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## [Editorial: A Spring of Change](#)

### News from the EU



- [Athens conference on biodiversity: strong appeals, weak outcome](#)
- [Could do Better! Why EU Rural Development Policy is failing to reach its biodiversity potential](#)
- [Common Fisheries Policy: new hope for reform?](#)

### News from the BirdLife European Partnership



- [Artists for Nature in Israel](#)
- [Georgian school books promote nature conservation](#)
- [Finland: The Battle of the Towers](#)

### From the Conservation point of view

- [First map of Bulgarian and Romanian best preserved forests](#)
- [The EU throws a life line to starving](#)



## vultures

### BirdLife on the move



- **Meet the BirdLife European Partnership: Katrin Klinkusch from NABU**

### What's more



- **Rock Music supports Born to Travel campaign!**

### Events



- **European Events**
- **BirdLife Events**

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## Editorial: A Spring of Change

Dear reader,

“Change” is maybe the best word to describe the spirit of this spring! At the end of April, Claire Papazoglou left BirdLife’s European Division, after almost three years as Regional Director. To a large degree it is thanks to her that BirdLife International has become a respected and influential “player” at EU level, promoting policy change for the protection of nature and a healthy environment. Establishing the European Division office with a strong team in Brussels, Claire has also significantly strengthened our conservation, communication, research and fundraising work, and most importantly brought our national NGO Partners closer together. I would like to thank Claire once more very much for everything she has done for BirdLife, and wish her all the best in her new position as Director of BirdLife Cyprus!

The new Director will start at the beginning of July and we will introduce him in this newsletter soon!

The last event at which Claire represented the European Division was of special importance: A high-level conference in Athens called upon by the EU to take more action for nature and biodiversity (see separate article in this edition). Commission President Barroso, the Commissioner for the Environment Dimas and many others gave encouraging speeches, stressing the need to strengthen nature conservation, reform agriculture and fisheries policies and provide more financing for biodiversity. BirdLife will remind decision makers of this wind of change they started in Athens!

Finally, change is also the key-word for the European Institutions. In early June the European Parliament will be elected, and BirdLife calls on all its Partners, friends and supporters to participate in this vote. The Members of the new European Parliament will decide on issues fundamental for our future, from Europe’s future climate change and biodiversity action to the next financial framework of the Union (which hopefully will look much greener than the current one!). I invite you to look at our election page and manifesto at <http://www.birdlife.org/EuroElections2009/introduction.html>

With my best wishes



Konstantin Kreiser  
EU Policy Manager  
BirdLife International European Division

[-> Top](#)

### Athens conference on biodiversity: strong appeals, weak outcome

In 2001, the Heads of States of the European Union committed to an ambitious goal to 'halt the loss of biodiversity' by 2010. As the Commission has now confirmed, it is unlikely that the 2010 biodiversity target will be met. However, the protection of our biodiversity is even more significant and urgent than ever before.

In order to create a framework for the post-2010 biodiversity policy and prepare the strategy for the years ahead, the European Commission organised at the end of April a high-level Conference in Athens, entitled "Biodiversity protection – Beyond 2010, Priorities and options for future EU Policy". Through several discussions and workshops involving more than 200 participants, the President of the European Commission Mr Barroso, the Commissioner for the Environment Mr Dimas, the Greek Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis and many other politicians analysed the needs and responsibilities of the European Union in protecting biodiversity worldwide.

BirdLife International welcomed the strong appeals made by these key- decision makers to stop the loss of biodiversity and the sense of urgency reflected in the discussions. However, there remains a huge gap between aspirations and real action. The "Message from Athens", expressing the Commission's commitment for the coming years to halt the loss of biodiversity, is by far not ambitious enough especially related to the necessary policies reform. In the end, it only mentions 'reviewing the impacts of EU policies' instead of changing them, and it asks for a 'reform' of harmful subsidies, instead of phasing them out.

