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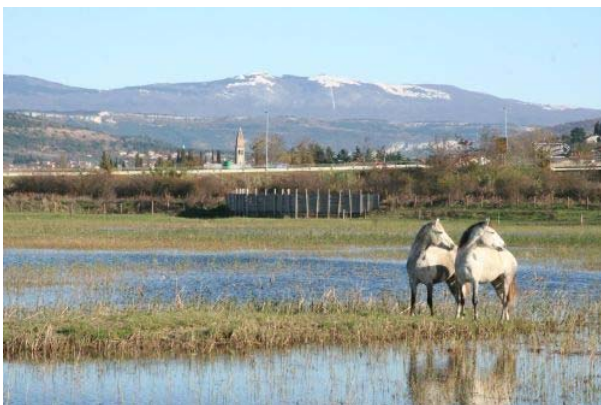
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Editorial: Together we can make a difference

Dear reader,

As new Regional Director of the BirdLife European Division, I find the times we are leaving extremely promising. A crisis time offers a good opportunity to re-think life-styles and happiness paradigms which prove to be unsustainable for the planet and its living species, including human beings. A good opportunity for a slower approach to life, with happiness and success not measured by cold numbers and economic indicators, but by the capacity to create warm empathic relations with people who live around us or very far away. A new paradigm whereby human beings seek enjoying and preserving, rather than consuming, the beautiful planet we live in.

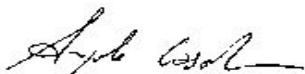
Crisis times offer also good opportunities for new ideas to emerge – as for example greener technologies - or for “old” ideas to capture attention of wider public and potential supporters - such as nature and biodiversity conservation, for example. As you will read in this newsletter and on the daily news published on our website, BirdLife International is one of the leading biodiversity conservation organizations, with a unique approach on the whole “conservationism continuum” linking birds, habitats and biodiversity areas conservation to policy and decision-making through millions of passionate people in the field (our “heroes of bird and biodiversity conservation”), their organizations (our committed and creative Partners) and a fantastic group of professionals working in the global and regional secretariats. People and organization with long-term vision and commitment to preserve the highest common interest: biodiversity, source of life and *condicio sine qua non* (indispensable condition) for a happy future.

As you know very well, and can further read in these pages, we still have a lot to do, as the EU is very likely to miss its 2010 target of halting the loss of biodiversity and Europe in general the reducing biodiversity loss target

of the UN Millennium Development Goals. I would like to quote Yann Arthus-Bertrand's final words in his stunning movie "Home": "It is too late to be pessimistic". This is also the message we want to pass through this newsletter and through our work in general: together we can make a difference, we can protect birds and biodiversity, we can have a better world.

2010 is the International Year of Biodiversity whereby the United Nations aims to bring greater attention to the importance of biodiversity and efforts to reduce the current rate of biodiversity loss. It is a fantastic opportunity also to engage citizens on biodiversity conservation all over Europe and world-wide, the only way to have sustainable and long-term impact. In the next newsletter issues and through our website we will keep you updated on the several planned initiatives and on how you can get involved to make next one a year of hope and change.

With my very best wishes



Angelo Caserta
Regional Director
BirdLife International European Division

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BirdLife presents five challenging keys for Sweden to unlock Europe's environmental problems



Early July 2009, BirdLife International presented its five top priorities for the Swedish EU Presidency, which will run until the end of December.

Launching its restyled biannual publication 'Greening Europe', BirdLife asks the Swedish government for strong leadership in difficult times – where a global environmental and economic crisis meets the institutional limbo of the European Union.

According to BirdLife, the Swedish Presidency should ensure that Europe and the world set sail towards an ambitious and effective new biodiversity policy after 2010 and secure the EU is in the driver's seat for a successful Copenhagen deal on climate change. Moreover, the foundations for a reformed Common Agricultural Policy that delivers public goods should be set, and the environment should feature at the heart of the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy. Last but not least, Sweden should be a firm voice for sustainability when addressing the economic crisis with public funds.

