



2014 HIGHLIGHTS

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EDITORIAL

LONGING THE BIRD'S EYE

“Her eyes can follow the wingbeats of a bee easily as ours follow the wingbeats of a bird...” This hawk can see colours I cannot, right into the ultraviolet spectrum. She can see polarised light, too, watch thermals of warm air rise, roil, and spill into clouds, and trace, too, the magnetic lines of force that stretch across the earth. The light falling into her deep black pupils is registered with such frightening precision that she can see with fierce clarity things I can't possibly resolve from the generalised blur. The claws on the toes of the house martins overhead. The veins on the wings of the white butterfly hunting its wavering course over the mustards at the end of the garden. I am standing there, my sorry human eyes overwhelmed by light and detail, while the hawk watches everything with the greedy intensity of a child filling in a colouring book, scribbling joyously, blocking in colour, making the pages its own”.

This fantastic description of a Goshawk's vision by Helen Macdonald tells a lot about us, human beings. Our “sorry human eyes”... really do not see that far. This is what we witness every day in our Nature conservation work when confronted with policies, economic choices and ideological approaches, down to the very simple planning of infrastructures.

How can it be that we are so short-sighted? When do we lose connection with nature? When do we start ignoring it, thinking that Nature is not relevant? We are not born with that indifference. When we are children our attention is drawn to all creatures, even the smallest. We are fascinated by nature... A busy ant can capture our attention for hours. Yet some of us lose this fascination, lose the connection and sometimes lose their soul.

In this annual report we tell you the stories of those who have not lost the connection with Nature, stories that make BirdLife the largest network of conservation NGOs in the world with 120 Partners worldwide. In the European and Central Asian Division 48 Partners, 4,100 employees, more than 2 million individual members work every day, and often nights, to keep the connection with Nature alive, managing over 6,000 nature

sites covering over 320,000 hectares, providing invaluable data that inform our work, engaging at local and national level to promote the value of Nature. Together we restore habitats, study and protect species, advocate for nature in the “palaces of power”, mobilise citizens, engage corporates to become sustainable, across the Europe and Central Asia. It is a fantastic movement of Civil Society Organisations, of passionate individuals who stay connected with and care for all living things, supported by individuals, foundations, governments, the European Commission, who believe in our cause and provide financial support.

Luckily, not all human eyes are “sorry”. Certainly not the eyes of the over 150,000 European citizens that, as we go to press with this Report, have asked our policymakers not to trash nature protection laws, responding to the campaign called “itsmynature” that BirdLife Europe launched together with WWF, EEB and Friends of the Earth.

It is just the beginning, but it's an historical record, already, showing that human beings care about nature more than many politicians think. “itsmynature” is about us. It is about my air, my water, my bird, my tree, and my river. It is my nature, and none can take it away from me. Because I am the landscape where I grew up, I am the high mountains that forged me, I am the Golden Eagle that I first observed when I had my son's age, I am the Goshawk whose nests are still robbed.

I am proud to be part of this community that cares, protects, shelters and loves and to present our achievements of an intense year of work. Keep supporting us, keep the connection with Nature: this is our true, profound nature.

Angelo Caserta
Regional Director of BirdLife Europe



- Partners
- Project work



PREVENTING EXTINCTIONS

Extinctions of birds and other species are a growing threat to the health of our ecosystems because every living creature plays a vital role in maintaining the world's ecological balance. Birds are often indicators of overall ecosystem health, the canary in the mine, so it is important to monitor the health of bird populations. The BirdLife Europe network does this by mapping and recording the diverse threats that European bird populations face. As the global Red List authority on birds, BirdLife also collates scientific evidence and expertise from across the world to identify which species are at most risk of extinction and defines conservation actions that can help save them.