In order to stress and explain BirdLife's concern about the current biodiversity crisis, Dr Claire Papazoglou, former Regional Director of the European Division of BirdLife International, gave a presentation on the expected impact of climate change on bird populations and Mr. Zoltan Waliczky, Head of International Biodiversity Policy at the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK) and representing 17 NGOs of the European Habitats Forum (EHF), highlighted the NGO-perspective on Europe's Natura 2000 network of protected areas and presented our recommendations on how to speed up its implementation.

For more information contact Rastislav Rybanic, EU Nature Policy Officer at [Rastislav.Rybanic@birdlife.org](mailto:Rastislav.Rybanic@birdlife.org) or visit:

The Conference website with speeches and presentations and final message from Athens  
[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/conference/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/conference/index_en.htm)

The European Habitats Forum contribution to the Athens Conference:  
[http://www.birdlife.org/eu/pdfs/ehf\\_briefing\\_for\\_athens\\_final\\_22apr09.pdf](http://www.birdlife.org/eu/pdfs/ehf_briefing_for_athens_final_22apr09.pdf)

BirdLife and FACE joint statement for the post 2010 Biodiversity Policy  
[http://www.birdlife.org/eu/pdfs/BirdLife\\_Face\\_statement.pdf](http://www.birdlife.org/eu/pdfs/BirdLife_Face_statement.pdf)

BirdLife International reaction on the Message From Athens:  
<http://www.birdlife.org/news/extra/europe/athens.html>

[-> Top](#)

### Could do Better! Why EU Rural Development Policy is failing to reach its biodiversity potential



A new study launched by BirdLife International and the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK) reveals that poor implementation by Member States is often undermining the positive potential of the "green element" of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The main findings show that, although the EU Rural Development policy has the potential to tackle the decline of biodiversity, only a very small proportion of spending is benefiting Europe's nature, while many potentially harmful investments are still funded without appropriate safeguards.

BirdLife sees Rural Development as the way forward for the EU's Common Agricultural Policy. While most current CAP spending goes on untargeted income support, not linked to farmers' delivery of public goods, Rural Development can deliver effective answers to the environmental crisis, as shown by many good schemes highlighted by the study. The problem is that many governments appear to be more interested in channelling money to well-connected farm lobbies than they are in delivering on their own stated objectives.

The study presents a range of good and bad practice case studies. Positive examples include schemes that pay farmers for conserving biodiversity-rich landscapes or to restore wetlands and grasslands. Among the negative examples are ill-designed schemes that pay farmers to plough up hilly slopes causing increased erosion, use the same amount of fertilizer they would be using anyway or to establish super-intensive olive plantations. In some cases, Rural Development investments are actively subsidising environmental destruction as in the case of Portugal where 200.000 ha of biodiversity rich drylands are earmarked for conversion to irrigated farming, with heavy impacts on threatened species and an exacerbation of unsustainable water use.

The full report is available at [http://www.birdlife.org/eu/pdfs/Could\\_do\\_better\\_report\\_05\\_09.pdf](http://www.birdlife.org/eu/pdfs/Could_do_better_report_05_09.pdf)

For more information contact Ariel Brunner, Senior EU Agriculture Policy Officer at [Ariel.Brunner@birdlife.org](mailto:Ariel.Brunner@birdlife.org)

[-> Top](#)

### Common Fisheries Policy: new hope for reform?



On 22 April, the European Commission unveiled its eagerly anticipated 'Green Paper on the Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) in preparation for the CFP's next fundamental round of reform in 2013.

The Commission presented a chilling analysis of the legacy of the current policy: 88% of the Community's stocks are overfished compared to a global average of "just" 25%; on the whole there are still far too many boats chasing too few fish, with the result that overall the fisheries sector is in a very bad shape, being sustained in many countries thanks only to public subsidies (witnessed by the recent injection of four millions Euros by the French Government into its fleet); fishing activities continue to damage the wider

marine environment, be it species or vulnerable habitats.