As Konstantin Kreiser, EU Policy Manager at BirdLife International European Division, stated, "Sweden has always been at the forefront of the European environmental policy. BirdLife really hopes that this Presidency will lead the way out of the current crisis, by showing how inseparably linked economic and environmental problems are. There is no bail-out for the planet, we have to act now and finally take sustainability seriously".

At the end of December, BirdLife will assess how the Swedish government has used its Presidency to make the most out of 'BirdLife's five Keys', and you will find the results in the January issue of this Newsletter.

You can download BirdLife's Greening Europe at

http://www.birdlife.org/eu/pdfs/GreeningEurope_Swedish_Presidency_July_December_2009.pdf

If you are interested in receiving the paper version of the Greening Europe, please send an e-mail to euope@birdlife.org

Check our special pages on the Greening Europe at

http://www.birdlife.org/eu/EU_policy/Greening_Europe/Editorial.html

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The EU gives new impetus to integrating environment in development cooperation



On 25 June the Environment Council gave the 'green light' to the European Commission's plan to better integrate environmental concerns into development cooperation.

In 2005, the European Consensus on Development, i.e. the renewed EU development policy, introduced a requirement for environment and sustainable management of natural resources to be integrated into all development activities. However, despite many improvements, there is still a huge gap between political commitment and the reality on the ground.

The Commission's plan, endorsed by the Council of the EU, lists actions in six priority areas which, if properly implemented, should significantly contribute to an improved environmental mainstreaming. The actions involve a better dialogue on environmental issues with partner countries, helping them to understand the value of environmental protection for their country's development, a better coordination between EU and other donors, and an improved integration of environment in projects and programmes based on systematic environment assessment.

BirdLife International welcomes the new plan and commends the Commission and Member States for the progress on environmental integration so far. BirdLife also supports the Commission's intention to develop a joint EC-Member State Environment Integration Strategy by 2011 and stands ready to help ensure this happens.

For more information please contact Tatiana Nemcova, Senior EU Advocacy Officer at tatiana.nemcova@birdlife.org

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EU biodiversity policy – between rhetoric and reality

Just before the summer break two important milestones were reached by the EU Institutions regarding the protection of biodiversity.

On 25 June, European Environment Ministers gave strong messages both on the EU biodiversity policy in general and on the threat of Invasive Alien Species (IAS). In its reaction, BirdLife welcomed the fact that Ministers stressed the urgency and importance of preventing the collapse of ecosystems and the loss of species and habitats, and their clear call for action at EU level on Invasive Alien Species. Also, BirdLife fully supports the statement Ministers made to strengthen the Natura 2000 network of protected areas.

However, BirdLife sees the Council Conclusions as 'wishful thinking' - contrasting sharply with the political reality - where the same governments continue to follow old-fashioned recipes in stimulating short-term growth at the expense of future generations, the global poor and last but not least future public budgets.

The big gap between rhetoric and reality is demonstrated by the European Commission's groundbreaking report on the conservation status of species and habitats protected under the EU Habitats Directive, published on 13 July. Despite some improvements thanks to special nature conservation efforts, the report pointed out that the EU is very likely to miss its 2010 target of halting the loss of biodiversity. Especially farmland, wetland and coastal habitats are in trouble and only less than one fifth (17%) of the EU's most important species and habitats are in good shape.

The report shows that particularly habitats associated to agriculture activities are in poor conditions compared to others, with grasslands suffering most from intensification or abandonment. These conclusions match well with evidence collected by BirdLife International about the decline of many farmland birds, like the well-known Eurasian Skylark *Alauda arvensis* or the Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*. BirdLife therefore reiterated its call for an urgent reform of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) without which it will be impossible to reverse biodiversity decline and stabilise rural ecosystems.

For more information see BirdLife's press releases on the 25 June Council Conclusions (www.birdlife.org/news/extra/europe/council_conclusions.html) and on the 13 July Habitats Directive report (www.birdlife.org/news/extra/europe/commission_report.html).

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Bringing the Škocjanski Zatok Nature Reserve back to life!

The district of Škocjanski zatok, located on the Slovenian coast, has always had a unique natural richness. At least until 1980, when the local

Government decided to urbanize the area with new buildings, which would have obviously destroyed centuries of biodiversity.