FIRST FULL MIGRATION CENSUS TO PROTECT ICONIC BIRDS IN TURKEY

Turkey has one of the largest breeding populations of Egyptian Vultures, estimated at 1,000 – 3,000 pairs. This beautiful bird, revered in ancient Egypt as a symbol of parental care, is a very difficult species to monitor. It has a very large breeding range and nests in very inaccessible places. In 2014, in order to provide the country with the necessary information to protect this iconic species and other raptors, BirdLife Turkish Partner Doğa Derneği, in collaboration with our British Partner the RSPB, launched the first full census of migratory raptors in southern Turkey. From 16th August to 16th October 2014, the team went to a well-known migratory bottleneck near the Gulf of Iskenderun and counted 130,347 migratory raptors. Besides observing the Egyptian Vulture within this count, they also observed 47,594 Lesser Spotted Eagles, which is more than 95% of the currently estimated world population.

LITTLE OWL POPULATION DOUBLES IN SWITZERLAND

The Little Owl can be found in the European countryside, including traditional orchards, where there tends to be an abundance of their favourite prey and nesting holes. The population of the species decreased over the last decades in Europe. But in Switzerland, our Partner has done tremendous work to preserve the remaining colony. These efforts were rewarded in 2014 when the number of breeding pairs reached 122 (from 60-70

in the 1990s). At the end of the year, the Swiss government also published a Species Action Plan for the Little Owl which was produced in collaboration with BirdLife Switzerland and gives national authorities guidelines on how to protect it.

NEW SPECIES ALSO BENEFIT FROM PROTECTION

To prevent the extinction of any species or population, we first need to know of their existence and then how the species is doing overall. Our Partners are active on the ground and so are keeping on top of this. In autumn 2014, our Romanian Partner SOR made two important discoveries: the first was the discovery of the Hairy Broomrape in Romania, a plant that is known in the Mediterranean Basin but was never seen before in Romania. The second was the discovery of seven specimens of Javelin sand boa, a non-poisonous, non-aggressive snake that had not been seen in Romania since before World War II. Last year, our Armenian Partner ASPB encountered a new colony of Lesser Kestrels. This more than doubled the known Armenian population. Finally, with the release of the updated global IUCN Red List for Birds and BirdLife's Checklist of the Birds of the World, our experts announced that Fea's Petrel is now recognised as two separate species: the Desertas Petrel, which is found and breeds on Bugio in the Desertas off Madeira, Portugal, and the Cape Verde Petrel. Since the discovery and identification of the new species, our Partners began implementing measures to ensure their protection.

RED LIST OF BIRDS

The IUCN Red List is the world's most comprehensive source of information on the global conservation status of plant and animal species. It is based on an objective system for assessing the risk of extinction of a species should no conservation action be taken. It is used globally by scientists, governments and international entities, including the European Union, to set priority actions for the most endangered species. As the world's authority on birds, BirdLife was contracted by the European Commission to produce a European Red List of Birds, based on data collected by EU Member States. This was done with the contribution of our Partners on the ground, and BirdLife Partners and collaborators across Europe.



SAFEGUARDING IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS

From forests to beaches, and croplands to marshes, wild birds and plants thrive in harmony with their landscapes. An Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA) is a priority site for conservation. BirdLife International identifies these sites using globally accepted standardised criteria. In Europe and Central Asia, 6,000 IBAs have been identified covering over 320,000 hectares. However, not all IBAs are legally protected, and many require urgent conservation action. To protect, manage and monitor these sites, BirdLife is supported by a network of thousands of active volunteers, collecting data on the ground, fighting against site threats and networking across regions, countries and continents.

TAKING ACTION TO PROTECT 122 IMPORTANT NATURE SITES IN DANGER IN EUROPE

Last year, BirdLife released a report which identified 122 IBAs that are in Danger in Europe and Central Asia because of non-sustainable agriculture, energy production, mining, pollution and invasive species. These IBAs are in desperate need of protection and management. Among the most iconic IBAs in danger are Sa Conillera in Spain, Kaliakra in Bulgaria, and the Wadden Sea (Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands). The report not only helps us revise our conservation priorities but it also provides crucial information to governments, development agencies, international environmental and conservation conventions, businesses and wider civil society, to take action and prevent further harm to these internationally significant sites.

