

## Editorial

### New Rural Development Regulation

On June 20<sup>th</sup> the EU Council of Agriculture Ministers formally adopted the final text of the new Council Regulation on Support for Rural Development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). This follows a long debate that has seen BirdLife International deeply engaged in the effort to give the EU a better rural development policy.

The new Regulation brings under a single financing instrument what is known as the CAP II Pillar, the only part of the CAP subsidies that is specifically targeted at explicit policy goals such as environmental protection, job creation in rural areas and boosting the competitiveness of EU farmers. Despite spending a much smaller amount of EU money than Pillar I (or direct subsidies), Rural Development has been increasingly playing a role in reconciling agriculture and the environment, for example through the Agri-environmental schemes.

The new Regulation, though much less ambitious than the one BirdLife was advocating for, does include some extremely important elements that could prove vital in the fight to save

Europe's biodiversity. Agri-environmental schemes will remain mandatory for Member States and will be joined by new forest-environmental measures to finance eco-friendly forest management practices. A major new feature of the regulation is the Natura 2000 payment option that can reward farmers for farming sensibly in sites protected by the Birds and Habitats Directives.

However, a disappointing outcome has been the postponement until 2010 of the reform of the Less Favoured Area payments. Under the current system, money is not efficiently directed to areas where it is important to guarantee the continuation of farming activities and there are no particular environmental standards attached to these top up payments.

Key elements of the reform that have been retained are: attaching measurable objectives to measures, integrating different measures and axes in order to ensure a coherent sustainable development policy, and the new instruments, such as payments for Natura 2000 and forest environment measures, which can be used effectively for biodiversity conservation. These measures should be able to bridge the gap between the farming and conservation

communities.

The Commission will also soon present the Council with the Strategic Guidelines and the Implementing Regulation later this year. These will spell out the details of the legislation and its spending but will also provide MS with vision and guidance about the use of the new Rural Development instruments.

The approval of the RD regulation is a step in the right direction but this progress is severely threatened by the looming cuts to the overall Pillar II budget. The EU Heads of State summit on June 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> has spectacularly failed to reach an agreement on the EU Financial Perspective. Proposals that have been under discussion in the last few months have suggested cuts of up to 20% to the Rural Development budget. Such a development would effectively kill any hope of achieving the Gothenborg target of halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010. This would be unjustifiable to European taxpayers considering that the Pillar I lavish subsidies would remain untouched in spite of their poor value for money to EU taxpayers.

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### Special points of interest:

- Declaration on Sustainable development
- Environment Council



## Declaration on Sustainable Development: European Council June 2005

The European Council, under the Luxembourg Presidency, apart from dealing with the two “NO” votes on the Constitution from France and the Netherlands, as well as the deadlock on negotiations with the Budget (Financial Perspective), also adopted a Declaration on Guiding Principles for Sustainable Development, in June (16-17).

This was Annexed to the Conclusions of the Council. The Declaration reinforces that Sustainable Development is an overarching objective for the Union and it states as its key objectives:

1. Environmental Protection, 2. Social Equity and Cohesion, 3. Economic Prosperity, and 4. Meeting our International Responsibilities.

It also states as its guiding principles: 1. Promotion and Protection of Fundamental Rights, 2. Solidarity within and between generations, 3. Open and democratic society.

4. Involvement of Citizens, 5. Involvement of businesses and social partners, 6. Policy coherence and governance, 7. Policy integration, 8. Use best available knowledge, 9. Precautionary principle, and 10. Make polluters pay.

On the key objective of environmental protection the declaration states:

*“Safeguard the earth’s capacity to support life in all its diversity, respect the limits of the planet’s natural resources and ensure a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment. Prevent and reduce environmental pollution and promote sustainable production and consumption to break the*

*link between economic growth and environmental degradation.”*

Also of importance are the key principles of policy coherence and integration, as well as the precautionary principle and making the polluters pay principle.

