

WILL YOU LEAVE A LASTING LEGACY FOR NATURE?

BirdLife Europe & Central Asia, EEB (European Environmental Bureau), Friends of the Earth Europe and WWF European Policy Office call on Commissioner Karmenu Vella to take decisive action in his remaining time as EU Environment Commissioner to improve the implementation and enforcement of the EU's world-leading nature laws – the Birds & Habitats Directives¹.

Threats to birds and the implementation and enforcement of the EU Birds & Habitats Directives

The #NatureAlert Countdown is on! But there is still time to take action to save threatened wildlife and habitats across Europe!

European biodiversity is in freefall. Major gaps in the implementation and enforcement of our nature laws are leaving our natural heritage dangerously exposed. Bird populations – a barometer of ecosystem health – are collapsing across the continent. The threat of illegal shooting, trapping, poisoning and collision or electrocution is having a massive impact on bird populations, particularly migratory birds, like vultures and many raptors. Scientific reviews have recently estimated that around 24 million birds are illegally killed each year by shooting, trapping or poisoning in the Mediterranean alone. With many species already brought to the brink by habitat loss and climate change, we must urgently address these illegal threats through better law enforcement and better planning of energy infrastructure.



A SUCCESS STORY: SAVING THE SONGBIRDS OF SULCIS, SARDINIA



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The Sulcis is an area of south-west Sardinia covered by vast forests. It's the largest surviving patch of continuous Mediterranean maquis in the Mediterranean basin. Each autumn and winter, the area hosts hundreds of thousands of migrating birds. Like across much of the Mediterranean, there is a long tradition of trapping here. A decade ago, it was estimated that 126,000 birds were illegally killed each year in the Sulcis alone.

In the region, small song birds – traditionally Song thrush – are caught by special traps, placed among the woods, both on the ground or between branches. The birds that are caught are used for a local typical dish called “Grive”. However, since the trapping methods used are non-selective, many other species – including protected or threatened species – are also caught in these traps.

Each winter, since 2005, local NGO LIPU (BirdLife Italy) has held an annual anti-poaching camp in Sulcis where dedicated staff and volunteers work together to remove the traps, snares and nets set along hidden paths in the woods. Between 2012–2015, over 12,000 traps – aimed at small birds, snares for wildboar and red deer, as well as trip-line operated guns – were located and removed. LIPU's conservation work and local campaigning efforts to raise public awareness about the problem in Sulcis has massively improved their relations and cooperation with the Regional Forestry Department and Carabinieri (police), leading to better enforcement of the EU Birds Directive in the area. This is an inspiring example of how a bad situation can successfully be turned around when conservationists, local communities and public officials work together.

¹ [January 2019. 'Joint Policy Brief on the Implementation and Enforcement of the Birds & Habitats Directives'](#)

**The #NatureAlert countdown is on!
Will you, Commissioner Vella, leave a lasting legacy for nature?**

Please support our call for the European Commission to closely monitor the situation in Thrace and bring any unresolved infringement cases to the European Court of Justice.

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