IBA RESTORATION PROJECT GIVES A FUTURE TO THREATENED NATURE AREA IN BELGIAN FLANDERS

The Demervallei IBA in the Flanders region of Belgium hosts a wide and unique range of biodiversity. The area has sandy to loamy soils and has many habitat types including former river arms, peat ponds, marshes, reed beds, sedge-fields, humid grasslands and alluvial forests. This Special Protection Area is a favoured breeding and staging ground for meadow birds, waders and waterfowl as well as a range of species listed in the Birds and Habitats Directive. Unfortunately, the site

suffers from habitat fragmentation, which is leading to decline and extinction of native wildlife. Last year, our Partner in Belgium Natuurpunt began a project to help with the recovery of native species. Project activities mainly involved habitat restoration, such as increasing the area of both grasslands and heathlands, and it saw the introduction of grazing management.

ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION HAS NEVER BEEN SO IMPORTANT

Despite some of our best efforts, destruction of nature continues throughout the world. Protecting what is left is no longer enough to remedy the scale of the losses that have occurred. To reverse this trend we can restore ecosystems that have been degraded into liveable habitats for biodiversity. In recent years more and more of BirdLife Partners include ecological restoration activities in their projects. Examples include re-wetting drained peat bogs, replanting riverine vegetation and other actions focused on specific sites, habitats or species. More often than not, these actions cost dearly and are only included in projects with sizeable budgets (e.g., LIFE). But does it always have to be like this? In order to promote a partnership approach to ecological restoration and inspire collaborations between conservationists and industry, a new blog Eco-restore was launched last year. It aims to build a sense of community around this important topic and to also foster investment from industry to support it.

LOCAL ENGAGEMENT IN CONSERVATION

BirdLife Partners cooperate with local communities for the conservation of IBAs. Working together with local residents permits us to develop a sense of ownership and responsibility among communities while making sure that our conservation work is built on good knowledge of local economic, cultural, and historical conditions. In Europe and Central Asia, local volunteers are called "IBA Caretakers". We work alongside each other to ensure that local knowledge is harnessed and that projects last over the long-term.



PROTECTING MIGRATORY BIRDS

Bird migration is one of the most spectacular of natural phenomena, with hundreds of millions of birds traveling twice a year to and from their breeding and wintering grounds. Many migratory species – such as cranes, storks, swallows and eagles – travel thousands of kilometres. They follow pre-determined routes known as “flyways” that span across entire countries and continents. Unfortunately, these voyages are not always safe. Migratory birds encounter many threats as they travel, such as direct persecution at “stopover” sites and habitat loss. These are worsened by other factors, such as climate change. Together, they take a toll on our European and central Asian breeding birds. This is why BirdLife Partners aim to tackle these challenges and safeguard migrating birds, including protecting important sites, as they travel along their flyways.

FIRST EVER BIRD COUNT ALONG THE ATLANTIC IDENTIFIES PROTECTION NEEDS FOR MIGRATORY BIRDS

Starting in January last year, BirdLife in the Netherlands (VBN) and BirdLife International organized the first ever comprehensive migratory bird count along the East Atlantic. This transcontinental event brought together local communities, experienced birders and nature lovers of all ages. In total, around 1,500 bird watchers from 30 countries counted millions of birds. This census will help identify winter stopover and other critical sites in need of protection so that conservation measures can be taken.

BIRDLIFE INITIATIVE INSPIRES NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION AROUND WADDEN SEA AND ITS BIRDS

The Wadden Sea, which spans Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands, is considered one of the world’s most important areas for migratory birds. After the Dutch and German areas of the Wadden Sea were declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2009, both countries decided to initiate the “Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative” in an effort to ensure a safe route for birds migrating between Africa and the Wadden region. Our BirdLife Partner in the Netherlands (VBN), with the BirdLife Africa Partnership Secretariat, provided expertise and support to the initiative. They helped create a strategy

for capacity building and monitoring of flyway populations of birds and participated in the first ever count of waterbirds along the entire Eastern Atlantic flyway. They also contributed to the development of a “Flyway vision” which was signed last year by the three Wadden Sea governments and twenty regional and international stakeholders, including BirdLife International, and the BirdLife Partners in the Wadden Sea, DOF, NABU and VBN. This was in recognition of their responsibility to protect migratory birds. Since then, the BirdLife network has been working at supporting its implementation on the ground.

