

<http://europe.birdlife.org>

<http://www.birdlife.org/eu/newsletters.html>

Vol. 5, Issue 6

July - August 2011

Editorial

News from the EU



- [Where's the promised green budget?](#)
- [Biodiversity strategy under the Polish Presidency](#)

News from the BirdLife Partnership



- [Climate Change: from talk to action](#)
- [Greece: facilities for blind visitors in nature reserve - a country's first](#)
- [European Spring Alive season ended on a high note](#)

From the Conservation point of view



- [OSPAR acts to safeguard seven seabird species](#)
- [German European NRW minister visits nature conservation project 'Hetter'](#)
- [Portuguese atlas of wintering and migratory birds - join the project!](#)

New



- [New BirdLife report on Species Action Plans for threatened birds in Europe](#)

What's more



- [Birdwatching festival in Sagres - we await you!](#)

Events



- [Events](#)

Editorial

Dear reader,

The financial crisis has offered, in recent months, an unedifying vision of a Europe that is sorely missing political leadership. Governments have been systematically dodging hard choices, dithering, adopting belated halfhearted measures, followed by stronger, but still halfhearted measures.

Something depressingly similar can be observed in the reaction of our political leadership to the ecological crisis that is threatening the wellbeing, and in the long run even the existence of our society. Most recently, the sorrow show has played out in the Commission's proposal for the future EU budget. The Commission identified huge challenges that need to be urgently addressed, including the need to deeply transform the European economy into a resource efficient one, so that it can prosper on the long term within the finite limits of the planet and its ecosystems.

Disappointingly, the level of ambition has been casting only a tiny and vague shadow in terms of the actual proposals. The new budget looks remarkably like the old one. No courage has been found to stand up to vested interests and roll back perverse subsidies in favor of a clear pursue of public goods. The proposal includes, in many instances, mildly encouraging language and semi-commitments, which might be read as going in the right direction; but it is a far cry from what is needed.

The Commission still has time to start showing courage and forward looking leadership in the actual legal proposals that will follow in the autumn, most notably on the CAP and the Cohesion policy. Missing this opportunity will have grave consequences. Defaulting on our financial debts can be ruinous, but we ultimately cannot default on our ecological debts.

Best wishes

Ariel Brunner
Head of EU Policy

[-> Top](#)

Where's the promised green budget?

For the last ten years, the EU has been committing to shifting Europe towards a sustainable society. Sadly, the recent Communication from the European Commission for the next EU budget 2014-2020(1) was disappointing and unambitious, and does little for the EU to achieve its obligations. The communication retained the business as usual approach, lacking the needed support to shift the EU towards a green Economy.

Although it has shown some promising signs, mainly in terms of funding certain measures for mitigating climate change, the communication essentially fails to address either biodiversity conservation or climate change adaptation and land based mitigation. Clearer and additional measures and actions are needed to ensure that the EU Budget is fully coherent with EU 2020 environmental and climate targets.

The lack of commitment for supporting biodiversity is illustrated by the lack of coherence within the communication. It promises to integrate biodiversity within the different sectors, yet the sectoral funding streams lack any targets or priorities to achieve this, especially with financing Natura 2000, the EU's main tool for supporting biodiversity. The communication makes a point that "Natura 2000 action frameworks...will provide a strong basis for the new Natura 2000 financing strategy" (financial action plans for Natura 2000 for the implementation of Nature and Biodiversity policy as required by the Habitat's Directives). However, none of the sectoral funds reference these action frameworks.

Although the communication has set a target of devoting 20% of funding for climate related activities, it is unclear on how it will achieve this, failing to separate the funding streams supporting mitigation/adaptation and to specify their targets within sectoral policies. The communication does set an adequate coverage for climate mitigation within Cohesion Policy, setting to dedicate 20% to energy efficiency, unfortunately, only in the richer regions. Furthermore, climate adaptation (including improving habitat connectivity and reducing fragmentation, and improving the ecological status of water bodies and soils) and land based mitigation (such as financing for peatland (2) restoration) are completely dismissed and not at all integrated in the most important policies, cohesion and agriculture.

