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Editorial: A new dawn for Europe?

Dear reader,

Europe has elected its new Parliament. Irrespective of the results it is a very worrying fact that less than half of the EU's citizens considered it worthwhile to influence the composition of this Parliament – which has more power than any of the 27 national assemblies in the Member States. This low turn-out is largely due to national parties and politicians who did not bother to debate European topics during the election campaign, but focused on their national political games. The 'concern' that many of them now express about the lack of public interest in the EU is simply not credible.

The new European Parliament will decide on issues that are essential for the future well-being of each European. Will Europe lead, or lag behind on climate change? Will the EU turn the tide of ecosystem breakdown and biodiversity loss? Will we support poor countries to develop sustainably? Will we finally respect the natural limits when exploiting nature? On all these questions and many more BirdLife and its Partners will challenge the newly elected Members of the European Parliament over the next years.

But, as regular readers know, in this newsletter we do not only discuss politics, but also present some of the wonderful initiatives that our BirdLife Partners are taking to protect the diversity of life and to bring the beauty of nature closer to people. For example, in this edition BirdWatch Ireland (BirdLife in Ireland) tells us about their recent 'Dawn Chorus' event, where all around the country thousands of people gathered at 4 o'clock in the morning to enjoy the impressive concert of wild bird songs – and more than one hundred thousand listened via special radio programmes. Maybe this is something politicians could learn from?

With BirdLife's best wishes for a happy summer time,



Konstantin Kreiser
EU Policy Manager
BirdLife International European Division

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European Parliament elections

The new European Parliament that emerged from elections last June will be much more fragmented, with an increased numbers of euro-skeptic and far right parties.

The European Peoples Party (EPP) confirmed its leading role with 264 out of 736 MEPs. The socialist group is still the second largest group, though significantly weakened with only 161 MEPs. The strongest groups were followed by the Liberals (80 MEPs) and the Greens who strengthened their positions compared to the previous Parliament (53 MEPs).

So what does this new political balance in the Parliament mean for the environment? Major political groups mentioned sustainability and the need to fight climate change in their manifestos. It remains to be seen though how these proclamations will be translated into real and ambitious policies. The new Parliament will have many opportunities to re-orientate Europe towards a greater sustainability and resource efficiency: translating the outcomes of the Copenhagen agreement into policies, discussing the future EU budget and reforming all sector-based policies.

Notably for BirdLife, the new Parliament will decide on the new EU Biodiversity policy. With almost 50% of European bird species in trouble and ecosystems seriously degraded, urgent and ambitious action need to be taken, or Europe risks losing a significant part of its natural heritage which in turn will undermine the very basis of human life and economic activities. A rescue plan for our ecosystems is even more urgently needed as the already serious impacts of climate change intensify.

Evidence shows that European citizens want ambitious actions from their decision makers to protect the environment. The positive results of Green Parties in France and Germany give a strong signal that there is an increasing support for politics based on green principles. BirdLife looks forward to working with the new Members of the European Parliament towards a more sustainable, more responsible Europe that cares for its citizens and for our planet.

Check out our website now and learn more about our priorities for the new EU Parliament, maybe even in your language, as many BirdLife Partners translated BirdLife's Election manifesto into their national languages. Visit <http://www.birdlife.org/EuroElections2009/introduction.html>

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

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Will Cyprus spring shooting be banned forever?



After a successful campaign led by BirdLife International and BirdLife Cyprus, the Cypriot Government decided to stop the shooting of birds on the island during the month of May. "Banning hunting during May will help saving migratory birds passing through Cyprus", said Martin Hellicar, Campaigns Manager from BirdLife Cyprus.

Prior to the new law, hunting was allowed in 2008 during eight days in the month of May in order to control the amount of crows – particularly Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* and Black-billed Magpie *Pica pica*. This was then used by many as a cover for illegal shooting of migratory species like European Turtle-dove *Streptopelia turtur*. However, this year the 'corvid control decree' has been reduced to just three days in June when the risk to migratory species is deemed to be low.

Last year, BirdLife reacted immediately by contacting the European Commission to denounce the corvid control measure. The Commission heeded BirdLife's call and contacted the Cypriot Government resulting in the recent modification of the 'crows control decree'.

In 2007, BirdLife had already managed to ban spring hunting after the Cypriot government tried to apply another derogation to the EU Birds Directive, this time related to the shooting of European Turtle-doves, wrongly justified as 'crop damage control'. The European Commission sent a "Letter of Formal Notice" - a first warning - to the Cypriot government, who then promised not to repeat this practice.

Three years of continuous vigilance by BirdLife and its Partner in Cyprus finally paid off this year as now, not only European Turtle-dove, but also other migratory species such as European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* and Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix* can fly more safely over the island.

For more information please contact Martin Hellicar, Campaigns Manager at BirdLife Cyprus at martin.hellicar@birdlifecyprus.org

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'The End of the Line' film reveals the inconvenient truth on fisheries



On 8 June 2009 more than 50 cinemas across the UK and Europe showed 'The End of the Line', the first major feature documentary about the global overfishing crisis. Based on the hard-hitting book by environmental journalist Charles Clover, the film was launched on the World Oceans Day, which for the first time this year was officially recognised by the United Nations.

