

Bulgaria brought to Court over failure to protect key sites for biodiversity

Title

In October the European Commission referred the Bulgarian government to the European Court of Justice due to failures to protect **internationally important nature areas**, leading to further endangerment of globally threatened bird species.

The Bulgarian government has not fulfilled its duties under the EU Birds and Habitats Directives, the main pieces of EU nature legislation, which notably ensure the conservation of important nature areas in Europe. Bulgaria failed in the implementation of the **Birds Directive** particularly by not protecting the **Kaliakra peninsula** on the Black Coast. The Kaliakra peninsula is part of the wintering grounds of the Red-breasted Goose, a globally threatened species and it is on Via Pontica? migration route. The route is plied by hundreds of thousands of birds every spring and autumn, including rare and threatened species such as White Storks and rare raptors. The Bulgarian government has also allowed the development of damaging wind farms that threaten birds in the area. The lack of implementation has also led to destruction of protected steppe grassland habitats.

The Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds (BSPB ? BirdLife in Bulgaria) has been fighting for over eight years to stop the continued degradation and destruction of these wildlife sites. One BSPB?s currently running **project** focuses in ensuring the Red-breasted Goose?s long-term conservation. BirdLife Europe and BSPB hope that the attention from the Court will be a wake-up call for the Bulgarian government to make sure that its regional inspectorates give precious wildlife sites the protection they deserve and stop other damaging projects in the country such as the Smin windfarm that threatens birds wintering at the nearby Durankulak lake.
