

# Greening Europe

BirdLife's priorities for the **Swedish** EU Presidency

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## Will Sweden lead the way?

Sweden takes over the EU Presidency at a crucial and challenging moment. A new European Parliament has just been elected and the Commission is about to end its term. At the same time, the future of the Lisbon Treaty remains uncertain. In such times, strong leadership from the Presidency is more important than ever - especially as political challenges do not wait until the Institutions have regained their capacity to act.

Firstly, in the midst of an economic and environmental crisis, decision makers, and we all, have to understand that sustainability is not only a nice word - but the only way humankind can survive in the long run. Sweden is well-placed to lead the way, promoting the understanding that the cost of environmental inaction would dwarf the current economic problems by far. There is no bail-out plan for the planet, we have to act now.

Secondly, Europe and the world have to realise that our planetary crisis is not 'only' about greenhouse gases, but about the collapse of whole ecosystems. Sweden must pave the way for stronger EU and global action on biodiversity. In 2001 the last Swedish Presidency adopted Europe's 'Gothenburg target' to halt biodiversity loss by 2010 - which the EU will fail. This Presidency needs to ensure we learn the lessons - because we cannot afford another failure.

Thirdly, in December a global deal has to be achieved to save the world's climate. Sweden must ensure the EU restores its reputation as global leader in climate change policy.



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### BIRDLIFE'S FIVE KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL SWEDISH EU PRESIDENCY

- Member States reconfirm their commitment to tackle the loss of biodiversity, including through **better implementation of the EU Nature Directives**, and the EU makes progress towards an **ambitious post-2010 biodiversity target**.
- The EU champions an **ambitious global climate change agreement**, including 40% (30% domestically) reduction of EU greenhouse gases by 2020 and aiming at **resilient ecosystems**.
- The Presidency facilitates a transparent **debate about the future EU budget**, including a fundamental **reform of the Common Agricultural Policy**.
- The Council calls for **environmental sustainability** to be the primary objective of the future **Common Fisheries Policy**.
- The Presidency, together with all EU Institutions use the current economic crisis to **increase public investments in sustainable policies** instead of measures that weaken ecosystems.



Bohemian Waxwing - *Bombycilla garrulus* - © C Timmons »

**“ The EU needs a bold, measurable and hugely ambitious post-2010 target ”**

## **Biodiversity in 2010 and beyond - Turning the Tide**

In 2001, EU Heads of State committed themselves to stop biodiversity loss by 2010. When the Swedish Presidency takes over, there will be only six months to go. The mid-term review of the Biodiversity Action Plan, published last December, and BirdLife’s own data all show that this target will not be met. Although some major achievements have been made in protecting wildlife and nature in the EU, especially thanks to the Natura 2000 network, we are still losing species and their habitats at ever-increasing speed. Put simply, our current economic model is not compatible with the limits imposed by the Earth’s natural resources and ecosystems. We must find a path that is truly sustainable in an ecological sense and harmonious with human development goals. On the eve of 2010 and in the midst of a deep economic crisis, it is more important than ever that Europe reduces its “ecological footprint” – at home and worldwide.

The EU needs a bold, measurable and hugely ambitious post-2010 biodiversity target and a consistent policy to go with it. Stopping any further loss is essential but not enough. Animal and plant populations are already severely depleted and ecosystems dependent on them are heavily degraded, especially in the more industrialised countries. Helping these species and ecosystems to recover and function normally is imperative now, especially as climate change puts huge strains on them. The time to act is now, and the Swedish Presidency has a key responsibility to make it happen.

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### **Under the Swedish Presidency:**

- ✦ **The Council, the new European Parliament and the College of Commissioners** should re-confirm their strong commitment to halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 and beyond.
- ✦ **The Commission and all Member States** need to improve the implementation and financing of Natura 2000, including speeding up the designation of marine protected areas.
- ✦ **The Presidency and the Commission** should work together in agreeing an ambitious, measurable and challenging post-2010 biodiversity target for the EU and globally, building on the outcomes of the Athens and Stromstad high level conferences.
- ✦ **The Presidency and all Member States** should start new, and support existing initiatives to communicate the importance of biodiversity and ecosystems in 2010, the International Year of Biodiversity.

*“If Europe and the world do not act now on climate change, societies worldwide will face unprecedented disaster”*

## Saving our planet, saving our climate

The evidence is overwhelming. If Europe and the world do not act now on climate change, societies worldwide will face unprecedented disaster, far outweighing the current economic crisis. And climate change is part of the wider, deep crisis of our planet's ecosystems that might soon stop delivering many of the environmental services

humans and their economies depend upon. 2009 must end with a bold and ambitious global deal on climate change in Copenhagen. The EU and the world cannot afford anything else. This deal must combine decisive action for the reduction of greenhouse gases with a comprehensive, sufficiently-financed climate change adaptation strategy. Both must be underpinned by the principle of solidarity with poor countries, and the necessity to strengthen the resilience of our ecosystems in everything we do.