MIGRATORY BIRDS IN SPAIN GET THEIR OWN WEB SITE!

Last year, BirdLife Spanish Partner, SEO-BirdLife, launched the website Migracion de aves (www.migraciondeaves.org). It gives access to all the data collected so far on the migration and movements of birds in Spain. Thanks to the deployment of miniaturised satellite-trackers on tagged birds, many Spanish breeding birds can now be followed in real-time along their migratory routes to and from Africa. Thanks to this tool, key aspects of the birds’ ecology have been revealed for the first time. To date, more than 350 birds of 27 species have been tagged, so anyone can go to the website to discover and learn more about them.

CAMPAIGN FOR AN EU WIDE BAN OF THE VULTURE AND EAGLE KILLING DRUG

Diclofenac is an anti-inflammatory drug extremely toxic to Vultures and Eagles. Its use on cattle led to a 99% decline of the South-Asian vulture population in the 90’s. Despite this tragic experience and although alternative safe drugs exist, veterinary diclofenac is still commercially available in several EU countries, including Italy and Spain, which holds the largest vulture populations in Europe. Because we cannot allow the repetition of the Asian ecological catastrophe, BirdLife Europe and its Partners have launched a campaign together with the Vulture Conservation Foundation, calling for an EU ban on the use of veterinary diclofenac. Regular updates on the campaign are available on the BirdLife website <http://www.birdlife.org/europe-and-central-asia/project/ban-veterinary-diclofenac-now>.



Across Europe, birds are illegally persecuted in many ways: illegal poisoning, shooting, trapping and chick removal for trade, are just a few. These practices are shockingly common in some regions and can jeopardise entire bird populations. The BirdLife Partners in Europe and Central Asia are doing everything possible – from joint projects to innovative initiatives – to address these threats.

BIRDLIFE PARTNERS JOIN FORCES AGAINST ILLEGAL KILLING OF BIRDS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

In the Mediterranean, illegal killing practices are particularly widespread. Last year, BirdLife Partners in Italy (LIPU), Greece (HOS) and Spain (SEO-BirdLife) launched the joint project "Safe Haven for Wild Birds". It aims to inform and change the attitude of local communities towards illegal killing. Within the project, Partners released a TV campaign, supported by a range of national celebrities, called "Leaving is Living" to fight the problem. The campaign consists of a series of videos explaining the rights that migratory birds have to migrate safely, as it is a crucial part of their life cycle, and that illegal killing of birds must stop.

ACTIONS TAKEN TO ENSURE A SAFE PASSAGE FOR MIGRANTS

Migratory birds face many threats during their journey between Europe and Africa so BirdLife Partners have been stepping up their efforts to address them. Last year, LPO (BirdLife in France) denounced

the illegal poaching of Ortolan Buntings by releasing as many illegally caught Ortolans as possible. In Malta, our Partner carried out its bi-annual "illegal killing camp", welcoming volunteers from across Europe to observe and report illegal killing practices during migration peaks. In Italy, a campaign organized by our Partner LIPU led the European Commission to call on Italy to put an end to a hunting method common in the country but illegal under EU law: the capture of wild birds for use as live decoys.

CAMPAIGNS AND TASK FORCES TO TACKLE ILLEGAL TRADE OF BIRDS AND EGGS

Last year, BirdLife Serbia Partner BPSSS announced the creation of a Bird Crime Task Force to put an end to the poaching and illegal bird trade in the country. In Portugal, our Partner SPEA launched a campaign – Say NO to birds in a cage or on a plate – to stop the illegal capture and sale of birds, a practice quite common in the country for consumption or commercial reasons, notably because of a lack of education and information.