In order to save this exceptional region, DOPPS-BirdLife Slovenia decided in 1993 to organize a strong operation to raise awareness and sensitize people about the risk of losing this natural treasure. The plans to degrade the area were finally abandoned and in 1998 the area was transformed into a protected natural reserve, with DOPPS nominated as its manager in 1999.

In 2007 an extensive restoration of the reserve led by the Slovenian Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning together with DOPPS, was finally completed. A freshwater marsh was created as a substitute habitat for the areas that had been completely destroyed in previous years, while brackish and seawater habitats were restored and enhanced. As a result, the largest brackish Slovenian wetland has reassumed its deserved position among protected and ecologically important areas and has been designated as a Natura 2000 site.

This habitats restoration coincided with the creation of a visitors' path with five observation spots around the freshwater marsh in the Bertoška bonifika area. The visitor centre, which also contains observation hides and other structures, will be ready to welcome visitors at the beginning of 2011. The reserve is perfectly equipped to receive various groups, even those with particular needs, and it is quickly becoming a very well know touristic destination.

At least 220 bird species can be seen in the reserve, together with a variety of amphibians, reptiles, mammals and invertebrates. Visitors can also meet Camargue horses and Istrian cattle 'boškarin', which are very helpful to manage the freshwater habitats by grazing it, and which also bring back memories of ancient times, when the cohabitation of men and animals was an everyday necessity...

If you want to find out more about the activities organized by DOPPS in this reserve, please contact Andrej Medved, Director of DOPPS at andrej.medved@dopps.si

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Portuguese NGOs boycott energy company biodiversity fund



In May 2009 Energias de Portugal (EDP), the only Portuguese electricity producer and supplier, started a public campaign to present the dams they will build in the coming years in Portugal, only focusing on the positive outputs to people and nature, and voluntarily omitting the problems related to ecosystem disruption, species depletion and social disturbance.

SPEA (BirdLife in Portugal) and the major Portuguese environmental NGOs immediately reacted to the campaign, urging EDP to stop it. They also asked the Environment Ministry to take steps against this campaign and clearly separate the national strategy for nature conservation from compensation measures needed as a consequence of large dam constructions. Neither of these requests was satisfied.

In 2004 the Portuguese Government approved the first large dam in years, the Baixo Sabor, in Northern Portugal. Already under construction, this project raised huge polemics, because it is destroying one of the most beautiful and the last wild river in Portugal, which is also an Important Bird Area (IBA – identified by BirdLife International) and a Natura 2000 site protected under EU law. Threatened bird species such as Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*, Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraaetus fasciatus*, Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*, Red Kite *Milvus milvus* and other wildlife will be affected.

The European Commission had opened an infringement procedure against Portugal, but after several years closed it again due to political pressure, suspected to have been exerted by the Portuguese Government and the top level of the Commission itself.

In 2007 the Portuguese Government created the National Program for Large Hydropower Dams, including 10 new large dams which should have complied with renewable energy targets. A strategic environmental assessment was conducted, but failed on a number of subjects, not having analysed neither real alternatives nor their social, ecological and economic impacts on the environment.

The main message from EDP's recent awareness campaign was that large dams would significantly contribute to the sustainable economy of local communities and to nature conservation. Incredibly, the Environment Minister also supported this view, publicly confirming the need of these large dams to secure enough funding for the protection of endangered species such as the Iberian Lynx and the Wolf, by means of compensation measures.

Therefore at the beginning of July eight Environmental NGOs announced the boycott of the 2009 call related to the 'Fundo EDP para a Biodiversidade', EDP's Biodiversity Fund. This 2,5M€ fund spread over 5 years, aims to support research and conservation work on biodiversity affected by electricity production and distribution.

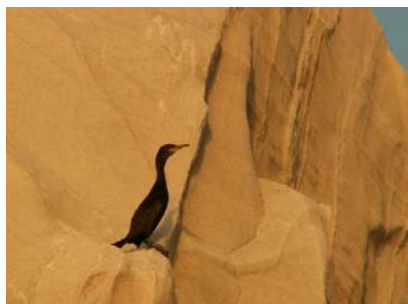
Domingos Leitão, Conservation Officer of SPEA, commented: "No thanks to the EDP Biodiversity Fund - if we

have to accept EDP lying on the positive effects of dams on nature protection. We must ensure citizens are fully aware of the massive natural destruction and social distress large dams will cause". The Portuguese NGOs are determined to keep on boycotting future EDP's calls if the company persists its irresponsible and non-ethical communication strategy.