During the next six months the Commission will publish a Communication on the Sustainable Development Strategy which is expected to be adopted in the European Council meeting in December, under the UK Presidency, as the new Sustainable Development Strategy of the Union.

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## The financial perspective 2007-2013

The European Council meeting in Brussels on 16 and 17 June failed to reach an agreement on the financial perspective after several Member States, particularly the UK, Sweden and The Netherlands, rejected the final compromise proposals presented by the Presidency to the Summit.

Talks will resume under the UK Presidency with a view to reaching a political agreement at the European Council in December. The UK has linked any changes to its rebate with further reforms of the CAP, with the intention of decreasing the percentage of the EU budget that is spent on agriculture.

BirdLife has been campaigning to defend the proposed budget for rural development from cuts, and instead

to increase the budget for this programme by transferring funds from Pillar I to Pillar II. As another matter of priority, BirdLife has been calling on EU decision-makers to allocate



Great Snipe (*Gallinago media*) by Peter Morris

sufficient funds to Natura 2000, on the basis that the Commission estimates that at least EUR 6.1 billion per year is required to finance

Natura 2000. As regards the EU’s external actions, BirdLife is calling on the EU to allocate around EUR 250 million per year to tackling globally important environmental problems such as climate change and biodiversity loss.

BirdLife welcomes the European Parliament’s report on the financial perspective that was adopted on 8 June which is strong on all three priority issues, and we will continue to campaign for an EU budget that delivers clear benefits for people and wildlife.

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## Launch of seven new inventories of Important Bird Areas for new Member States

On 10 May BirdLife launched seven national inventories of Important Bird Areas (IBAs) at the European Commission's DG Environment in Brussels. In the format of an afternoon seminar the books were presented by representatives of the respective BirdLife Partners from Estonia (Andres Kalamees), Latvia (Edmunds Racinskis), Lithuania (Liutauras Raudonikis), Poland (Pawel Sidlo), Slovakia (Rastislav Rybanic), Cyprus (Martin Hellicar) and Malta (John Borg). Introductory presentations on BirdLife and its IBA programme were given by Claire Papazoglou and Zoltan Waliczky.

With the launch of these publications BirdLife has now completed the process of IBA identification in all of the

ten new Member States which joined the EU in 2004.

In the presence of the new Director of Directorate B of DG Environment, Mr Ladislav Miko, and many other officials from the Commission and the Permanent Representations of Poland, Slovakia and Malta, the presentations also evaluated the progress made by the new Member States with the classification of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) under the EU Birds Directive. BirdLife asks all IBAs to be classified as SPAs and adequately protected and managed under EU law.

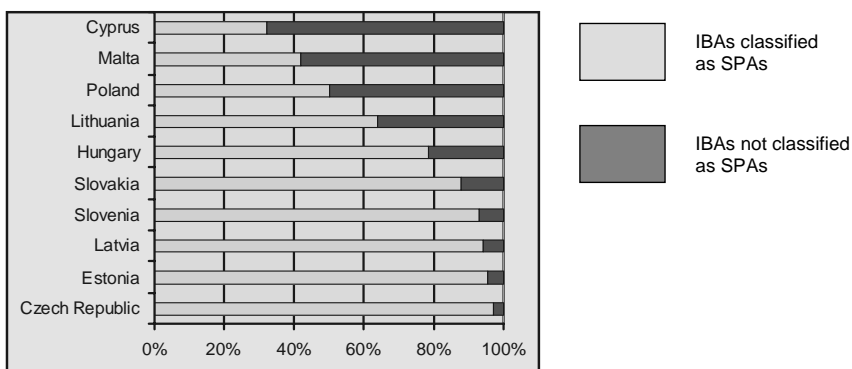
IBAs cover on average 14% of the combined land area of the new Member States, and many of these countries have already classified a high proportion of them as SPAs (e.g. Slo-

venia, Czech Republic, Estonia and Latvia more than 90%). Although some countries still have some work to do, it can be stated that in general the new Member States have progressed quicker and further compared to many of the old Member States, who are still lagging behind more than 25 years after the Birds Directive entered into force.