BirdLife welcomes the Green Paper as a good start to an honest discussion about a badly needed CFP reform. BirdLife will be advocating for environmental sustainability to be the primary objective of the future CFP. To this end, BirdLife needs to see an explicit obligation on the reformed CFP to meet the objectives of the new Marine Strategy Framework Directive. An effective new CFP also needs binding measures to force a substantial cut in the fleet capacity. Equally, BirdLife will be calling for safeguards ensuring that the scientific advice on catch limits of fish is not overridden by political haggling and short term interests.

For more information contact Tatiana Nemcova, Senior EU Advocacy Officer at [Tatiana.Nemcova@birdlife.org](mailto:Tatiana.Nemcova@birdlife.org)

[-> Top](#)

### Artists for Nature in Israel



The second edition of the "Artists for Nature" festival took place in the Hula Valley, in the northern part of Israel between 6 and 15 March 2009.

This very successful event was organised by the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI/BirdLife in Israel) and the Artists for Nature Foundation (ANF) with the support of the European Commission. Non-stop nature art workshops, tour visits, lectures, exhibitions and other side events filled the air for more than one week.

Nineteen international wildlife artists from the UK, Ireland, Spain, The Netherlands, Germany, France, Greece, United States and Kenya met seven Israeli and Palestinian artists, sharing ideas and projects.

In these intense and exhilarating 10 days artists painted and sculpted birds, wildlife and landscapes around the Hula Valley for the 12,000 visitors who participated to the festival activities in the Agamon HaHula Park. One of the most memorable day was when over 100 children from Jordan and

Israel, including Arab (from Jaljulia) and Jewish (from Petah Tikvah), spent a magic day together learning about the Hula Wetlands, the wonders of bird migration and how to paint nature. The day culminated with a visit by the Israeli President Shimon Peres who met the children and enjoyed a guided birdwatching trip.

SPNI is currently working to raise funds for an art book with works from over 40 artists to be published in English, Hebrew and Arabic. A travelling exhibition on the fascinating story of the Hula Valley, its biodiversity and its relevance for birds and many other animals is planned for Israel, Europe and North America.

Please help us to support this project contacting Zev Labinger at [Labinger@netvision.net.il](mailto:Labinger@netvision.net.il)

[-> Top](#)

### Georgian school books promote nature conservation



The Georgian Centre for the Conservation of Wildlife (GCCW/BirdLife's Partner Designate in Georgia) started cooperating with the Ministry of Education of Georgia already in 2002, first assisting teachers establishing groups where teachers and children could enjoy nature together and then preparing science text books for schools. Aiming at helping teachers to integrate nature conservation and biodiversity in the formal education, this cooperation also represented a successful fundraising activity and helped increasing GCCW's members.

With the latest two published in April 2009, there are currently 12 books used by 80000 students and 2500 teachers in Georgian primary schools. Besides planning the publication of two new books in 2010 and the revision of the existing ones, GCCW will also set up the Georgian Science Teachers Association, which will support teachers to include nature conservation in the education of the future generations.

For more information please contact Ramaz Gokhelashvili, GCCW board member at [ramaz@gccw.org](mailto:ramaz@gccw.org)

[-> Top](#)

### Finland: The Battle of the Towers



Every year on a May morning's dawn, hundreds of birdwatchers climb the 400 birdwatching towers located all over Finland. Their main goal in the coming 8 hours is to see as many bird species as possible, and above all, more species than the ones identified by the other birdwatchers on the nearest tower.

Together with the teams participating to the event, thousands of tourists and birdwatchers visit the towers, to see birds and get information about them.

The competition is not always fair, as between the northern and the southern towers there are more than 1000 km and 30 degrees, a condition which plays a role in the number of species to be seen.

BirdLife Suomi (BirdLife in Finland) has been organizing this successful Battle of the Towers for 9 years now, and the event becomes every year more famous.

This year the Battle of the Towers took place on 9 May, with 289 teams and more than 1000 people participating. The winner team spotted 113 different species in Pyhäjoki, on the western Finnish coast, while the most northern situated team, in Inari, over 300 km north from the arctic circle, saw 46 species.