Furthermore, the amount proposed to be dedicated entirely to the environment and tackling climate change (the LIFE + funding stream) represents a meagre 0.31% of the total EU Budget. Not only is this an insignificant increase from the last funding period, additional actions and focus have increased, unmatched by financial resources. Although mainstreaming within the European funds is necessary for achieving environmental sustainability, targeted environmental investments are essential to support bottom-up activities that have the greatest impact in preserving biodiversity, supporting climate adaptation and capacity building.

The broad measures outlined in the budget proposal still need to be translated into specific implementation actions within sector regulations and other planning tools. This means that the Commission can still propose the right measures, despite missing the opportunity of setting a clear direction through the budget proposal.

There are currently no guarantees that integration of financing biodiversity, Natura 2000, and climate mitigation and adaptation within other policies will happen. This is now dependent on the different sectoral regulations. Serious proposals must be delivered from the Common Agriculture Policy, the Cohesion Policy, and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund. The European Parliament and the Member States must also pledge a significantly increased sum to LIFE, a realistic allocation to ensure sufficient financing for biodiversity and Nature 2000 priorities.

More information: [Bruna Campos](#), EU Financial Perspectives Policy Officer, BirdLife Europe / Conservation International - Europe

Notes

- 1 - European Commission (2011), A Budget for Europe 2020, COM(2011)500 final
- 2 - Peat has a high carbon content and covers 2% of the world of which one third is found in Europe.

[-> Top](#)

Biodiversity strategy under the Polish Presidency

In December the Polish presidency will chair a second round of discussions in the Environment Council on the new EU Biodiversity Strategy. The June meeting under the Hungarian Presidency had agreed that the strategy and its six sub-targets would be key to enabling the EU to reach its 2020 biodiversity target, but called for further discussion on the twenty actions set out in the strategy.

The question now is whether Member States will renege on the commitments signed up to in 2010 at the Nagoya meeting of the CBD and attempt to further dilute the already weak actions proposed by the Commission, or press for something more ambitious

At stake is not just the EU's reputation for being a global leader in the field of nature conservation, but also the survival of Europe's wildlife, and the delivery of ecosystem benefits. EU nature protection measures work, if they are properly implemented and financed, and biodiversity is worth billions of Euros to Europe's economy.

Ministers would do well to note that between the June 21st and December 19th meetings of the Environment Council, according to current estimates of global extinction rates, between 3600 and 13,600 species will have gone extinct.

More information: [Alistair Taylor](#), EU Biodiversity Policy Officer at RSPB

[-> Top](#)

Climate change: from talk to action



Concern for the natural world is a relevant part of the climate change debate which is often sidelined, but Scotland's climate change legislation has the power to ensure that we avoid climate action which is unsustainable and causes unnecessary damage to the natural environment.

The Scottish Climate Change Act was passed in 2009 and is currently the strongest climate change legislation anywhere in the world. The strength of the Act can be partly attributed to the Stop Climate Chaos Scotland coalition (SCCS), within which RSPB Scotland is a key player.

SCCS is the largest and most powerful civil society coalition in Scotland, made up of organisations ranging from community and faith groups, environment and development organisations, and students and trade unions. Part of our success has come from working together across such a diverse range of organisations under the common goal: to stop climate

chaos.

SCCS saw most of its top asks delivered in the Scottish Climate Change Act, and for RSPB Scotland this legislation was a great success. We led in arguing for a sustainable approach to climate change, and secured an overarching sustainability duty regarding all action under the Bill, which will be vital in ensuring that climate change solutions are found which do not cause environmental harm. We also secured firm adaptation measures, and successfully championed a requirement for the Government to produce a sustainable land use strategy with obligations towards meeting climate change objectives.

Legislation was only the first step in galvanising action and we are continuing to work with SCCS to ensure that the Act is implemented swiftly and sustainably. Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions are a small percentage of global emissions so we cannot tackle this problem alone. We want to encourage and support civil society groups in other countries to work together to create momentum for urgent action on climate change, and have produced a short film about the role of SCCS in influencing the Scottish Climate Change Act.

