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Editorial

The newly released EU Biodiversity Strategy represents the EU's master plan for reversing the decline of biodiversity, a target adopted last year by the Heads of States, in the wake of the failure to achieve the 2010 target. It is an important document, charting out the main areas where action is needed: proper implementation of the nature legislation, reform of the agriculture and fisheries

policies, tackling the threat of invasive alien species, investing in green infrastructures and reducing the global negative environmental footprint of Europe. Sadly, the level of ambition and detail suggests that achieving a true change in our mismanagement of the natural world will be an uphill struggle.

Ominously, the Commission has dropped from the strategy, at the very last moment, any quantitative target regarding agriculture. This suggests that powerful vested interests opposed to any improvements are still holding sway. The uninspiring debate on the budget reform, currently ongoing at the European Parliament is another sign that our politicians are finding it hard to free themselves from the need to cater to specific economic lobbies, running an ever greater risk of sacrificing both the future of Europe and that of the EU, to their petty political calculations.

As ever, BirdLife Europe will keep arguing for better governance and pursuit of public goods. In doing so we can take heart from the many positive examples where our Partners are making a real difference on the ground. In this issue you can read for example about the Spanish imperial Eagle, a magnificent bird, brought back from the brink and now spreading its wings on the web. One of the key conservation measures that have saved this charismatic species has been the insulation or redesign of the power lines that were systematically killing young eagles in their last redoubts. In another article of this newsletter you can read about a new pan-European initiative to tackle this threat at a continental level, in cooperation with governments and companies. The eagles tell us that biodiversity loss can be reversed. The question is whether we can muster the political will and the courage to do it.

All the best,

Ariel Brunner

Head of EU Policy
BirdLife Europe

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The SURE report on the Multi-Annual Financial Framework - Will this become a report of the Least Common Denominator

In the current EU Budget, the EU broadly failed to match real funding to its sustainable development ambitions. The next, post 2013, EU Budget will be an important step to coherently and strategically support policies which will provide money for public goods. A better and more focused use of scarce financial resources is paramount. The European Parliament has a crucial role to play in determining the shape of the future budget.

The Parliament powers on the budget are limited to approving (or not) the legal text decided by the council. The main tool it has to actually influence the content of the budget is an upcoming report being elaborated by a special committee (the SURE committee). MEP Garriga-Polledo, of the EPP group, presented his draft report entitled: "Investing in the future: a new Multiannual Financial Framework for a competitive, sustainable and inclusive Europe" on the 17th of March. Unfortunately, the report was vague and uninspiring. The report lacked ambition and took a minimal stance in all fields, a clear example of a report of the least common denominator. The report failed to deliver clear financial support for a sustainable Europe. Furthermore, the report made no mention

of Natura 2000, and mentioned biodiversity just once under the section on the Common Agricultural Policy.

This is deeply disappointing, at a time when citizens are faced with economic turmoil and a global ecological crisis. Fortunately, the important role of biodiversity was picked up again and emphasised across the political spectrum in many of the recently proposed amendments to the draft report. Many MEPs also expressed support for continuing the LIFE instrument. The LIFE fund, the only upfront environmental investment tool of the EU, is crucial to ensure that biodiversity and the Natura 2000 network continue to provide essential ecosystem services and ecosystem resilience benefiting European citizens.

Through this report, the European Parliament has the opportunity to take a courageous stance and ascertain their ability to represent the interests of all European citizens. Hopefully, MEPs will show this courage during the voting round. The result will help shape the future of the EU but will also reflect the ability of the European Parliament to be a relevant force for change.

More information: [Bruna Campos](#), EU Financial Perspectives Policy Officer at BirdLife Europe.

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New EU Biodiversity Strategy adopted



On 3rd of May the European Commission revealed its long awaited EU Biodiversity strategy, which sets out a blueprint for achieving the EU's renewed biodiversity target. BirdLife welcomed the strategy but at the same time stressed that if EU is serious about reversing the decline of biodiversity and restoring the ecosystems on which we all depend, much more than the outlined actions will be needed.

