



Greening Europe

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

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Rescue biodiversity NOW!

The Belgian Presidency takes over during the second half of the International Year of Biodiversity and will lead EU engagement at the 10th Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya, Japan, in October. Having just failed its own target of halting biodiversity decline by 2010, the EU cannot allow Nagoya to follow in the wake of last year's Copenhagen fiasco.

Recent years have seen a tremendous growth in our understanding of biodiversity and its value to human life. While the moral imperative to save the wonderful variety of life that makes this planet unique is as strong as ever, we now know how important biodiversity is to our own survival. The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) study is producing compelling evidence of the urgency of addressing biodiversity loss, the huge cost of keeping a 'business as usual' model and the relatively minor cost of taking effective action now. Ignorance is no longer an alibi.

The reform of the EU budget and of the EU's main sectoral policies is the first big test for Europe's commitment to a change-of-course, away from the self destructive logic of pillaging the resource base on which we all depend. The opportunity must be grasped and the EU must both put its own house in order and lead by example on the global scene. Missing the target to halt biodiversity loss by 2020 is no longer an option!



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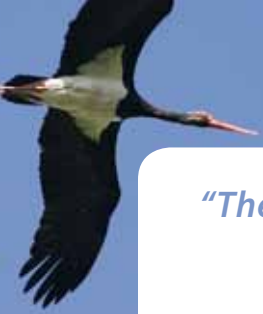
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BIRDLIFE'S KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL BELGIAN PRESIDENCY

- The **European Commission** should publish an ambitious new Biodiversity Strategy for the EU and initiate the production of 2020 strategies for different policy sectors, setting out the details of how to achieve its new 2020 target.
- The **Presidency and Member States** should ensure that ecosystem services provided by nature –such as flood prevention– are placed at the heart of National Adaptation Strategies.
- **EU institutions** must agree a viable vision for sweeping CAP reform, refocusing spending on rewarding farmers for the delivery of clearly defined public goods and on the acceleration of a true 'sustainability revolution' in EU farming.
- Significant resources must be allocated to **funding the Natura 2000 network**, to biodiversity conservation and ecosystem restoration both inside the EU and globally.
- The **Presidency** should call on the European Commission to instigate emergency measures to stop the slaughter of 200,000 seabirds in European fisheries each year.



Black Stork - *Ciconia nigra* - © Jules Fouarge »

“The EU should show strong leadership at the CBD COP10 in Nagoya”

A new biodiversity vision for Europe and beyond

The Belgian Presidency has a very important role to play in the second half of the International Year of Biodiversity. Under the preceding Spanish Presidency, Heads of State adopted an ambitious vision and a target to go beyond halting the loss of biodiversity to the restoration of species, habitats and ecosystems by 2020. BirdLife and other NGOs have been campaigning for the EU to show strong leadership in the run-up to the 10th Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which will take place on 11-29 October in Nagoya, Japan. At this meeting, the world is expected, amongst other decisions, to adopt a strong new 2020 biodiversity target.

The Belgian Presidency will organise another high-level conference on biodiversity and ecosystem services in September. This should serve as a platform to highlight

the messages coming out of a series of reports under the umbrella of The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) report, which will be formally launched at Nagoya. At the end of the Presidency, the European Commission is expected to publish its vision document for a new EU Biodiversity Strategy. BirdLife stresses the importance of putting the EU Birds and Habitats Directives at the core of the new Strategy, while plugging some important policy gaps, such as legislation on invasive alien species and soil ecosystems. In addition, securing more financing for the EU and global biodiversity, achieving better governance for biodiversity and ecosystems and reducing the biodiversity impact of production, consumption, trade and infrastructure development will be vital.

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Under the Belgian Presidency:

- The EU should show strong leadership at the CBD COP10 in Nagoya, both in the adoption of a new 2020 target and on other key issues such as the establishment of a new financing mechanism for biodiversity conservation, the creation of a policy-research platform and taking forward the programme on protected areas.
- The EU must help to launch and promote the key messages of the various TEEB reports, especially those related to policy and financing.
- The European Commission should publish an ambitious new Biodiversity Strategy for the EU and initiate the production of 2020 strategies for different policy sectors, setting out the details of how to achieve its new 2020 target.



“An ambitious climate policy is absolutely necessary”

Climate change - Time for action

The outcome of the Copenhagen negotiations is disappointing. But there is no time for fatalism. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports are clear: delay means real and permanent damage to the environment, societies and economies.

The EU has a double responsibility. On the one hand, it has to do everything possible to revive the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations and to reach an ambitious, fair and binding agreement, preferably in Cancun in December 2010. To achieve this, it is important to restore the confidence of developing countries by providing resources for climate adaptation and by facilitating technology transfer.

On the other hand, we should not wait for an international agreement to proceed internally. An ambitious climate policy is not simply meant to ‘set a good example’ but is necessary to reduce our energy dependence and to boost research and development.