It is a high priority for BirdLife that SPA classification will be completed very soon in all Member States (as part of the Natura 2000 network, and including marine areas), so that the focus of work can shift to proper protection and management of the sites.

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Percentage of IBAs that have been classified as SPAs



Bulwer's Petrel (*Bulweria bulwerii*) by Paul Hirst



## WFD Seminar 11-12 May 2005

ECO organized a seminar on the Water Framework Directive with the help of the RSPB Water Unit, and in particular Ruth Davis and Sarah Oppenheimer on 11-12 May, in Brussels. In total, 16 BirdLife Partners attended the seminar, which served as a very good introduction to this important Directive.

Most talks were by the RSPB but all Partners had the opportunity to talk of their experiences with the Direc-

tive and give information about what is happening in their country.

Partners learnt about problems with the implementation of the Directive in particular the problem of intercalibration, as well as the opportunities presented as regards encouraging reforms for the Common Agricultural Policy and conservation of Natura 2000.

There were also talks by three external speakers. Stefan Scheuer from the

EEB, Eva Royo Gelabert from WWF and Jorge Rodriguez-Romero from the Water Unit of DG Environment.

BirdLife is grateful to the RSPB, the representatives of the other NGOs and the European Commission for attending and giving talks and the European Commission for co-funding this seminar.

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## Europe's countryside alive exhibition launched in the European

The BirdLife International "Europe's Countryside Alive" photo competition exhibition was officially opened in a special event held at the European Parliament on 1st June 2005.

Award-winning images, selected from over one thousand entries from amateur photographers all over Europe, provided a stunning display and thought-provoking reminder of the need to keep Europe's Countryside alive.

The event was hosted by Dorette Corbey, MEP, with Canan Orhun, BirdLife's Head of the European Division. The exhibition was officially opened by special guest, Gabriel Sierra, International wildlife photographer and one of the professional judges of the competition.

During the event, trophies were presented to the winners; Helder Afonso from Portugal (Category: Bird Portraits) and Miroslav Demko from Slo-

vakia (Category: Farming in the 21st Century). Unfortunately, the third winner, Daniel Vasset from France (Category: The Countryside Alive) was not able to attend the event.

An online version of the exhibition and more information about the photo competition can be found on BirdLife's Farming for Life website at [www.birdlifecapcampaign.org](http://www.birdlifecapcampaign.org)

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## Wild Bird Indicator

On June 8, BirdLife launched its revised common Wild Bird Indicator for Europe, together with European Bird Census Council and Statistics Nederland. The indicator includes three indices: for farmland birds, forests and other common birds. The expanded list of species shows a marked downward trend for both farmland and forest species, while the trend for other common birds goes up.

The launch of this indicator coincided with a lunchtime event in the European Council organised by the Euro-

pean Commission DG Environment on biodiversity indicators. Richard Gregory from the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK) presented the results of our work on the common Wild Bird indicator, which is now one of the Structural Indicators, as well as one of the Sustainable Development Indicators of the EU. This was the first time ever we were invited to talk to Council about this important topic. On the same day, we also attended a meeting organised by DG Environment for major institutions in the EU engaged in biodiversity indicators, to discuss how best to represent this topic in

the new Biodiversity Communication. It was acknowledged that other indicators can learn from our experiences in developing and expanding a monitoring scheme.

We are in discussion with the Commission and Eurostat on delivering and strengthening this indicator in the future.

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## “Get to grips with Climate Change” – Green Week 2005

From 31 May to 3 June the European Commission's DG Environment organised for the fifth time the Green Week in Brussels. Over the years this event has grown to a big public event on the environment at EU level, with many stakeholders being present, ranging from authorities, NGOs, and business companies to scientific institutions.