For more information please contact Dr. Domingos Leitão, Coordinator of the Terrestrial Programme at SPEA at domingos.leitao@spea.pt

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A LIFE Project for the Greek Seabirds



Since the beginning of 2009, HOS (BirdLife in Greece), is implementing a LIFE Project on the conservation of Mediterranean Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis desmarestii* and Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii*, which also includes the inventory of relevant marine Important Bird Areas (IBAs). The project is implemented in collaboration with SPEA (BirdLife in Portugal), the Hellenic Society for the Protection of the Monk Seal (Mom), the Hellenic Centre for Marine Research (HCMR), and the Ionian Technological Institute (TEI). The project will involve 17 Greek Special Protection areas (SPAs) and will last until 2012.

The project aims to achieve a significant improvement of Mediterranean Shag's and Audouin's Gull conservation status in Greece, firstly by designing several Marine Important Bird Areas (IBAs) and by implementing concrete conservation actions in Special Protection Areas (SPAs) sites, according to the relevant guidelines of the European Commission and BirdLife.

About 10% of the Mediterranean Shag subspecies global population and 20% of the European population breed in Greece. What's more, the SPAs involved in the project host 89% of the national Shag population and 73% of the national Audouin's Gull population.

To considerably increase the status of these species, HOS and its Partners will organise several actions to support the European BirdLife Marine Network, eradicate invasive species such as rats, and assess and mitigate the accidental trapping of Shags and Audouin's Gulls in fishing gears.

Important actions to raise public awareness on the importance of the conservation of seabirds, such as the production of environmental education material, mobile exhibitions, media work on a local scale and a campaign for fishermen on by-catch, will also play an important role in the project.

For more information please contact Roula Trigou, Public Awareness Coordinator at HOS, at rtrigou@ornithologiki.gr

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Cirque de Navacelles – the Grand Canyon of France!



The Cirque de Navacelles, a large circus landform in the southern edge of the Massif Central in France, is a spectacular natural site. It is part of the Natura 2000, the unique ecological network of protected areas in the European Union. This exceptional site is home to Golden eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*, Eurasian Eagle-owl *Bubo bubo*, Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*, Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*, Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*, and many other fabulous species.

In autumn 2008 a tourist project for caged raptors was proposed for this site, threatening its unique nature and raising concerns that the wild birds of prey nesting there might abandon the area.

Concerned with this project, LPO (BirdLife in France) and other nature protection organisations proposed a better initiative to increase rural tourism, that emphasises this remarkable area and helps visitors to discover the region and its traditional activities.

Their philosophy was that any local development should respect the landscape, the culture and the biological diversity of the region. The region was not ready to take mass tourism as an option, not even having the

infrastructures for that. Instead, nature and culture needed to be preserved.

A petition to stop the project which was circulated by local associations, LPO, and relayed by BirdLife International, was successful in collecting 3752 signatures from France and other countries. As a result, the project for caged raptors in the Cirque de Navacelles was abandoned.

An association called "Terre de Causse" is now implementing the project on how to develop sustainable rural tourism which will benefit the local community as a whole.

For more information please contact Bertrand Eliotout at bertrand.eliotout@lpo.fr or Renaud Nadal at renaud.nadal@lpo.fr

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More Dalmatian Pelicans than ever in Prespa



The Prespa lakes, between Greece, Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), have long been considered one of the key nature conservation areas in the Balkans, and because of their pelican colonies they are therefore recognised as an Important Bird Area (IBA). This year, more than 1400 pairs of Dalmatian Pelicans *Pelecanus crispus* bred on the colonies on the Greek side of the lakes. The Natura 2000 site there has received an effective conservation management in the last few years. "This is a historical maximum for this globally threatened species, and it represents more than 20% of its world population", says Myrsini Malakou, the director of the Society for the Protection of Prespa (SPP).

