

PREVENTING EXTINCTIONS

Northern Bald Ibis
Geronticus eremita



An adult (left) and juvenile (right) Northern Bald Ibis (© Jens and Hanne Eriksen/www.rarebirdyearbook.com).



Background

Northern Bald Ibis occurs in Morocco and in Syria, with a semi-wild population in Turkey. Populations are thought to have drastically declined over the last few decades, with the current global population estimated at 500 wild individuals with only four in Syria. However the estimate does not include a population of roughly 100 birds in Turkey, due to their intensive management. The tiny Syrian population is migratory, travelling through the Middle East to Ethiopia, but the larger, genetically distinct western population is dispersive.

The species has declined for several centuries, perhaps partly owing to natural causes. However, the more recent rapid decline is the result of a combination of factors, including hunting, poisoning, land-use changes and predation, with different threats affecting different populations.

Actions being implemented

1. BirdLife has continued to support protection and monitoring of the breeding site at Palmyra, Syria. In 2011 the only pair **successfully fledged** two young.
2. The use of **satellite tracking** has shown hunting to be the primary threat to Middle Eastern birds. This has allowed stronger protective measures to be put in place for the 2011 winter.
3. Studies on the eastern population wintering in the Ethiopian Highlands have led to the **discovery** of two subadults. This increases the hope of this population surviving.
4. Population **monitoring in Morocco** has continued, where over 100 pairs fledged a total of over 130 young in 2011. Two Moroccan birds were fitted with satellite tags for the first time to provide data on the movements of this population, in work supported by Spain's Ministry of Environment.
5. A **National Species Action Plan** has been drafted for Morocco, which details priority actions to secure and support the growth of the population.