The strategy includes six targets, each accompanied by a package of actions. These range, from properly managing the EU's Natura 2000 network of protected areas to combating the spread of invasive alien species, from habitat restoration to supporting biodiversity conservation in developing countries. It also rightly highlights the key role played by the two most problematic natural resource-based sectors under EU control: agriculture and fisheries.

The make or break point for the biodiversity strategy, and for Europe's wildlife, will be the outcome of the reforms of the EU's budget and sectoral policies for the 2014-2020 period, looming in 2013. At the same time it will be vital that the strategy is fully implemented and financed by the EU and Member States.

BirdLife Europe urges the European Parliament and European Council to lend their support to the biodiversity strategy, and to commit to showing leadership and ambition for protecting our biodiversity and ecosystems. BirdLife is also committed to closely following implementation of the strategy by the EU and its member states, and will sound the alarm bell if progress is hindered through unnecessary delays or political interference.

More information: [Ariel Brunner](#), Head of EU Policy at BirdLife Europe.

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The EU biofuel criteria tested - can we keep out bad biofuels from Dakatcha?



On 3rd of May 2011, BirdLife Europe and ActionAid, organised a lunchtime debate on biofuels in the Dakatcha woodlands of Kenya. Judging by the amount of interest, the biofuels is still a very hot topic.

During the presentations it was shown that biofuels grown in Dakatcha are considered unsustainable based on the sustainability criteria (Article 17) of the Renewable Energy Directive (RED). First-hand reporting was done by representatives from Nature Kenya (BirdLife in Kenya) and ActionAid Kenya.

Their experience was that biofuel production not only displaces wildlife but has a much wider impact. Local populations risk being displaced and lose income while newborn ecotourism in the region will decline.

NGOs told the Commission to draw its conclusions and do everything it can to avoid these situations of biofuel production driving land use change. It can do this by scrapping the 10% (biofuels) target in the RED, radically overhauling the sustainability criteria to include all environmental and social impacts and ensuring a legislative proposal to address impacts of Indirect Land Use Change. However, the Commission partially ignored the issue stating that it didn't believe it is EU legislation driving these detrimental projects. Nonetheless, Birgit Schnieber-Jastram (MEP) pointed out that this is a clear case of policy incoherence whilst the public voiced that there needs to be a clear distinction between "good" and "bad" biofuels.

More information: [Trees Robijns](#), EU Agriculture & Bioenergy Policy Officer

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SPEA VII Ornithology Congress & I Macaronesia Ornithology Conference - call for abstracts until 31st May



The city of Machico, in Madeira island, will be the host of SPEA VII Ornithology Congress & I Macaronesia Ornithology Conference, between the 29th and the 31st October 2011. The congress is organised by SPEA, in partnership with the Natural Park of Madeira, SEO/BirdLife and Biosfera I, from Cape Verde, and has the support of several entities, including BirdLife Netherlands.

The call for abstracts and workshop proposals is open until the 31st May. In complement to a rich scientific programme dedicated to the birds of Macaronesia region, forest birds, endemic and threatened birds, feeding ecology of marine birds, monitoring common birds and socioeconomic perspectives of nature conservation, we are also planning several field trips, the usual congress dinner, a small fair, a silent auction and much more:

Coming to the congress will be an excellent opportunity to share your experience with the 200 participants expected, and also a good excuse to make some holidays in Madeira at special prices for participants!

More information: [Vanessa Oliveira](#), SPEA (BirdLife in Portugal) or visit the SPEA website by clicking [here](#)

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The European and Central Asian Partnership meeting (EPM) - April 2011



The European and Central Asian Division is the largest of the six BirdLife Regions in terms of number of Partners: 45. It is also amazing in terms of biodiversity. It counts 660 regularly occurring wild bird species: 6 Critically Endangered, 7 Endangered, 22 Vulnerable. 66 bird species are of global conservation concern (35 Globally Threatened and 31 Near Threatened) and 226 of European conservation concern. BirdLife Partners in the region have identified 5200 IBAs, covering a total area of 2 million sq km, which represents 10% of the total area

of the region.

