BirdLife Partners join forces against illegal bird killing in the Mediterranean

Title

For migratory birds, illegal killing is an additional threat to their already dangerous and challenging journey. The EU Bird Directive protects the millions of birds who travel between their nesting and wintering grounds twice every year, by stating that only a few species can be hunted under certain conditions of timing and methods. In the Mediterranean, violations of this EU legislation are particularly widespread, exacerbating the substantial decrease in migratory bird populations over the past 40 years.

BirdLife Partners in Italy (LIPU), Greece (HOS) and Spain (SEO/BirdLife) have decided that coordinated actions and a common approach are required to address the problem, and have created the joint “Safe Haven for Wild Birds” LIFE + project. The project aims at changing the attitude of local communities in three migratory blackspots: Sulcis (SW Sardinia, Italy), Ionian Islands (Western Greece), and the South and East of Spain (Catalonia, Valencia and SE Aragon).

In all these places, illegal killing regularly takes place on a large scale, targeting species protected under EU and national law, as well as threatening the survival of the breeding populations of migratory birds. Unfortunately local authorities tend to keep a blind eye on poaching, or, as it has recently been the case in the Valencia Region, try to legalise it.

Within the project, the three BirdLife Partners have launched the ‘Leaving is Living’ campaign, which is aimed at explaining the right of migratory birds to migrate, as it is a crucial part of their life cycle, and that illegal killing of birds must stop. Supported by national celebrities, such as TV personalities, singers, actors and writers, the campaign released the first video of a series communicating the trauma inflicted on the natural world by poachers.

The selected blackspots are not the only areas where environmental crimes take place, so the Partners are also working on informing people and promoting active involvement in the issue. Diverse local events will be organised, targeting citizens and decision makers and a traveling exhibition will be set up in Greece and Spain. In local schools, workshops will raise students’ awareness about illegal killing and its impact on local and European biodiversity. Finally, national and international workshops will be held with Law Enforcement Agencies in each country to highlight the importance of these environmental crimes and to share experiences gained from other areas. Together these efforts will help ensure a safe passage and a future for migratory birds.