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### Under the Swedish Presidency:

- Championed by Sweden, **all EU Institutions and Member States** must press for an ambitious global climate change agreement at the Copenhagen climate summit. The EU should commit to a 40% greenhouse gas emission reduction by 2020 (based on 1990 levels) – at least 30% to be achieved through domestic action. Reducing energy consumption and increasing energy efficiency must be the top priority to this end.
- The European Commission and all Member States** must ensure the EU's 2020 target of 20% renewable energy will be reached - without undermining the resilience of ecosystems. Adequate implementation of strategic environmental assessments and EU nature legislation is key. The Commission needs to guide and enforce this as national renewable action plans are developed.
- The Commission** must ensure that the 10% renewable energy target for the transport sector does not lead to biofuel production increasing deforestation, peat drainage and other harmful land use change that would result in increased emissions and loss of biodiversity. The issue of indirect land use change and the implementation of biofuels sustainability criteria must be taken forward by the Commission in a transparent and scientific manner. Robust standards must be proposed for all biomass use for energy.
- The Presidency and the European Parliament** should use the Commission's White Paper on climate change adaptation to champion a robust EU policy that strengthens the resilience of ecosystems and biodiversity – as the most efficient and cost effective protection of humankind in times of climate change.
- In the run-up to Copenhagen, the **Presidency and the European Commission** must promote a strong and comprehensive regime to use carbon financing to stop the destruction of tropical forests. Such forests harbour a large part of global biodiversity as well as being a vital carbon store.

Brambling · *Fringilla montifringilla* · © S Connolly »



Great Tit · Parus major · © M Finn »

## “The EU urgently needs to develop a vision for the CAP after 2013”

### Reforming the budget, reforming the CAP

At the end of 2009 the European Commission is due to publish its long awaited Communication on the EU budget review. Sweden will have an opportunity to orchestrate a genuine and transparent debate amongst Member States and stakeholders about what budget Europe needs.

BirdLife International wants to ensure this opportunity to make the EU more sustainable is not missed. In particular biodiversity decline and climate change need to be addressed in the future budget, as these are the most pressing challenges for the environment and a big threat to human well-being and socio-economic development.

One of the key challenges in the discussion on the future budget is what agriculture policy (CAP) we need in Europe and how expensive it should be. The current CAP absorbs over 40% of the EU budget but the majority of its payments are unrelated to any current policy objective and simply reflect historic levels of production. However, the temptation to reduce the CAP budget, without reforming it, would be a mistake. The EU urgently needs to develop a vision for the CAP after 2013 which eliminates wasteful anachronisms and instead rewards farmers for the actual delivery of valuable public goods such as wildlife habitat, watershed management and carbon storage.

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#### Under the Swedish Presidency:

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**The Presidency and the European Commission** should strongly promote the principle of ‘public money for public goods’ and the need to make biodiversity decline and climate change key areas for future EU spending. More platforms for open and transparent debate on EU Budget reforms should be created.
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**The Presidency and all EU Institutions** must work towards a new model of the CAP. This should build on the current Rural Development Regulation, but be clearly targeted at sustainability, with public support focusing on land management that delivers clear benefits to society.
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**EU Member States and the Commission** must ensure that all public funds, including economy rescue packages, do support and not harm the resilience of ecosystems, and the fight against climate change.

## “Environmental sustainability should be the primary objective of the future Common Fisheries Policy”

### EU set to stop slaughter of seabirds in fisheries

Ten years after the initial commitment it made at the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the European Commission is set this year to adopt its Community Plan of Action on Seabirds. This will be the EU's blueprint for tackling the needless loss of seabirds as bycatch in long-line and other fishing gears.

The need for EU action is undoubtedly urgent. At current rates of decline the Critically Endangered Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus* is predicted to be extinct in 40 years. Regional bycatch rates for other Mediterranean species are also alarming. The urgency for action is also underlined by data from the latest IUCN Red Data list showing that albatrosses and petrels are declining faster than any other major group of birds, with fisheries impacts held mainly responsible.

According to the FAO's recently adopted best practice technical guidelines, the Action plan should introduce mitigation measures for any fisheries incurring seabird bycatch, i.e. longlining, trawling and gillnets. It will also guide EU action on seabird bycatch beyond the strict bounds of Community waters to engage the Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) which manage fisheries in international waters.

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#### Under the Swedish Presidency:

- **The Commission** should propose a robust Community Plan of Action on Seabirds based on the recently adopted FAO guidelines. This should be underpinned by a comprehensive data collection system and effective legislation.
- **The Presidency and the European Parliament** should adopt a strong positive response to such a proposal, and promote its swift implementation.
- **The Commission** should give high priority to follow-up research projects aimed at testing and evaluating bycatch mitigation measures.

