

Concern over migrant birds prompts international response

Title

In recent months, the indiscriminate and unsustainable killing of migrant birds in North Africa has become an issue of public concern in a growing number of countries. There has been widespread hunting and trapping of migratory birds in Egypt and also Libya, especially through the use of mist nets along large stretches of the Mediterranean coast. In response, the BirdLife Partnership, Government Agencies, the Convention on Migratory Species and the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds have rapidly moved to address the situation.

“Bird trapping in these countries is an ancient tradition. The main target species, Common Quail, is a local delicacy”, said Marcus Kohler, BirdLife’s Senior Programme Manager for Flyways.

“It’s a legitimate way for local people to supplement their diet. However, the indiscriminate nature and scale of the trapping has now reached worrying proportions and is having an impact upon other species.”

It’s not only Quail that are caught; many other species, such as European Turtle-dove and Red-backed Shrike, are also trapped as “bycatch” in significant numbers. The increasing use and magnitude of mist net trapping is a new and worrying development.

Current estimates are that millions of birds are caught each autumn as they leave Europe and Asia for their wintering grounds in sub-Saharan Africa.

“Quails themselves are not endangered, but why the issue of netting has now become a major concern locally and internationally is the element of indiscriminate catching or unsustainable trapping of birds, where we have lots of bycatch and occasionally this bycatch may include endangered species?”. Listen to Noor Noor, from BirdLife’s Egyptian Partner, NCE talking about the trapping in Egypt

In response, an international meeting brought together a number of key people and organisations, including participants from both the government and non-governmental sectors

from Egypt, and Libya. The meeting was convened last week in Bonn, Germany and included representatives from the BirdLife Partnership, NABU (Birdlife in Germany), RSPB (BirdLife in the UK) and Nature Conservation Egypt (BirdLife Partner) and also the Secretariats of the [Convention on Migratory Species \(CMS\)](#), and [African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement](#).

The meeting agreed on a detailed plan of action to get robust measurements on the scale and impact of the problem, and to look at the socio-economic and legal aspects of bird trapping.

?The BirdLife Partnership is tackling illegal killing and unsustainable hunting in many countries through its [Flyways Programme](#). This agreed plan will fill in the gaps in our knowledge and allow us to work with the Egyptian and Libyan authorities to make sure they have the skills and understanding needed to address these trapping issues, while respecting the need for quail hunting?, said Kohler.

It was also agreed that there is a need to ensure that effective legislation and regulations are in place and being adequately enforced while building capacity of local Government, NGOs and local communities to effectively address indiscriminate trapping in the region.

?The illegal and unsustainable killing of birds is a global issue that BirdLife Partners are committed to tackling. While there have been significant and encouraging improvements in several countries over the last 20 years, many others need to step up and deal with this increasing and unsustainable practice. It is heartening to see commitment from the Egyptian and Libyan Governments. The BirdLife Partnership is fully committed to support them in their efforts?, said Dr Marco Lambertini, BirdLife International?s Chief Executive.

Listen to BirdLife's Marcus Kohler talk about what needs to be done to address the problem.



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