This year's Green Week was dedicated to climate change, a topic that is rapidly gaining attention in environmental policy debates and which is particularly current as the Kyoto Protocol—the global Treaty to reduce greenhouse emissions, came into force in February following the ratification by Russia. In the Green Week

in a wide variety of workshops the latest scientific scenarios were presented, mitigation and adaptation measures discussed and future policy responses explored (e.g. for the “post-Kyoto” process).

BirdLife was present with a stand informing about our work in general and specifically about the research done by the RSPB (BirdLife UK) on the impact of climate change on bird distribution. This was also the topic of a presentation given by John Lanchbery from the RSPB in the workshop “Biodiversity: can it adapt to climate change?”

In the same workshop, Hermann Hötker from NABU (BirdLife Germany) presented a recent study on the im-

pact of windfarms on birds and bats.

The rapid development of windfarms all over Europe in order to mitigate climate change can have serious side effects on nature and wildlife. These however can be minimised if certain principles are taken into account, in particular regarding the site selection for windfarms. BirdLife is part of an ongoing working group set up by the Commission to develop guidelines on “wind energy and nature”, which met for the first time on 31 May (with representatives from the German, Spanish and UK BirdLife Partners).

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## Regional Policy Update

As the days have got longer and hotter, so too the political debate. Lack of agreement on the Financial Perspectives, for example, is almost certain to delay the adoption of the Structural Fund regulations and the Community Strategic Guidelines for Cohesion Policy.

The regulations are being discussed in the European Parliament and by the European Council structural actions working party. It is very difficult to follow what happens in the Council. However, we know that Member States have so far rejected any mention of environmental partners in the General Regulation. Current texts also omit mentioning the SEA Directive or environmental ex-ante. Natura 2000 financing is not mentioned either.

Perhaps this is not surprising given renewed emphasis on the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs, but it

makes our work influencing Governments more difficult – and our efforts in the Parliament even more important. BirdLife has been arranging meetings coordinating briefings and picking up the telephone to deliver our message to MEPs. All this hard

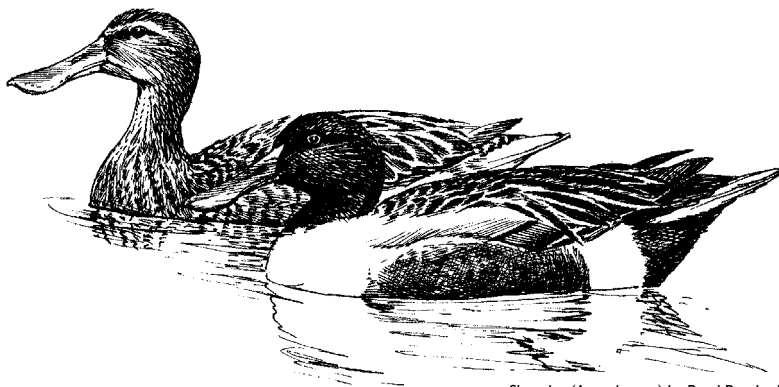
work has met with some success. When the Regional Development Committee voted on the General Regulation, ERDF and Cohesion Fund on Tuesday 24 May, all three reports were significantly strengthened from an environmental point-of-view.

Running parallel to discussions on the draft regulations, BirdLife and the coalition have been very concerned about the preparation of the Community Strategic Guidelines. Commissioner for environment Stavros Dimas, made a public commitment that

Natura 2000 financing would be in the Guidelines. However, drafts of the guidelines seen in May omitted all mention of Natura 2000. BirdLife, together with our partners in the NGO coalition, has been pressing the Commission with our concerns. The Guidelines will be adopted by the

Commission and posted on the Commission website in July ([http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional\\_policy/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/index_en.htm)).

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Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*) by Pavel Prochazka



## Environment Council 24 June

The Environment Ministers met in Luxembourg, under the presidency of Mr Lucien Lux, Luxembourg Environment Minister.