And now BirdLife Finland can already look forward to next year's edition!

For more information contact Lauri Hänninen, Communication Officer at BirdLife Finland at [Lauri.Hanninen@birdlife.fi](mailto:Lauri.Hanninen@birdlife.fi)

[-> Top](#)

### First map of Bulgarian and Romanian best preserved forests



At the end of April, Sofia and Bucharest hosted the final seminars presenting the results from the Bulgarian-Romanian Forest Mapping Project (BRFM), carried out by the BirdLife Partners in these countries. Biologically Important Forests (BIF) mapping was initiated by the BirdLife Partnership in Europe in 2001.

A Biologically Important Forest (BIF) is defined as “a forest that has remained in natural or close to natural state and that is considered a key area for the protection of forest-dependent species that need a certain amount and quality of suitable habitat to survive and maintain favourable population status”.

The project was funded by the Aage V. Jensen foundation and implemented jointly by BSPB (BirdLife in Bulgaria) and SOR (BirdLife in Romania)

Forests in Bulgaria and Romania are among Europe’s richest and most diverse ecosystems. They provide shelter for many vulnerable species that have already disappeared elsewhere in the continent, including many endemic species and endangered birds, bats and beetles. Large carnivores such as the lynx, wolf and brown bear are still abundant in some of the mapped sites.

The project makes an important contribution to the conservation of forest wildlife in both countries. Results from the project demonstrated that around 23% of all forests in both countries meet the BIF criteria. Gap analysis using sophisticated digital information showed substantial deficiencies in the existing protection system: only 11.4% of Biologically Important Forests in both countries are strictly protected, with further 14.2% under other, less strict forms of specific legal protection. It also found out that the Natura 2000 network made no real contribution yet to the conservation of forest biodiversity, because the designation of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) in both countries is not yet complete.

The conservation measures adopted on national level in these sites are not specific enough and there is not a single management plan adopted yet. This means that for the moment up to 74.4% of BIFs in the mapped areas are not secured by any protection. Another finding is that most of the protected forests are located in mountains while lowland forests are either severely under-protected or already lost.

Results and further background information of BRFM mapping will soon be available at an interactive user-friendly map service <http://www.forestmapping.net>

For more information contact Boris Barov, European Conservation Manager at [Boris.Barov@birdlife.org](mailto:Boris.Barov@birdlife.org)

[-> Top](#)

## The EU throws a life line to starving vultures

The crisis facing vultures and other birds of prey in the Iberian Peninsula might be at a turning point, following the approval by the European Parliament of the new Animal By-products Regulation.

Widespread starvation has affected Griffon vultures *Gyps fulvus* since the EU introduced, in the wake of the mad-cow disease, restrictive rules forcing farmers to collect and incinerate all livestock that dies accidentally. Despite the introduction by the Commission of partial derogations to allow the management of feeding stations, lack of food has been pushing starving vultures to wander off as far as Brussels and was affecting endangered species such as the Spanish Imperial Eagle *Aquila adalberti* and Egyptian vulture *Neophron percnopterus*.

The new rules, expected to be rubber stamped at the next relevant meeting of EU Ministers, will allow Member States to issue specific derogations letting farmers leave carcasses in the field in extensive grazing systems where these would not pose health risks and would be quickly disposed of by vultures and other scavengers- nature’s unpaid cleaning service.

While this landmark decision brings concrete hope, not just to birds but also to other threatened species such as wolves and bears that in some regions rely on dead livestock, food will not be back on the vultures menu just yet. Real change on the ground will only come once national and regional authorities, especially in Spain, actually implement the derogations that are now made possible by EU legislation. BirdLife has lobbied hard within the Commission and European Parliament to bring the new rules forward and will now work, through SEO/BirdLife (BirdLife in Spain) and the other national Partners to ensure that national authorities act swiftly to put an end to this unnecessary crisis.