Watch our short video to find out more: [SCCS Climate Change Act film](#)

For more information please click [here](#).

[-> Top](#)

Greece: facilities for blind visitors in nature reserve: a country's first



The Hellenic Ornithological Society (HOS, BirdLife in Greece) has inaugurated a series of trails and visitor facilities in a small nature reserve near Athens (Vravona wetland) that include purpose-built facilities for blind visitors – a first in Greece. These include interpretation panels and board rails in Braille, a number of audio displays, as well as unique access solutions. The nature reserve, which is situated next to an archaeological site, is proving very popular for a number of schools for blind people in the Athens region. As a result, the nearby archaeological site has also allowed blind visitors to touch some of the sculptures, therefore providing a more complete sensorial experience for the visually impaired visitors.

[-> Top](#)

European Spring Alive season ended on a high note

The European part of the 2011 Spring Alive edition is over. Once again, the campaign proved how many Europeans enjoy watching spring migrants.

Thanks to the engagement of thousands of children and their families, a record number of 125 768 observations was registered on the Spring Alive website.

Although the site is now closed for European observations on www.springalive.net, already from September onwards, African children will be watching and registering Spring Alive birds arriving at their wintering grounds. Thus, we all will be able to observe the continuation of the migration cycle when birds return to their wintering grounds.

Every bird lover is therefore invited to join www.springalive.net and follow their Spring Alive species while learning new facts about their favourite bird.

[-> Top](#)

OSPAR acts to safeguard seven seabird species



This summer, Contracting Parties to the OSPAR Convention have taken a significant step towards ensuring coordinated, international protection for seven species of seabird in the north-east Atlantic, ranging from the ivory gull in the far north to the little shearwater in the far south of the OSPAR region, and including the Critically Endangered Balearic shearwater.

The OSPAR Convention is an agreement between coastal states around the North East Atlantic region, and provides an important forum for international cooperation on marine conservation issues such as marine pollution, and protecting vulnerable species. As an 'observer' organisation to OSPAR, BirdLife International has worked hard over recent years to expand the OSPAR official list of priority seabird species, and to ensure that conservation actions are agreed for these species.

OSPAR Contracting Parties have signed up to a range of conservation actions to protect the seven seabird species, including the establishment of marine protected areas, increased protection from predation at the breeding colonies, and quantifying and reducing bycatch in commercial fisheries operations.

We hope this latest move by OSPAR signals the start of a new era of increased protection for our seabirds at sea, giving them the protection they need to face the increasing threats in the marine environment.

[-> Top](#)

German European NRW minister visits nature conservation project 'Hetter'



On the 22th of May, the International Day of Biodiversity, Dr. Angelica Schwall-Düren, Minister for European Affairs in the Northrhine-Westphalian (NRW) Government, together with Josef Tumbrinck, president of NABUs branch in NRW and other NABU-representatives, visited the successful nature conservation project for wetland bird species in the „Hetter“. The Hetter is part of the Lower Rhine Special Protection Area (SPA), where the NABU NRW and the Northrhine-Westfalian Foundation for Culture and Nature Conservation – similar to the National Trust in UK - have been taking care of about 40 breeding pairs of the black-tailed godwit for 25 years. By now they have become the most important breeding population of these endangered marsh-area-birds in whole Northrhine-Westphalia.

Since the beginning of the nineties, the NRW-Foundation and NABU have bought 100 ha of this large 658 ha declared nature reserve. The regional NABU-center for nature conservation in the city of Kranenburg and the nature conservation center of the county of Kleve manage the protected area. The most important partners however, are the local farmers. Only with their help the wetlands of particular importance could be developed to one of the greatest marsh-marigold-area of the whole Lower Rhine area. The Hetter marsh areas all in all are home to the big five of marsh-area-birds: not only for the Black-tailed Godwit, but also for the Northern Lapwing, the Common Snipe, the European Curlew and the Common Redshank.