The film's message is sharp: greedy and reckless over-exploitation is driving global fish stocks towards catastrophe and inflicting massive collateral damage on the wider marine environment. The fundamental problem is the gross over-capacity of the modern fishing fleet, combing

the oceans relentlessly in pursuit of dwindling fish stocks; in short there are too many boats chasing too few fish.

According to the film, 'The global fishing capacity could catch the world catch four times over. The world's long-lining industry sets 1.4 billion hooks every year. These are estimated to be set on enough line to encircle the entire globe more than 500 times.' This is killing at least 300,000 seabirds annually, including 100,000 albatrosses and threatening 18 out of 22 species with extinction. A heavy toll on seabirds is also taken by trawling and gill-nets.

The film ends with a message of hope, challenging society to take action on three critical fronts - reduce the size of the fleet, protect the oceans with a network of marine reserves off limits to fishing, and harness consumer choice to purchase only fish certified as sustainable.

With the EU's Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) currently under review, it is telling that the film has been given the thumbs-up by Joe Borg, European Commissioner for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries. 'The End of the Line' is the wake-up call for the marine environment as 'An Inconvenient Truth' proved to be for global warming.

For more information on the film click on: <http://endoftheline.com>

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BirdWatch Ireland's National Dawn Chorus Day 2009



One of the most important dates in BirdWatch Ireland's (BirdLife in Ireland) annual calendar is its National Dawn Chorus Day, which was held this year on Sunday 17th May. Over 30 different early morning birdsong walks were organised by BirdWatch Ireland staff and volunteers across the Republic of Ireland, making this the biggest birdsong event ever in Ireland.

Despite a rather wet weather, which is not at all unusual in Ireland in May (or June, or July, or any other month...), over 5,000 people turned out at 4:00 am to enjoy a morning of beautiful music. Over a hundred thousand more people listened from the comfort of their own home, as the events were featured live on a special national radio programme celebrating the dawn chorus.

In addition to being a great opportunity to spread the conservation message, the National Dawn Chorus Day has proven to be a particularly important membership recruitment tool for BirdWatch Ireland. Usually the

majority of the participants are not members, but large numbers are persuaded to join on the day. It is also a very popular event with local and national media, and this year generated more press attention than any other BirdWatch Ireland activity over the past 12 months.

For more information on managing dawn chorus events and ways to use them to recruit members and attract media attention, contact Niall Hatch, BirdWatch Ireland's Development Officer, at nhatch@birdwatchireland.ie

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EuroBirdwatch welcomes the Born to Travel Campaign



Every year during the first weekend of October you can explore the magic and beauty of birds in the wild while participating to the many activities and events organised by BirdLife Partners for the EuroBirdwatch event. This autumn Born to Travel, the BirdLife Flyways Campaign who protects migratory birds, will be the special theme of the event, and more than 30 BirdLife Partners are already preparing for the occasion.

For more than 15 years already, EuroBirdwatch has been a great success in engaging the public, witnessing our birds leaving for Africa on their annual migrations, and counting them as they pass overhead. Migratory birds are now disconcertingly declining and even common ones, such as the Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* and the Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* risk not being common anymore. Born to Travel, the new BirdLife International campaign, aims at saving migratory birds on their long journeys, protecting them from Europe to the Middle East and Africa.

While looking at birds leaving to warmer places in October, people will be able to find out more about Born to Travel and how they could contribute to help saving these birds on their amazing journeys.

Follow up our activities on <http://www.borntotravelcampaign.com> and join EuroBirdwatch in your country on 3-4 October 2009! Visit <http://www.birdlife.org/action/awareness/eurobirdwatch/index.html>

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Common Bird Monitoring: Luxembourg finally on board!

After many years of hard work and a fruitful cooperation with the Ministry of Environment, in 2008 LNVL (BirdLife in Luxembourg) finally launched its Common Bird Monitoring Programme in Luxembourg. Common Birds Monitoring schemes in Europe aim to reveal the trends in the numbers of common and widespread birds. Typically such schemes are implemented by well organized networks of skilled volunteers. Thanks to this program almost 10% of the country will be surveyed using standard methodologies.

Although populations of rarer breeding birds were monitored almost annually, there was not a systematic programme to monitor common breeding birds in Luxembourg until now. LNVL published a national Atlas of Breeding Birds in 1987.

In the framework of the national biodiversity monitoring scheme, the Common Bird Monitoring will be the first monitoring program to be launched to fill this gap. This is in response to the recognition that birds are essential indicators for our changing climate and landscapes. As one of the first steps LNVL will include their data into the European Common Bird Index and in the future they will develop their Farmland Bird index, the indicator of the state and trends of bird populations living on farmland.

For more information contact Patric Lorgé, Director at the Ligue Luxembourgeoise pour la Protection des Oiseaux at lnvlp@luxnatur.lu

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Wilderness in Europe – what a wild idea!