For more information contact Ariel Brunner, Senior EU Agriculture Policy Officer at [Ariel.Brunner@birdlife.org](mailto:Ariel.Brunner@birdlife.org)

[-> Top](#)

## 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 Kathrin Klinkusch, Press Officer at NABU (BirdLife in Germany)**



My name is Kathrin Klinkusch and since 2005 I am the Press Officer at NABU (BirdLife in Germany). I studied history and German and before joining NABU I worked for some German newspapers and for the Deutsche Presse-Agentur (dpa), a German News Agency. I am neither an ornithologist nor a biologist but I have always been interested in nature and since I work for NABU I also became a real birdwatcher!

Among my daily tasks, I write press releases, organize press conferences, liaise with journalists and coordinate NABU's events and campaigns.

My favourite campaign is the "Bird of the Year" initiative. It has been created in 1971 and since then it is a very popular campaign in Germany, both for the media and local groups. Another very funny campaign is the election of the "Dino of the Year". Every year, between Christmas and New Year's eve, NABU nominates the biggest environmental sinner. The press likes it, the "winner" a bit less!

As you can imagine my days are hectic and full of different tasks and requests, but being part of the BirdLife Partnership and contributing to the protection of the environment definitely pays off.

For more information contact Kathrin Klinkusch, Press Officer at NABU at [Kathrin.Klinkusch@NABU.de](mailto:Kathrin.Klinkusch@NABU.de)

[-> Top](#)

## Rock Music supports Born to Travel campaign!



On 23 April at the British Film Institute, during one of their numerous concerts, the UK rock band 'British Sea Power' enthralled BirdLife and their fans by playing a unique composition inspired by migratory birds. The music was accompanied by the moving images from 'Les ailes de la nature', a 2002 film by Galatée Films following the flights of migratory birds to their wintering grounds in the South.

Many bird species which make their biannual journeys between Europe and Africa are declining dramatically. As Martin Noble, the band's lead guitarist said, British Sea Power is "delighted to support BirdLife's Born to Travel campaign which is promoting migratory bird conservation".

Born to Travel, the BirdLife Flyway's Campaign, is aiming to improve the conservation status of migratory birds and their habitats along the African-Eurasian flyway.

Combining the wonderful images of the film with the powerful music of British Sea Power was a fantastic way to celebrate the miracle of bird migration.

For more information visit [www.borntotravelcampaign.com](http://www.borntotravelcampaign.com) and follow the Campaign on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Born-to-Travel-the-BirdLife-Flyways-Campaign/58551253521?v=wall&viewas=1567004452>

[-> Top](#)

## Events

### European events

- January- June 2009: Czech Presidency of the European Union

- 27-28 May 2009, Prague, Czech Republic: Conference on Wilderness and Large Natural Habitat Areas in Europe. Visit <http://chm.nature.cz/stories/conference-wildnearly-wild-areas-eu-27-28-may>

- 4-7 June 2009: European Elections. Visit <http://www.birdlife.org/EuroElections2009/introduction.html>

- 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/>

### **BirdLife Events**

- 3-5 June 2009, Brussels, Belgium: Fundraising Workshop (for BirdLife Partners only)
- 16-17 June 2009, Brussels, Belgium: Agriculture Task Force (for BirdLife Partners only)
- 30 June-1 July 2009, Berlin, Germany: Birds and Habitats Directives Task Force (for BirdLife Partners only)

**-> Top**



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- News from the EU: *Puffin* by C gomersall (*rspb-images.com*)
- News from the European BirdLife Partnership: by A Ezra
- From the Conservation point of view: By D kostovska
- BirdLife on the move: *Barnacle Geese* by R Degreville/ Galatée Films
- What's more: by Robbie/flickr
- Events: by carf/flickr
- Could do Better! Why EU Rural Development Policy is failing to reach its biodiversity potential: by BirdLife International
- Georgian school books promote nature conservation: by GCCW
- The Battle of the Towers: by L Hanninen
- First map of Bulgarian and Romanian best preserved forests: by D Uzuno
- Meet the BirdLife European Partnership: by K Klinkusch
- Rock Music supports Born to Travel campaign!: by British Sea Power