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- ✦ **The EU Institutions must agree to enhance the Energy and Climate Package: Member States should commit to a target of 40% greenhouse gas emission reduction by 2020 with at least 30% of the effort to be achieved by domestic measures.**
- ✦ **The Presidency and Member States should ensure that ecosystem services provided by nature -such as flood prevention- are placed at the heart of National Adaptation Strategies. This approach is laid out in the Commission’s White Paper on Adaptation.**
- ✦ **The Presidency and Member States must decide how to ensure a fair EU contribution to international climate financing, stopping the destruction of tropical forests and strengthening the resilience of ecosystems in developing countries**

How can bioenergy become sustainable?

The EU approach to bioenergy is currently deeply flawed and risks causing widespread damage to biodiversity and ecosystems, depleting natural resources and harming vulnerable communities. It is also likely to fail the main objective of promoting renewable energy and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Indeed, unless strong corrective measures are instigated, the net impact of bioenergy deployment in the EU is likely to be an increase in greenhouse gas emissions. Under the Belgian Presidency the EU must take key actions to ensure that bioenergy promoted in the EU is truly sustainable. Concerns high on the political agenda will include the crucial issue of indirect land use change (ILUC), the extension of sustainability criteria to all biomass uses, the closing of many loopholes contained in current biofuel sustainability criteria and a review of the fundamentals of carbon accounting in relation to bioenergy.

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Under the Belgian Presidency:

- ✦ **The Presidency, Member States and the European Parliament must require the Commission to propose sustainability criteria for biomass (other than biofuels).**
- ✦ **The Member States and the European Parliament should demand that the Commission proposes legislation introducing a robust mechanism to account for the indirect land use change impacts of biofuels.**
- ✦ **The Presidency, Member States and the European Parliament should work to ensure that sustainability criteria are not watered down at the implementation stage and that unsustainable biofuels are not allowed to enter the EU market.**
- ✦ **The Presidency should promote a profound rethink of the EU’s approach to bioenergy, in particular the dangerously flawed assumption that all biomass combustion is carbon neutral.**

Corn Bunting · *Miliaria Calandra* · © René Dumoulin »



Red Kite · *Milvus milvus* · © John Carey »

“The CAP has a key role to play in preserving our biodiversity”

Saving a viable CAP

During the Belgian Presidency, the European Commission is expected to publish a Communication on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), outlining a reform of Europe's agriculture policy in the period after 2013. The CAP has a key role to play in preserving our biodiversity, landscape and ecosystems, in helping to put farming on a long term sustainable path of production and in preserving the resource base needed for long term food security.

Unfortunately, the current CAP is out of sync with current needs and priorities. It wastes huge sums of money on untargeted subsidies that are not linked to any policy outcomes and, all too often, promotes environmental degradation. At the same time, the CAP's budget is coming under increased scrutiny and pressure. The Belgian Presidency will play an important role in facilitating debate within the institutions and involving stakeholders. Council and Parliament must show courage and build on Commission proposals, drawing up a new, solid, credible and effective CAP, capable of facing up to the challenges of the present century.

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Under the Belgian Presidency:

- ✦ **EU Institutions must agree a viable vision for sweeping CAP reform, refocusing spending on rewarding farmers for the delivery of clearly defined public goods and on the acceleration of a true 'sustainability revolution' in EU farming.**
- ✦ **EU Institutions should make sure that the future CAP has a sufficient budget allocation for the achievement of its goals while building much stronger accountability and efficiency so that spending is effectively geared towards the achievement of objectives and outcomes that can be monitored and assessed in a transparent way.**



“The post-2013 budget must aim to build a truly sustainable resource-efficient economy”

Towards a greener budget

Following the publication of the European Commission's Communication on the future of the EU budget, the Belgian Presidency will have an important role in facilitating the debate with other institutions and stakeholders. The EU budget must be overhauled to bring it in line with EU priorities and needs. The current budget dedicates an insignificant share to biodiversity conservation and is still riddled with perverse subsidies and investments that promote environmental harm, from over-fishing to unsustainable agriculture practices and damaging transport infrastructure.

The post-2013 budget must aim to build a truly sustainable resource-efficient economy. Investments in Europe's 'natural capital' -biodiversity and ecosystems- must be dramatically scaled up. The Natura 2000 network of EU protected areas must finally receive European co-funding in line with the legal obligation to protect the network. All funding lines should be 'ecosystem-proofed' to ensure that no EU funds damage biodiversity or worsen climate change. Significant investment must be channeled into green technologies, energy and resource efficiency and sustainable land management.