Are there any truly wild areas left in Europe? Who knows where they are? How did they manage to remain untouched by man? These questions would be the normal first reaction of anyone upon hearing about the recent "Wilderness

initiative" - an idea that attracted the attention of the European Parliament and became the central topic of a high level international conference in Prague, last month.

Wilderness is not just a concept of wild imagination. It is a reality, even in Europe, as it became clear. Think about the wind swept summits of the Alps, or the walrus schools in Svalbard. Did you know that the rarest species of a wild cat, the Iberian Lynx, actually lives in Spain? There are nearly 40 species of whales and dolphins in the European seas and bears and wolves still roam the forests in Eastern Europe. In Lapland one can hear the lonely call of a Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata* coming with the morning mist... Indeed, truly wild areas have managed to survive mostly where we, the people, feel uncomfortable and desolate.

In the past people were afraid of the wilderness and it took us millennia to transform the world into a habitable place for our species. Nowadays, wild means most of all "natural" and we finally start to appreciate its value. Millions of people each year seek spiritual and physical uplift in their contact with wild nature. Some travel around the globe looking for the 'wildest' experiences. So, wilderness areas still exist and offer special attractions to the civilisation addicted urban dweller.

And in fact, experts say, humanity will need wild areas more and more in the future - as space for the natural ecosystems to fulfil their life supporting roles or as an insurance policy against a more hostile climate. The more we do today to protect our last wild places, and indeed to re-wild parts of Europe, the better we prepare ourselves against climatic havoc. Such were the main ideas discussed among policy makers and practitioners in Prague last month.

More information about the Wilderness conference as well as all the presentations and outcomes from discussions can be found at the Conference website: <http://www.wildeurope.eu/>

You can also contact Boris Barov, European Conservation Manager at Boris.Barov@birdlife.org

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The first Adriatic Flyway Conference in Montenegro



From 14 to 17 April 2009, 120 participants from some 20 countries attended the first Adriatic Flyway Conference in Ulcinj, Montenegro.

The conference provided a valuable opportunity for BirdLife to engage with various national organisations on the future development of the European Partnership in the Western Balkans, which represents the last gap in the European network. It included a particularly useful session to review the status and completeness of the Important Bird Area (IBA) network in each country, and to identify gaps and needs for further survey work. Another important outcome was the Ulcinj Declaration, an international statement on the protection of migratory birds along the Adriatic Flyway, which was adopted by

all the participants to guide further work.

The event was organised by EuroNatur, and most of the participants represented national conservation institutes and organisations from all countries on the East Adriatic Coast and its hinterland, which is the region of the Adriatic Flyway. Other participants represented the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the Bonn Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) and the Bern Convention of the Council of Europe, as well as BirdLife International, Wetlands International and the international bird research and habitat management community from other European and North African countries.

For more information, please visit www.adriaticflyway.com or contact Ian Burfield, European Research and Database Manager at Ian.Burfield@birdlife.org

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Meet the BirdLife European Partnership

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

For this issue, we've teamed up with Chantel Kyriakopoulou-Beuvink, Corporate Partnership Coordinator at HOS (BirdLife in Greece)



My name is Chantel Kyriakopoulou-Beuvink and I am working for HOS, the BirdLife partner in Greece. I am a native Dutch but I have been living in Greece for over 3 years

now. Before moving I studied Environmental Economics & Marketing (at the University of Wageningen-a city well-known to many of you because this is where the former BirdLife European office was located!) and worked in The Netherlands as a Consultant in Environmental Management and Project Management. In the past I volunteered for several environmental organizations and now that I am working for one, I feel privileged to be around young, hardworking professionals who create so many national and international conservation and education programs, protect natural sites and lobby environmental policy makers.

After working on some projects, last January I started as a Corporate Partnership Coordinator, a brand new position in HOS. We immediately created an action plan that included elements such as an inventory of funding needs, a corporate clearance policy and a list of suitable companies. One of the initiatives we recently undertook is a collaboration with S&B Industrial Minerals, Europe's largest bauxite producer, with the aim of diminishing the impact mining activities have on the environment.

HOS has run many successful projects that prove that a BirdLife Partner does not only offer benefits to biodiversity but also to business and its stakeholders, such as local communities and employers. There are many cooperation opportunities with multinational companies such as the recent idea to involve car rental companies, conceived together with the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK) and the European Division. We actually found out that many European Partners were interested and we managed to sign a contract with AVIS, where BirdLife Partners get cheapest rates when renting cars. I hope this will be the first of a series of European corporate agreements with benefits for BirdLife Partners, biodiversity and business.

For more information please contact Chantel Kyriakopoulou, Corporate Partnership Coordinator at HOS (BirdLife in Greece) at ckyriakopoulou@ornithologiki.gr

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New staff in HOS (BirdLife in Greece)

Elina Sarantou just started as Communications Officer at HOS (BirdLife in Greece). You can welcome her and get in contact with her at esarantou@ornithologiki.gr.

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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

- 29 June 2009, Berlin, Germany: Seminar on Renewable Energy (for BirdLife Partners only)

- 30 June – 1 July 2009, Berlin, Germany: Birds and Habitats Directives Task Force (for BirdLife Partners only)

- 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)

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

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