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## New scientific report reveals: “25 million birds illegally slaughtered in the Mediterranean every year”

Unlawfully shot, trapped or glued: tens of millions of birds are being killed illegally each year across the Mediterranean, according to the first scientific review of its kind to be carried out in the region by BirdLife International.

BirdLife and Partners have uncovered the shocking extent to which a number of birds are being illegally killed, putting together a list of the ten countries with the highest estimated annual death toll.

Although countries currently hit by conflict, such as Syria and Libya, feature high in the rankings, some European nations also fare poorly.

Italy (where 5.6 million birds are estimated to be killed illegally every year<sup>[1]</sup>) is second only to Egypt for the estimated mean number of illegal killings each year, with the Famagusta area of Cyprus the single worst location in the Mediterranean<sup>[2]</sup>.

Other European countries featuring in the top 10 are; Greece (mean estimate of 0.7 million birds killed annually<sup>[3]</sup>), France (0.5 million<sup>[4]</sup>), Croatia (0.5 million<sup>[5]</sup>) and Albania (0.3 million<sup>[6]</sup>).

This further demonstrates why the Birds Directive, currently under review by the European Commission, should be better implemented, rather than re-opened.

Despite not ranking in the top 10 overall, Malta (where 108,000 birds are estimated to be killed illegally each year<sup>[7]</sup>) is still seeing the region’s highest estimated number of birds illegally killed per square kilometre.

The review also exposes some of the common methods of killing in use across the Mediterranean, including illegal shooting, capture in nets and recordings of bird sounds used to lure large numbers of birds to illegal trapping locations.

Many of the cruel methods used, such as lime sticks that glue the birds to branches, cause considerable suffering before resulting in the bird's death.

The report estimates that Eurasian Chaffinch comes top of the 'kill list' (an estimated 2.9 million are killed each year<sup>[8]</sup>), with Eurasian Blackcap (1.8 million<sup>[9]</sup>), Common Quail (1.6 million<sup>[10]</sup>) and Song Thrush (1.2 million<sup>[11]</sup>) making up the rest of the top four.

A number of species, such as Eurasian Curlew, already listed as 'Near Threatened' or 'Vulnerable' on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List are also in danger.

The review's publication comes ahead of Birdfair 2015, which gets underway today [Friday 21 August 2015] at Rutland Water Nature Reserve in the UK.

It also marks the launch of BirdLife's new *Keeping the Flyway Safe* fundraising campaign to help target resources for conservation in the worst affected locations.

BirdLife International CEO, Patricia Zurita, stated: "This review shows the gruesome extent to which birds are being killed illegally in the Mediterranean. Populations of some species that were once abundant in Europe are declining, with a number even in free-fall and disappearing altogether."

"Our birds deserve safer flyways – concluded BirdLife's CEO - and we want conservation efforts to be increased now, before it's too late."

The data in this review previews a scientific paper due to be published soon giving a full assessment of the situation in the Mediterranean<sup>[12]</sup>.

ENDS

**For further information, please contact:**

Luca Bonaccorsi, BirdLife Europe Head of Communications:  
+32 (0) 2 238 50 94 Out of hours: +32 (0) 478 206 284

Finlay Duncan, BirdLife Europe Communications and Media Officer:  
+32 (0) 2 238 50 81 Out of hours: +32 (0) 485 873 291

The review is available to view in full here:

[http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/01-28\\_low.pdf](http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/01-28_low.pdf)

More details on the *Keeping the Flyway Safe* fundraising campaign (open until September 30<sup>th</sup> 2015) are available here: <https://www.justgiving.com/Fight-for-the-Flyway>

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**Notes to editors:**

[1] – Italy: the mean estimated number of birds killed illegally each year is 5.6 million, with a minimum number of 3.4 million and maximum number of 7.8 million.

[2] – Cyprus – the mean estimated number of birds killed illegally each year in the Famagusta region is 689,000, with a minimum of 405,000 and a maximum of 974,000

[3] – Greece: the mean estimated number of birds killed illegally each year is 704,000, with a minimum number of 485,000 and maximum number of 922,000.

[4] – France: the mean estimated number of birds killed illegally each year is 522,000, with a minimum number of 149,000 and maximum number of 895,000.

[5] – Croatia: the mean estimated number of birds killed illegally each year is 510,000, with a minimum number of 166,000 and maximum number of 855,000.

[6] – Albania: the mean estimated number of birds killed illegally each year is 265,000, with a minimum number of 206,000 and maximum number of 325,000.

[7] – Malta: the mean estimated number of birds killed illegally each year is 108,000, with a minimum number of 5,800 and a maximum number of 211,000.

[8] – Eurasian Chaffinch – the mean estimated number killed illegally each year is 2.9 million, with a minimum number of 2.2 million and a maximum number of 3.6 million.

[9] – Eurasian Blackcap - the mean estimated number killed illegally each year is 1.8 million, with a minimum number of 1.2 million and a maximum number of 2.4 million.

[10] – Common Quail - the mean estimated number killed illegally each year is 1.6 million, with a minimum number of 1.0 million and a maximum number of 2.2 million.

[11] – Song thrush - the mean estimated number killed illegally each year is 1.2 million, with a minimum number of 0.7 million and a maximum number of 1.7 million.

[12] - All numbers are best estimates, for further details and minimum/maximum estimates, see the scientific paper: Preliminary assessment of the scope and scale of illegal killing and taking of birds in the Mediterranean (Brochet *et al.*, in revision).