### Putting environmental protection at the heart of the new CFP

In April the Commission published its Green Paper outlining the policy options for the future of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) which is due for reform by 2012. The Swedish Presidency will be tasked with facilitating both a political and technical debate on the issue and proposing the way forward.

Nobody would argue with the fact that CFP has been failing, despite some limited improvements introduced through the last reform in 2002. According to the European Commission, more than 80% of fish stocks in Community waters are overfished, contributing to widespread declines in fishing communities and loss of livelihoods. Moreover, damaging fishing practices continue to have a serious impact on marine habitats and ecosystems.

#### Under the Swedish Presidency:

- As response to the Green Paper, **the Commission and the Presidency** should work together to facilitate an in-depth debate about the future of the CFP, involving relevant stakeholders including civil society organisations.
- **The Council** in its conclusions should call for:
  - environmental sustainability to be the primary objective of the future CFP, underpinned by the precautionary principle and an ecosystem approach
  - a drastic cut in fleet capacity
  - decisions on Total Allowable Catches (TACs) and quotas to follow scientific advice
  - the reformed CFP to fulfil the obligations of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, in particular with regard to achieving Good Environmental Status of Community Waters by 2020

Arctic Tern · *Sterna paradisaea* · © S Styrup »

# SWEDEN IN THE SPOTLIGHT



## SOF (BirdLife in Sweden): monitoring birds, protecting nature, and inspiring people

BirdLife Partners play an essential role in implementing the EU nature conservation policy on the ground. They also involve people in their activities, making them feel the beauty of nature and birds and the importance of protecting our biodiversity.



### The EU Birds Directive is protecting birds at home and on their journeys

In Sweden, the EU's Birds Directive has brought new strength to the national conservation work through helping to protect the most valuable sites for birds, which have been integrated into Natura 2000, the EU network of protected areas. The EU Birds Directive is also the backbone for the protection of millions of migratory birds, which leave Sweden at the end of the summer and cross many European countries before reaching their destination in the south.



### Birds tell us about our environment

Thousands of SOF volunteers regularly travel the vast Swedish landscapes to obtain data on birds and provide information for the national bird monitoring scheme. The data show that species such as Siberian Jay *Perisoreus infaustus*, Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker *Picoides tridactylus*, or the more common Willow Tit *Parus montanus* have declined in the last decades. Such bird data are invaluable for targeting any national, and European, conservation work. They give us a clear signal that our environment, and forest in this particular case, is not healthy.



### Helping people care about nature

SOF (BirdLife in Sweden) believes that people who are personally involved and who participate in activities in nature will automatically also care for the environment. That is why SOF invests heavily in involving people in field excursions, hiking and bird feeding, to help them enjoy the beauty of birds and nature, raising awareness for the protection of the Natura 2000 network. Personal initiative and feelings are the starting point for effective nature conservation, performed from the heart.



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*“The review of the Sustainable Development Strategy has to be integrated with the review of the Lisbon Strategy”*

## Sustainable Development Strategy

Eight years after the first EU Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) was born at the Gothenburg summit under the last Swedish Presidency, Sweden now has the opportunity to review the progress of its ‘baby’. This will be done on the basis of the Commission’s second progress report (based on the renewed SDS adopted in 2006) expected in the second half of 2009. The report will be accompanied by a roadmap setting out priority areas for the future implementation of the SDS.

This review comes at a critical moment when the world faces simultaneous economic and environmental crises, which some have called a ‘perfect storm’. A key lesson to learn from this is that sustainable development needs to be put on top of the agenda once again. The objectives and principles of the SDS should therefore be reaffirmed more strongly to guide the EU into a more sustainable economy, which respects environmental limits and generates social welfare .

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European Robin · *Erithacus rubecula* · © J. Fox »

### Under the Swedish Presidency:

- ✦ **The Commission and Member States** should reconfirm the objectives and guiding principles for sustainable development as approved by the June 2005 Council. These principles should become the basis for all EU policies and activities.
- ✦ **The Presidency, working with the Commission** should launch a debate, involving all relevant stakeholders and civil society, on a re-orientation of the current GDP-led economic model. There is a need for a vision and practice that includes a more comprehensive measurement of progress that moves beyond GDP. This is essential to develop a concrete and realistic vision for sustainable development in the EU over the next 50 years.
- ✦ **The Commission and the Presidency** need to ensure that the work on the review of the SDS is integrated with the review of the Lisbon Strategy, for which the SDS needs to provide the overarching framework.

## BirdLife International Partnership in the EU

The BirdLife International Partnership strives to conserve birds, their habitats, and global biodiversity working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources.

This memorandum on the Swedish EU Presidency was produced by the European Division of BirdLife International and SOF, the Partner of BirdLife International in Sweden.

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For more information on the BirdLife Partnership visit <http://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/national/index.html>



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