The SPP, a local conservation organisation that has as founding and supporting members both the Hellenic Ornithological Society (HOS, BirdLife in Greece) and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB, BirdLife in the UK), has recently concluded a EU-funded LIFE project aimed at managing the water levels of the Mikri Prespa lake, implementing active habitat management measures and therefore maximising their benefit for breeding birds.

Partly as a result, the significant wetland birds breeding colonies in Prespa have prospered. "Last year we also saw White Pelicans *Pelecanus onocrotalus* reaching 525 breeding pairs, another historical maximum. Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* reached 125 breeding pairs – one of highest figures ever, while this year Great White Egrets *Casmerodius alba* broke another record, with 75-80 pairs nesting in the marshes. In 2007, Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* also bred, a species that we had lost years ago – this proves that by managing the habitats for birds, we can bring them back and increase their populations", continued Malakou.

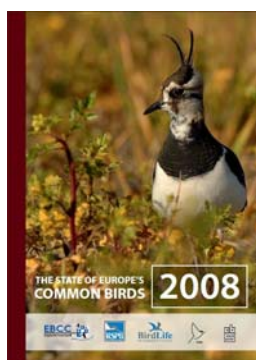
"Pelicans and other birds were persecuted and killed in Prespa in a not too distant past – so the present situation is a powerful example of what legislation and conservation investment can achieve in a relatively short period of time", said Xenophon Kappas, Director of HOS.

SPP has been leading an initiative to promote the International Prespa Park, a transboundary protected area sharing common conservation objectives. It engages with a multitude of partners in the neighbouring countries, and promotes research, monitoring, environmental education and joint planning.

For more information please contact Jose Tavares, Country Programmes Officer for Turkey, Portugal and Greece at the RSPB, at jose.tavares@rspb.org.uk

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New report shows that European common birds are still declining



'The State of Europe's Common Birds 2008', the new report of the Pan-European Common Bird Monitoring Scheme (PECBMS) project confirms that the population of common birds in Europe is still declining.

The report presents the latest update of the European population trends of 135 common bird species. The results are based on data collected from 21 European countries, covering the period from 1980 to 2006.

Analysing the individual population trends for the 135 European species covered, the results show that 37 of them have increased, 29 have remained stable, while 55 have declined in their numbers. In only 14 cases species trends remain uncertain.

The European wild bird indicators show that the marked fall is particularly evident in common farmland birds as on average its population has declined by 48% in Europe over the last 26 years. The common forest birds have declined less steeply, on average by 9%.

As a whole, European average population levels have fallen by 10%.

Although some differences in bird trends appear on regional or national level, the overall pattern is obviously

similar overall in Europe. Furthermore, there are worrying signs that the large declines witnessed in the old EU Member States may now be repeated in the new Member States.

The indicators produced by PECBMS have been widely relevant for policy purposes, both at European and national level, in the last years.

The electronic version of the report is available on <http://www.ebcc.info/index.php?ID=375>

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BirdLife's Honorary President, HIH Princess Takamado celebrates the 21st anniversary of BirdLife Rare Bird Club



BirdLife's Honorary President, HIH Princess Takamado of Japan, attended an event held in Cambridge to mark 21 years of BirdLife's Rare Bird Club.

The evening was hosted by Peter Schei – BirdLife's Chairman – who sang a traditional Norwegian birthday song in honour of HIH Princess Takamado, who was also celebrating her birthday. Her Imperial Highness was also presented with a further gift of a special pair of binoculars from Swarovski UK.

Over 40 guests attended the black-tie dinner at the Hotel Felix, and enjoyed a lively presentation by Dr Marco Lambertini – BirdLife's CEO– illustrating BirdLife's work to tackle the major conservation challenges facing the world's birds and biodiversity.

In particular Dr Lambertini presented several BirdLife Programmes and Campaigns, such as the Save the Albatross Campaign, aiming to halt the steep declines of the ocean's greatest ocean wanderers and the Forest of Hope programme. He also highlighted Born to Travel, BirdLife's Flyways Campaign to save migratory birds, and the Preventing Extinctions Programme, aiming to stop any bird species from disappearing forever.