To celebrate the (bio)diversity of the region and decide together on strategies and actions to address the threats, over 100 participants from 41 countries (including the Western Balkans) gathered together in Budapest from the 14th to the 17th of April.

It was a very powerful meeting with intense discussions, generating ideas on how to build on the past and current successes and to increase the impact of our joint action.

In particular, Partners discussed in plenary, through the World Café methodology, the elements that will constitute the new BirdLife Strategy and European and Central Asian programme.

Thematic Sessions allowed to identify the new conservation priorities, explore a new approach to our marine work, discuss the evolution of the agreement with FACE. We decided to have a strong focus on partnership development, looking at ways to engage young people, expand the membership base, improve the Partner Support system, increase funding through joint fundraising and expand income from the corporate sector.

Several side meetings organised by the participants to discuss specific joint projects and activities offered the opportunity to increase mutual knowledge and the sense of belonging to largest Partnership of conservation Civil Society Organisations.

The full report of this energising and inspiring EPM will be available during the first half of June.

More information: [Angelo Caserta](#), Regional Director of BirdLife Europe.

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The restoration of the Belene Marshes brings back the Dalmatian Pelicans



The restoration of the largest marsh on the Bulgarian part of the Danube was done in 2008 with the financing of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), as part of a World Bank managed project. "Wetlands Restoration and Pollution Reduction". The project was the first of its kind under the umbrella of the GEF Black Sea/Danube Strategic Partnership

–Nutrient Reduction Investment Fund which aims to control or mitigate nutrient inflow to the Black Sea. Thus the marsh situated on the largest of the Danubian islands, and part of the Ramsar site Belene Islands Complex (IBA BG017), is once again rebuilding its position of a birds' paradise. That is more than a welcome development, bearing in mind the inherent sombre reputation of this place, used as a deadly prison for the political opposition to the former Communist regime of the country.

BSPB/BirdLife in Bulgaria in partnership with the Persina Nature Park and the WWF-Bulgaria are monitoring the ecological effects of the wetland restoration project on biodiversity. As part of a conservation project and with the help of the Park management a fixed platform of reeds was built to stimulate the breeding of the Dalmatian pelicans.

Two months after the platform was constructed it was already used by a group of 20 Dalmatian pelicans for roosting. Public access to the island is still very limited, which helps to ensure a minimal human disturbance, a critical factor for the pelicans to start breeding. Observations from the last three years show that more than 200 Dalmatian pelicans from the Srebarna Lake (IBA BG033) and the Danube Delta (IBA RO081) breeding colonies use this area after their breeding season. BSPB hopes that the pelicans will adopt the marshes as a breeding site next year when a second bigger platform will be built.

"We are eager to see the Dalmatian pelicans returning to breed in the Belene Marshes, but even now it is already obvious that the restoration of the wetland was a blessing for biodiversity in the region", Emil Todorov, Coordinator of BSPB in the region says. "With every monitoring visit we witness the return of many water birds here, including at least 62 species of European conservation concern".

The site is known for protecting one of the largest breeding concentrations of grebes, herons, ducks along the lower Danube. During the spring and autumn the restored wetland is an important stop-over area for many migratory species. Thousands of geese use it as a quiet roosting place during the cold winter months.

More information: [Emil Todorov](#), Biodiversity Conservation Officer, BSPB (BirdLife in Bulgaria), Svishtov Regional Office

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Budapest Conference calls for action to make electric powerlines safe for birds

On 13 April 2011, Budapest hosted a special Conference "Power lines and bird mortality in Europe". This important event was co-organised by MME/BirdLife Hungary, the Ministry of Rural Development of Hungary and BirdLife Europe and was kindly hosted by MAVIR (the Hungarian Transmission System Operator Company Ltd.), as part of the official programme of the Hungarian EU Presidency.