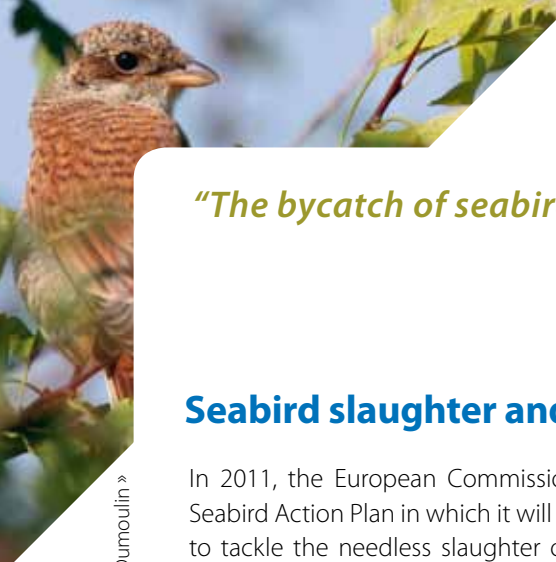
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Under the Belgian Presidency:

- ✦ **EU Institutions and Member States must engage in an open and constructive debate about making the EU budget an engine for the transformation of Europe into a truly sustainable and resource efficient economy.**
- ✦ **All funding streams must be reviewed and reformed to bring them in-line with the principles of doing no harm to the climate and ecosystems while contributing to biodiversity conservation, ecosystem restoration, resource efficiency, climate mitigation and climate adaptation.**
- ✦ **Significant resources must be allocated to funding the Natura 2000 network, to biodiversity conservation and ecosystem restoration both inside the EU and globally.**



Pink footed goose · Anser brachyrhynchus · © Charly Fairinelle



Red backed Shrike · *Lanius collurio* · © René Dumoulin »

“The bycatch of seabirds is symptomatic of problems with our fisheries”

Seabird slaughter and fisheries reform

In 2011, the European Commission is due to adopt a Seabird Action Plan in which it will outline an EU strategy to tackle the needless slaughter of 200,000 seabirds in EU fisheries each year. An Action Plan is a good start but emergency measures are needed now for those birds most at risk such as the Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus*.

The bycatch of seabirds is symptomatic of problems with our fisheries. Fishing is the single most influential human activity on marine ecosystems and overfishing is the principal factor damaging those ecosystems upon which fisheries depend. As more fish stocks face collapse, it is clear that the EU must reform the Common Fisheries Policy for real and not miss another opportunity as it did under its 2002 'reform'.

In 2011 the European Commission is due to publish its proposal for a new Common Fisheries Policy Regulation. The Belgian Presidency will play a key role in consulting within the EU institutions and with stakeholders in the run up to this proposal.

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Under the Belgian Presidency:

- ✦ **The Presidency should raise the issue of seabird bycatch with the European Commission and Member States, asking for immediate emergency measures, while drawing up ambitious Conclusions upon the publication of the Commission's Seabird Action Plan.**
- ✦ **The European Commission and the Presidency should establish negotiations on the Common Fisheries Policy based on the principle that ecological stability is the foundation objective of this policy and a pre-requisite for a viable fishing industry.**
- ✦ **The European Commission and the Presidency should ensure that any fisheries proposals are integrated into other EU marine policies, specifically the obligation to work towards achieving good environmental status of Community waters as specified in the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.**





Bringing back rare grasslands: the Helianthème LIFE+ project

From 2009 to 2013 Natagora and Natuurpunt (BirdLife in Belgium) are upscaling their efforts to preserve rare dry calcareous and stony grasslands in 23 sites in the lower and middle valleys of the Meuse basin, Belgium. Within the framework of the LIFE+ Helianthème

project, co-financed by the European Commission, the partners are restoring individual units of dry grassland and are raising awareness about their unique nature values such as rare plant and insect communities.

<http://www.life-heliantheme.eu>.

For other LIFE projects, visit www.natagora.be/life and www.natuurpunt.be/life



Empowering people to protect nature

Natuurpunt and Natagora have a long tradition of involving people in wildlife monitoring activities. In 2009 over 15,000 people participated in one or more citizen science projects such as counting garden birds, swallows, butterflies and mammals.

In 2008 the Belgian BirdLife Partners launched a joint bilingual website: www.waarnemingen.be and www.observations.be. Using these websites, people can easily record their observations. In less than 2 years, over 6,000 volunteers registered over 2 million observations, which were collected in a database covering 9,000 species.



Solar energy for nature

Climate change is high on the agenda of both Belgian BirdLife Partners, Natuurpunt and Natagora. One of their responses has been a programme to promote the use of solar power, which informs people about costs and benefits, and gives members the opportunity to buy installations at a pre-negotiated price. In

2009, more than 700 families bought 'their' solar panels. This programme also benefits nature, because their chosen solar power company donates a considerable part of its profits to a nature fund.

BELGIUM IN THE SPOTLIGHT



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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 Belgian EU presidency was produced by the European Division of BirdLife International, Natagora and Natuurpunt, the Partners of BirdLife International in Belgium.

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



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