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MITIGATING CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is a major threat to life as we know it and the ecosystems upon which we all depend. Conservation of biodiversity and mitigating the effects of climate change are closely linked, so BirdLife Europe uses scientific expertise and data from our Partners and team members to provide recommendations to those decision makers who are responsible for shaping international climate change policy. We advocate for ambitious EU climate policies, for renewable energies that are in harmony with nature, and we also engage with the energy sector to find sustainable and effective solutions.

FINDING A WAY OUT OF 1ST GENERATION BIOFUELS

Current 2020 targets in the EU will require that 20% of all energy consumed comes from renewable sources; with a 10% target for energy used by transport. Unfortunately, current plans to meet this target rely heavily on biofuels, which sometimes actually do more harm than good. Last year, we worked on finding alternatives to the most harmful biofuels; first generation sources that are produced on crop fields and impact food production. Together with the advanced biofuels industry and other NGOs, we looked at ways to develop sustainable advanced biofuels from waste and residues.

SUPPORT GIVEN TO NEWLY-ELECTED DECISION MAKERS FOR THE ILUC AND BIOFUELS DOSSIER

After years of campaigning by BirdLife Europe, the European Commission released a legislative proposal in 2012 on biofuels and ILUC. In 2014, while the text was in the middle of the decision process, new members of the European Parliament were elected and a new European Commission was established. BirdLife actively worked at informing these new decision

makers to raise their awareness about the issues. We did this with our "little book of biofuels" and website www.biofuelsreform.com where they can learn more about biofuels, ILUC, and the risks they pose.

INDEPENDENT SCIENTIFIC REPORTS COMMISSIONED TO ADVISE DECISION MAKERS

To show EU decision makers the limitations of using biomass, BirdLife Europe and other green NGOs released two independent scientific reports last year: *Space for energy crops – assessing the potential contribution to Europe's energy future*, and *Forest biomass for energy in the EU: current trends, carbon balance and sustainable potential*. These documents reveal that we cannot depend on using more forests and land for energy production in the EU if adverse impacts on climate and biodiversity are to be avoided. These studies also demonstrated that the emissions arising from wood used for energy – roughly equivalent to the EU's annual greenhouse gas savings – are currently not accounted for in EU climate policies and risks undermining efforts to fight climate change.

NGOs AND GRID OPERATORS WORKING TOGETHER FOR A SUSTAINABLE EU ENERGY POLICY

THE RENEWABLES GRID INITIATIVE

Mitigating climate change requires a transition from a wasteful and polluting fossil energy economy to a sustainable renewable-based and more efficient one. But such a move cannot happen without real cooperation, dialogue and exchange of expertise between the energy sector and NGOs. BirdLife Europe is a member of the Renewables Grid Initiative (RGI) which brings together green NGOs and electricity grid operators who are working together to develop a grid system which would allow a renewable energy transition. In 2014, BirdLife Europe, the EEB and the RGI released a report called "Connecting Energy, Protecting Nature" which shows how it is possible to protect nature when planning and investing to become a low carbon society.

THE BESTGRID PROJECT

This project develops and tests best practices in grid development. It brings together some of RGI's grid operators and NGOs. It advances good practices in grid expansion which respect nature, promote the exchange of good practices and explores solutions to encourage public acceptance for grid development. Last year, BirdLife Europe and its partners in Germany (NABU), Belgium (Natuurpunt) and the UK (the RSPB) gave advice for pilot projects run by grid operators in their respective countries. We also engaged with Italian operators to exchange best practices on nature-friendly renewable development.



ADVOCATING FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Farmland birds are among the most threatened creatures in Europe, along with other fauna such as pollinating bees and butterflies. Unsustainable agricultural practices threaten wildlife in general, our ecosystems and the future of farming itself. Over the long term, preserving farmland biodiversity is the best way to guarantee food production, the most fundamental of human needs. This is why BirdLife Europe works on the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) in Brussels and why our Partners engage with farmers on the ground, to get real and sustainable agriculture going.