During the evening, Peter Schei was presented with a painting of a Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* which is his "adopted" bird, as Mr Schei became the latest Rare Bird Club's member.

For more information on the BirdLife Rare Bird club, please contact Peter Hendley, Individual Gifts Manager at peter.hendley@birdlife.org

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BirdLife Europe e- news now available in German!!

Thanks to NABU (BirdLife in Germany), LBV (Association for the Protection of Birds in Bavaria), and DRV (German Bird Conservation Council), BirdLife Europe e-news is now also available in German!

Already 600 people have subscribed to the German version of the newsletter and new subscribers join in every month!

Previous issues can be downloaded from www.lbv.de, clicking on 'Service – BirdLife Newsletter'

If you want to subscribe to the newsletter, click on <http://www.lbv.de/service/birdlife-newsletter.html?schrift=%3F1%3D1>

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Neophron from Bulgarian to English

Neophron, the biannual newsletter published by BSPB (BirdLife in Bulgaria), is now also available in English!

You can read all about BSPB main projects and conservation activities and be kept up to date on their upcoming events.

You can download the last issue of Neophron at http://bspb.org/images/neophron%202009_email.pdf, or download previous issues at http://bspb.org/category.php?chPage=1&menu_id=52

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 **Philippe Funcken, Director at Natagora (BirdLife in Belgium)**



My name is Philippe Funcken and since a few months, I have the honour to be the Director of Natagora, the French and German-speaking Belgian Partner of BirdLife International.

A few months ago, destiny pushed me to take a bold step. After 10 years working for a private sector company all over the world, I had the opportunity to join Natagora and settle back in Belgium...it is such a pleasure to be able to contribute to a good cause, one I really believe in.

My interest in nature began quite early. My father taught me how to recognize birds and imitate their songs. As a boy scout, I could enjoy extensive stay in natural environments. Subsequently, I studied geography and specialized in phyto-sociology in the Hautes-Fagnes-Eifel Natural Park across the belgo-german border. At that time, I discovered the natural reserves of RNOB (which would become integrated into Natagora). I immediately became a member and

had the opportunity to work as a volunteer for them for a few years.

Now, my life is even more meaningful as I am able to work and contribute to the successes of Natagora in Belgium. Moreover, we know that being part of the vast BirdLife network is an added value to our local actions.

Everyday is bringing in lots of interesting events at Natagora. Our teams and volunteers are buzzing with new projects, organising citizens science events, partnerships with the daily press, conservation and awareness actions... We get the feeling that we do make a difference.

Our BirdLife Partners are really a source of inspiration for what needs to be done locally. I am really looking forward to exchanging ideas and meeting our other BirdLife Partners all over the world!

See you soon!

You can contact Philippe Funcken at philippe.funcken@natagora.be

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Events

European events

- July- December 2009: Swedish Presidency of the European Union

- 21-26 August 2009, Zurich, Switzerland: 7th conference of the European Ornithologists' Union (EOU)

<http://www.eou2009.ch/>

7-9 September, Stromstad, Sweden: High-level Meeting: Visions for Biodiversity Beyond 2010 – People, Ecosystem Services and the Climate Crisis

http://www.se2009.eu/en/meetings_news/2009/9/7/high-level_meeting_visions_for_biodiversity_beyond_2010_people_ecosystem_services_and_the_climate_crisis

- 6-8 Oktober, Abisko, Sweden: EU Nature Directors Meeting

BirdLife Events

- 26-30 September 2009, Smardewice, near Łódź, Poland: IBA workshop (for BirdLife Partners only)

- 14-15 October 2009, Brussels, Belgium – BirdLife Training “Campaigning for Nature” (for BirdLife Partners)

only)

- 22-23 October 2009, Purkersdorf, Austria: The BirdLife European Forest Task Force Annual Workshop (for BirdLife Partners only)

- 26-30 October 2009, Huesca, Spain: 6th International Symposium: Limnology and Aquatic Birds: Monitoring, Modelling and Management

<http://www.ipe.csic.es/congreso/principal.html>

- 9-11 November 2009, Malta: BirdLife European Partnership Meeting (for BirdLife Partners only)

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