

Final Warning for Bulgaria over Failure to Protect Internationally Important Sites

Title

On Thursday 21 June, the European Commission issued a final legal warning against the Bulgarian Government over its failure to fully designate, protect, and prevent deterioration of the Kaliakra Special Protection Area and Site of Community Importance, required under the EU Birds and Habitats Directives. This latest action by the Commission is the result of a prolonged campaign by the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds (BSPB; BirdLife in Bulgaria) since 2005, supported by BirdLife Europe, for the full protection of the Kaliakra Peninsula on the Black Sea coast of Bulgaria.

The Kaliakra Peninsula is internationally important, forming part of the wintering area for the globally endangered Red-breasted Goose. It acts as a stopover for thousands of soaring birds such as white storks on the 'Via Pontica' migration route between Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe. Its habitats also include rare Ponto-Sarmatic Steppe grasslands, which are a priority habitat under the European Habitats Directive. However, a large part of the Important Bird Area has been excluded from designation on spurious grounds, and many areas of the designated and undesignated parts of the site have been damaged by inappropriate wind farm and housing development, reducing at the same time the feeding areas available to the wintering geese, potentially jeopardising their winter survival.

The Bulgarian Government will now have an opportunity to react to the final warning. However, if it fails to deal with the issues at hand (as it has for the last seven years), then BirdLife Europe and BSPB (BirdLife in Bulgaria) fully expect the Commission to refer the case to the European Court of Justice by the end of the year. BirdLife Europe and BSPB welcome this strong action from the Commission and hope that the Bulgarian government will finally get the message that it needs to take its European responsibilities seriously: Kaliakra should be fully designated, these damaging developments removed and the damage done to habitats rectified as soon as possible. Also, the recent plans for more wind farms in key sites for birds must be the subject of objective assessment and not developed. For more information please contact [Daniel Pullan](#), International Site Casework Officer at the RSPB (birdLife in the UK)