PROJECT HELPS FARMLAND WILDLIFE RECOVER

Our Belgian partner Natagora has been working for years at fighting biodiversity loss on farmland across Belgium – mostly driven by intensive agricultural practices. To show that economically sustainable alternatives exist, Natagora launched their project “melodious flour” last year. They bought the entire production of wheat from an organic farm in Wallonia. About 90% of the wheat was sold as flour, but 10% was left on the fields as a food source for birds and other wildlife. “Melodious flour” did so well for nature, and was so appreciated by customers, that Natagora is continuing the project and expanding production in 2015.

“BEE THE SOLUTION” CAMPAIGN TO SAVE BEES IN LUXEMBOURG

Since the late 1990s, beekeepers around the world have been reporting sudden and inexplicable declines as well as disturbing mortalities in their honey bee colonies. Like many other European countries, Luxembourg has been severely affected by this. Last year, our Partner natur&environment, together with Greenpeace, launched their campaign “Bee the solution”. It aimed to raise the awareness of the need to ban bee killer pesticides and the importance of adopting more sustainable agricultural practices. It also provided Luxemburgers with easy things to do to help bees in their gardens and urban spaces.

BIRDLIFE PARTNERS ALERT THE EU ABOUT RAPID LOSS OF THEIR FARMLAND BIRDS AND WILDLIFE

In many EU Member States, there has been widespread loss of farmland birds, even in protected areas. The key reason has been the loss of grasslands – important bird habitat – converted into intensive crop fields. In order to incite Member States to maintain populations of affected birds – this is mandatory under EU law – BirdLife Partners notify the European Commission when there are critical situations. BirdLife in Slovenia DOPPS and Germany NABU did this last year when they sent formal complaints to the EU asking for legal action against respective governments.

PUSHING FOR REAL GREENING OF THE CAP’S “GREEN PILLAR”

The new CAP that was promised during the last reform was supposed to be ‘greener’ than before. But not too long after its adoption in late 2013, leading EU scientists released a joint article in Science which says that this new CAP is as bad and maybe even worse than before, for nature and biodiversity. In 2014, BirdLife Europe tried to mitigate the impacts of the new policy on the environment. We focused on improving the design of Rural Development Programmes (RDP) to try to preserve the few remaining real bits of benefits the new policy has on the environment. We also had ongoing discussions with decision makers on how national RDPs can be better used to ensure a healthier environment.



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PRESERVING MARINE ECOSYSTEMS

Marine ecosystems and biodiversity are facing unprecedented pressure from a wide range of human activities such as overexploitation of fish stocks, habitat destruction, pollution, invasive alien species and climate change. In 2014, BirdLife Partners in Europe and Central Asia continued to work both on the ground and through advocacy with European Institutions and Member States, to ensure that marine wildlife is better protected, fisheries are managed sustainably, seabird bycatch is reduced, and human activities such as offshore wind farms are not established near highly sensitive areas.

ON THE FOREFRONT OF TACKLING UNSUSTAINABLE MARITIME ACTIVITIES

For years, BirdLife has been advocating for improved regulation and planning of human activities at sea, to ensure that they are sustainable over the long term and that their impact on natural environments is minimized. Last year, the EU finally adopted a Directive on Maritime Spatial Planning which will oblige Member states to say how and where their seas will be used, and ensure that they do so while respecting EU nature laws.

HIGHLIGHTING GAPS IN SEABIRD PROTECTION

There are 82 seabird species that occur in the European region and each faces a range of threats both on land and at sea. Last year, BirdLife launched two new initiatives to help EU Member states identify and address the major gaps in seabird protection. Because protecting important sites for seabirds is fundamental for their conservation, the first initiative is an interactive map of EU coastal countries, indicating the Member states' current progress in designating a Natura 2000 network for seabirds. This was supplemented by factsheets for each country, which identify the areas on land and at sea where the Natura 2000 network needs further development. By protecting these sites, national governments will not only comply with EU nature laws but also progress towards EU Biodiversity targets. The second initiative is a blog where marine experts can exchange the latest news and findings related to European seabirds and discuss methods to improve protection and species resilience.