The Ministers reached political agreement on the Groundwater Directive, which is linked to the Water Framework Directive and INSPIRE a Directive about sharing of geographical environmental information. In the case of INSPIRE the Ministers voted unanimously because the Commission was opposing the Member State position,

claiming that it was too weak. Ministers also adopted conclusions on Mercury, GM crops (taking an unexpected and very strong stance and backing those five Member States that have already banned GM crops on their territories) and ship scrapping. Ministers also had a debate on state of play on REACH (the chemicals legislation) and LIFE+. On LIFE+ they stated that the objective of the regulation is to finance the development, implementation, monitoring, evalua-

tion and communication of community environmental policy and legislation, with a view to promoting sustainable development. However, the significant discussion on LIFE+ will take place under the UK Presidency probably in the December Council and following the adoption of the Parliament position in July.

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## BirdLife European Task Force coordinators Meeting 2 June 2005

BirdLife's Task Force Coordinators met with ECO's Claire Papazoglou on 2 June 2005. BirdLife has four Task Forces: the Birds and Habitats Directives TF (coordinator Zoltan Waliczky, RSPB/BirdLife UK), the Agriculture TF (coordinator Giovanna Pisano, RSPB/BirdLife UK), the Regional Policy TF (coordinator Rachel Lee, RSPB/BirdLife UK) and the Forest TF (coordinator Veronika Ferdinandova, BSPB/BirdLife Bulgaria).

The Task Forces agree the BirdLife policy positions on various issues and act as a network of Partners working on particular topics. More and more BirdLife Partners are involved as members of the Task Forces, and this leads to a need for

better coordination between the TFs in order to facilitate actions and travel.

The meeting was part of an effort to enhance communication and collaboration between Task Forces as well as

encouraging more homogeneous working methods.

This meeting also served as input for the BirdLife European Committee, which oversees the functioning of the TFs once a year, in its autumn meeting.

For more information contact Claire Papazoglou



Corn bunting (*Miliaria calandra*) by Andy Hay

## Staff Changes at ECO

One new member of staff started at ECO in June, Ariel Brunner as EU Agriculture Policy Officer. Ariel will mainly work on promoting reform to the EU Common Agriculture Policy (CAP). His job is assisting national BirdLife Partners and dealing with the

EU institutions and he is ECO's contact for the Agriculture Task Force. He speaks Italian, English, Spanish, French, as well as Hebrew.

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## European Parliamentary Questions & Answers

The Questions & Answers are set out as follows:

Subject, Question nr., Name & Party asking, date of question, Summary of Question, Commissioner answering, date of answer, Summary of answer.

Please contact us for more information on any of these questions & answers.

### WRITTEN QUESTION E-3251/04

by Phillip Whitehead (PSE) to the Commission

(26 November 2004)

Subject: LIFE-Nature and LIFE+ programmes

On Wednesday, 29 September, the Commission announced that the current LIFE programmes would be amalgamated from the start of 2007 so as to create the 'LIFE+' programme. This new programme would include the LIFE-Nature programme, which has as its objective the implementation of the Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive and has been widely regarded as a success in promoting nature conservation.

What steps will the Commission take to ensure that nature conservation is given adequate financial funding for it to remain a top environmental priority? Will it ensure that the funding currently granted to this programme is not reduced by other concerns in the new amalgamated programme? Will the Commission guarantee that an amount in the new programme will be 'ring-fenced' for the attainment of the objectives currently covered by the LIFE-Nature programme?