In 2009, the nature conseration-center of Kleve county and the NABU-center Kranenburg started a new EU LIFE+-project. Sponsored by the state of NRW and the NRW-Foundation, this project is supposed to improve the situation and protection of marsh-area-birds in the „Hetter“ in the future. However, the „Hetter“ is only one of many examples of successful nature conservation projects, whose consistency depends on European financial means. „Therefore the guarantee to maintain LIFE as the important European financial instrument for nature conservation projects has an enormous importance to rescue our biodiversity“, said Tumbrinck and appealed to Minister Angelica Schwall-Düren to lobby for this especially on national level, as Northrhine-Westphalia plays an important role in the Bundesrat, the

chamber of the federal states in Germany.

Birgit Königs, NABU NRW press relations officer

[-> Top](#)

Portuguese atlas of wintering and migratory birds - join the project!



This year in Portugal, a new national project will be launched, which is sure to involve the entire Portuguese community of birdwatchers and ornithologists. A new Atlas of the Wintering and Migratory Birds will be created, through a partnership between SPEA – Portuguese Society for the Study of Birds (BirdLife in Portugal), the University of Évora, the Regional Secretariat of Environment and the Sea (Azores), the Natural Park of Madeira and the Institute for Nature Conservation and Biodiversity, with co-funding from the EDP Fund for Biodiversity 2010.

The preparation of the operation has started and field work will begin during August. The call for volunteers is already on, and we are sure you would like to be part of a project that will certainly be a landmark for Portuguese Ornithology! To participate, you just need to know how to identify birds, to be fit for walking and have 1-2 free mornings or afternoons between August 1st – October 15th (migratory census) and/or November 15th – February 15th.

If you come to Portugal, during the Atlas season, you're now invited to join the project!

To register as a volunteer or more information, please contact [Vanessa Oliveira](#)

[-> Top](#)

New BirdLife report on Species Action Plans for threatened birds in Europe

In 2008-2010 BirdLife helped the European Commission to develop several new species action plans, as well as to review the implementation and revise some of the already working plans. The results of this project are now available in the Review of the Implementation of Species Action Plans for Threatened Birds in the European Union, Final Report (2011). The report contains a summary overview of the progress with recovery of threatened species as well as individual species accounts for 21 species. It can be downloaded from the BirdLife website [here](#).

[-> Top](#)

Birdwatching Festival of Sagres: we await you!

Do not miss the opportunity to observe the largest concentration of raptors in migration!

This autumn Sagres (Algarve, Portugal) will be an irresistible destination for birdwatchers. During three days, from September 30th to October 2nd, we propose to come and live out your passion for birds, approaching creatures as beautiful as Booted Eagle, Short-toed Eagle, Imperial Eagle, Egyptian vulture, Hobby, Eleonora's Falcon, Griffin and many more.

You'll have the opportunity to participate in many different activities, as field trips led by experts in birdwatching, boat trips, night trips, workshops, lectures, birdrace, and much more. We will also present the first awareness campaign and donations for the conservation of Sagres steppe birds. There are special prices for accommodation and meals for the participants.

To book your entry, visit www.birdwatchingsagres.com or contact [Alexandra Lopes](#) from SPEA/BirdLife in Portugal.

[-> Top](#)

Events

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

[-> Top](#)



This publication receives its support from the European Commission, the RSPB and numerous other EU BirdLife Partners.



BirdLife Europe - Avenue de la Toison d'Or 67 - 1060 Brussels
T: +32 2 280 08 30 - F: +32 2 230 38 02 - e-mail: europe@birdlife.org
<http://europe.birdlife.org>
Responsible editor: Angelo Caserta

To unsubscribe, follow [this link](#)

To forward this message to a friend, follow [this link](#)

To subscribe to BirdLife International Newsletters, follow this link: <http://europe.birdlife.org>

POWERED BY [PHPLIST](#) v 2.10.10, © [TINCAN LTD](#)