The aim of the Conference was to bring together nature conservationists, industry professionals and governments and to stimulate joint actions to address the problem of large-scale bird mortality on power lines at the European level. Power lines kill birds through electrocution on pylons or collision with wires.

Electrocution, for example is one of the main threats to the vulnerable Spanish Imperial Eagle *Aquila adalbertii* and Eastern Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca* as well as other threatened species listed in the EU Birds Directive. Electrocutions also disrupt electricity supplies causing economic loss and creating much extra work for the power utility companies. Thus everyone is interested to resolve this issue, but there is a lot to do.

Fortunately, the problem can be almost completely eliminated from the outset through well-proven mitigation measures, bringing benefits for birds, grid operators and electricity consumers alike. Large scale 'bird-safety' measures and specific local actions are priority conservation actions in many EU bird Species Action Plans. Many grid operators and regulators have also realised the benefits of eliminating electrocution risks, often working with bird conservation organisations to ensure win-win solutions are found.

The Conference was attended by 123 participants of 29 European and Central Asian countries, the European Commission, UNEP-AEWA, six energy and utility companies, experts, businesses and NGOs. The participants adopted a special [Declaration](#) calling the European governments and the EU institutions to ensure that the production and transport of our energy will not be the cause of unnecessary death of millions of birds. The conference documents and the declaration are available at a [dedicated website](#)

More information: [Boris Barov](#), European Conservation Manager at BirdLife Europe.

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New Forest protection for climate balance -NABU takes action to save climate-relevant ecosystems



Since 2008, the International Climate Initiative (ICI) of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment (BMU) has been financing climate protection projects in developing, transition and newly industrialised countries. Annually, 120 million Euros from the auctioning of emission allowances is available for use by the Initiative. The ICI serves as a supplement to the German development cooperation with a clear focus on climate protection.

With projects in Ethiopia, Indonesia and the Western Caucasus funded by the ICI, NABU supports the conservation of forests with particularly high levels of biodiversity and is thereby contributing to climate protection and sustainable development. For more news from NABU's ICI-projects, please subscribe to the "NABU-Newsletter International Climate Initiative" by clicking [here](#).

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What's more - New webcam showcases breeding Spanish Imperial Eagle



SEO/BirdLife invites you to follow the first days of the life of 3 eagle chicks in the Mediterranean forest in Castilla-La Mancha via a webcam which you can find by clicking [here](#).

Once again this spring and summer, everyone has the unique and wonderful opportunity to see live webcam images of a family of Spanish Imperial Eagles, the most threatened bird of prey in Europe, the populations of which are mainly located in Spain. The pictures show the ups and downs of the daily fight for survival of three little eagle chicks as they are brought up by

their parents.

The webcam has been installed near a nest in the Cabañeros National Park sited in central Spain, as part of the conservation programme for the Iberian imperial eagle "Alzando el vuelo", a flagship project of SEO/BirdLife since 2006.

"Alzando el vuelo" is based on land stewardship principles that involve not only the voluntary collaboration of private landowners, but also the participation of local councils and schools throughout the distribution of the species in central and south-western Spain.

According to BirdLife on behalf of the IUCN, the eagle is classified as Vulnerable. There are only 282 breeding pairs in the world, all of them located in the Iberian Peninsula. The main risks that the species faces are electrocution in powerlines, poor prey availability, habitat destruction and illegal persecution (poisoning, shooting). Despite these threats, the Spanish Imperial Eagle population has shown a slow but continuous increase during recent years.

Events

International events

- **January - June 2011: Hungarian Presidency of the European Union**
- **European conference on illegal killing of birds - 6-8 July, Larnaka, Cyprus**

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