Answer given by Mr Dimas on behalf of the Commission (written question: E-3251/04) (18.1.2005)

The Commission's proposal for LIFE+ would establish a dedicated environment policy instrument, foreseen to cover activities having a uniquely European dimension, which are essential complements to the

investment funding which will be facilitated under other funding instruments. Biodiversity and nature, as a priority under the 6th Environment Action Programme, will be a priority under the new environment policy instrument. LIFE+ will not therefore exclude funding for Natura 2000. Its provisions will be applicable to actions related to Natura 2000 – for example, innovative ways to approach and demonstrate site management; communication and networking activities; support for the establishment of local partnerships that promote specific governance approaches to the protection of Natura 2000 areas; development of the implementation of Natura 2000 relative to the marine environment; innovative breeding and species protection schemes etc. are expected to be eligible for consideration for funding under the new programme.

LIFE Nature has been very effective in supporting the designation of Natura 2000 sites and demonstrating, on a pilot basis, how some of these sites could be managed. The next step in the realisation of the Natura 2000 network, active management of the sites, requires increased funding and funding of a different, longer term and structural nature.

On 15 July 2004 the Commission adopted a Communication on the Financing of Natura 2000 to the Council and the European Parliament(1).

The Commission has so far integrated the Natura 2000 network and its needs into all its major proposals for the future Community Financing. These include the Commission's proposal for the future Financial Perspectives(2) and the Third Report on Economic and Social Cohesion(3).

The integration option proposed for co-funding Natura 2000 ensures that the management of Natura 2000 sites is part of the wider land management policies of the EU.

Thus, farming inside Natura 2000 sites will be part of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) financial support and, structural interventions can be an integrated element of rural and regional development policies. This approach will enable the network of Natura 2000 sites to play its role in protecting Europe's biodiversity better than if Natura sites are seen to be isolated from the wider policy context.

### WRITTEN QUESTION E-3019/04

by Daniel Varela Suanzes-Carpegna (PPE-DE) to the Commission

(17 November 2004)

Subject: Maritime safety

Following the Prestige disaster that occurred off the coast of Galicia, the Maritime Safety Agency announced that it would base one of its anti-pollution vessels in Galicia. Given that this undertaking has yet to be honoured, can the Commission say when it will be and whether a European anti-pollution vessel will be permanently stationed on the Galician coastline?

Answer given by Mr Barrot on behalf of the Commission (written question: E-3019/04) (3 February 2005)

The European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) was entrusted with a specific task in the field of response to pollution caused by ships by Regulation (EC) No 724/2004 of the Parliament and of the Council of 31 March 2004, amending the founding Regulation (EC) No 1406/2002 (1) of the Agency.

The Regulation, which entered into force on 19 May 2004, states that the Agency shall work with the Member States to support with additional means in a cost efficient way, via the Community mechanism in the field of civil protection established by Council Decision 2001/792/EC, Euratom, of 23

October 2001(2) their pollution response actions in case of accidental or deliberate marine pollution caused by ships, when such a request has been presented.

As provided in the above Regulation, the Administrative Board of EMSA adopted in October 2004 an Action Plan for Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response. This Plan identifies four priority areas where additional oil pollution response capacity is needed: the Baltic, the western approaches to the Channel, the Western and Northern coast of the Iberian Peninsula, where Galicia is situated, and the Mediterranean.

In accordance with the Action Plan, EMSA is planning to conclude stand-by contracts with commercial ship operators who have vessels that can be mobilized rapidly for oil pollution response activities. A ship of such type should be readily available in each of the four priority areas in order to assist Member States facing a large scale pollution incident.

Following confirmation of the 2005 credits for this task(3), EMSA is presently organising the required tendering process in order to conclude such stand-by contracts with individual operators in the course of 2005. The Commission will follow very closely all actions undertaken by EMSA for the realisation of its anti-pollution objectives.



Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) by Chris Gomersall



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## The Brussels Briefing

The Brussels Briefing is compiled by the ECO staff. It is intended to give up-to-date information on the activities of BirdLife International and the European Union.

Editor: Claire Papazoglou

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### Further information on specific topics

The Briefing is not large enough to contain the text of all the source materials used to compile it. If you would like further information on specific topics reported in the Brussels Briefing, please contact us - details above.