands have lost value as a nesting habitat for many birds.

Studies by ASPB/BirdLife in Armenia have shown a reduction of 40% in the number of breeding waterbird populations, and a decrease of species diversity from 60 species prior to the Soviet Period to 37 in the 2000's.

Fortunately the situation has been reversed, thanks to increased awareness among the authorities since 2000. A water management plan has been agreed with the local stakeholders, which resulted in spectacular increase of water levels by ca. 4 m per year!

The restored habitats of the lake and surrounding wetlands has already brought back rare species such as the Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*, Black-crowned Night-herons *Nycticorax nycticorax*, Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*, Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* and Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*.

Today in the Lake Sevan, we can count over 70 breeding waterbird species - a welcomed increase that has occurred just within the past 6 years.

Observation studies in the Lake Sevan have been lead by ASPB/ BirdLife in Armenia from 2000, and since 2005 they have been implemented by the local IBA Caretaker of the Lake Sevan who has monitored successful nesting activities.

[-> Top](#)

BirdLife Europe looks to improve Yelkouan and Cory's Shearwater situation



On 18th-19th October 2011, as part of a contract with the European Commission, BirdLife Europe hosted two days of workshops in Sardinia to collate information on Yelkouan and Cory's Shearwater in order to produce population assessments on the two species.

Both Yelkouan and Cory's Shearwater are on Annex I of the Birds Directive and are suffering declines due to incidental fisheries bycatch, as well as predation by introduced predators (particularly rats and cats), light pollution, human disturbance, illegal hunting and oil spills.

Experts and BirdLife partners from over nine countries came together to discuss the latest data on the species' population size, trends and threats to elaborate a common expert assessment of the population status and identify key knowledge gaps and research needed.

The information obtained through the workshops and the review process will enable BirdLife International to assess the population status of the two species with more confidence and provides baseline data for future species action plans.

The results of the assessment process also have potential implications for the species' Red List status and can be used in setting conservation action priorities for the species, supporting and informing policy work, identification of marine Important Bird Areas (IBAs) and potential inclusion of the species in maritime agreements and biodiversity protocols.

For more information, please contact [Mia Derhé](#), European Conservation and Research Officer at BirdLife International

[-> Top](#)

Music and Migration II: a music appeal to stop illegal bird killings in Malta



Second Language releases Music and Migration II in support of BirdLife Malta's campaign against illegal bird killing

In November 2011, the music label Second Language released its second compilation album in the series 'Music and Migration' with exclusive songs by a group of international artists to raise awareness for the illegal hunting practices threatening migratory birds over the Maltese archipelago, located on one of the three main routes used by Europe's breeding birds in their migrations to and from their African wintering grounds.

« The Maltese islands are particularly important as way stations in the middle of the Mediterranean and the spring and autumnal migrations offer spectacular sights ; yet, rather than a haven for birds, Malta is a killing ground, with one of the highest densities of hunters and trappers in Europe, and probably in the world. », said Martin Holm co-founder of Second Language.

BirdLife International and its partner BirdLife Malta have been campaigning against illegalities for close to 50 years now. There are signs of change : the courts have started issuing more serious sentences and members of the public are becoming increasingly outspoken, and even active, against the illegal killing.

However, continuous international support is key to ensuring that the Malta chapter is just one of a volume, and not the final chapter in the lives of many birds, which is why Music and Migration II, showcasing exclusive tracks from international artists, reaches out to the wider community to help BirdLife put an end to these illegalities and recognise the true value of what it means to be 'free as a bird'.

Dr. Marco Lambertini, Chief Executive of BirdLife International concludes : « BirdLife International is working hard to protect migratory birds and I appreciate very much the support Second Language shows by raising awareness through the Music & Migration series. By engaging with an audience through music, it is my hope that even more people will become aware and help BirdLife International in our continuous work for migratory birds and an overall healthy environment for wildlife and people. »

Title : Music and Migration II
Artists : Various
Label : Second Language

For more information on Music and Migration and to order your personal copy, please visit : <http://www.secondlanguagemusic.com/news.html>

[-> Top](#)

A new dawn for reporting under the Birds Directive

On 13 October, Member States, BirdLife Partners and other stakeholders from across the European Union met at the European Commission in Brussels to launch a new process for reporting on the status and trends of all birds under Article 12 of the Birds Directive.

Until now, Member States have reported to the Commission every 3 years on their general progress with implementing the Birds Directive. From 2013, they will report every 6 years and provide much more useful information about the outcomes of their efforts to conserve birds, using the latest population and trend data. The new system will produce data equivalent to those that are already reported for other taxa under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive. This will allow the Commission to report on the status of all biodiversity in the European Union every 6 years, and to assess progress towards meeting the 2020 biodiversity targets.

The 2013 reporting round foresees close cooperation between Member States, BirdLife Partners and other key data holders, to ensure that the best available data are mobilised and that broad national consensus is reached on the data that are reported. It is intended that the same data sets will flow into BirdLife Europe's third assessment of the status of all birds at European level, Birds in Europe 3, which is also scheduled for publication in 2014.

For more information about the proceedings of the meeting, [click here](#).

For more general information please contact [Ian Burfield](#), European Science and Data Manager at BirdLife Europe

[-> Top](#)

Events

International events

- July- December 2011: Polish Presidency of the European Union

- 29 November - 2 December: The Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention), Council of Europe's premises, Strasbourg. For more information please visit : <http://www.coe.int/Bernconvention>

[-> Top](#)



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