GOVERNMENTS ACROSS EUROPE TAKE ACTION ON MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

For years, BirdLife Partners have been advocating for their governments to identify and protect sites at sea for seabirds. In 2014, 41 new marine Natura 2000 sites were officially added to the European network for seabirds. This included 39 Special Protection Areas (SPAs) in Spanish waters, as well as at sea sites in Lithuania and the Netherlands. In Madeira, Portugal, the boundary of two existing terrestrial SPAs was extended to include adjacent marine habitats, and in

Scotland 14 draft SPAs for seabirds were proposed and 30 Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) declared to safeguard Scotland's marine environment.

WORKING WITH FISHERMEN TO ADDRESS UNNECESSARY AND UNWANTED SEABIRD BYCATCH

Seabird bycatch is one of the biggest threats facing seabirds in Europe. BirdLife estimates that at least 200,000 birds are caught and killed each year as bycatch on fishing vessels across Europe. In 2014, BirdLife began a new initiative – the Seabird Task Force – made up of experts from our Partners in Spain (SEO-BirdLife) and Lithuania (LOD). The team works alongside fishermen to understand when and how bycatch occurs, and also tests and develops methods to tackle the problem. In Spain, the team has been working in the western Mediterranean, building relationships with demersal longline fishermen to tackle the bycatch problem because this fishery is known to catch the critically endangered Balearic Shearwater. In Lithuania, the main focus is on bycatch from gill-nets. The Seabird Task Force team has been engaging with fishermen to understand the key times that gill-net bycatch occurs and to find possible mitigation measures including testing options such as different sized mesh and using high visibility markers to make nets more visible to seabirds so they avoid them.



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TACKLING INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES

Invasive alien species, or plants and animals introduced to areas where they do not occur naturally, plague Europe and cost the EU approximately €12 billion each year. Certain species negatively affect people's health, but above all are driving rapid biodiversity loss. Invasives prey on our native species, they compete for food and space and introduce diseases to which native species are not immune. Currently, more than 12,000 non-native species have been identified in Europe and at least 1,500 are known to be ecologically harmful. The BirdLife Europe network has been active for decades to address the issue, by running activities on the ground to control the spread of these invaders while raising decision maker awareness on the necessity for EU wide action. Last year, after years of campaigning by the BirdLife Europe network, the EU finally adopted the first ever EU legislation on invasive alien species.

BIRDLIFE'S ADVOCACY WORK TO ADDRESS INVASIVES PAYS OFF WITH AN AMBITIOUS EU LAW

Since the European Commission released its legislative proposal to combat invasives in 2012, BirdLife Europe and RSPB, its Partner in the UK, have been actively advocating that EU decision makers support a coherent and science-based approach for the new law. Thanks to our expertise and knowledge collected on the ground, we were able to contribute and influence what the new law will actually do. In particular, our advice helped ensure withdrawal of a cap on the number of invasives the regulation would impact: the law will now apply to all invasives in the EU. Our work also contributed to the establishment of a scientific forum to help with implementation of the law.

CONTROL OF INVASIVE RATS IN SCOTLAND'S SHIANT ISLES PERMITS SURVIVAL OF ENDANGERED SEABIRDS

The Shiant Isles is a Natura 2000 site important for seabirds – some of which are undergoing serious population losses. These islands face several threats, including

invasions by alien species. Key breeding seabird colonies have suffered greatly because they are especially vulnerable to predation by invasive rats. Last year the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK) launched "LIFE Shiant", a 4 year project which will aim to remove the invasive rats from the Isles and also support the recovery of native wildlife.

CONTROL OF INVASIVE PREDATORS TO RESTORE AND PROTECT THE BERLENGAS ARCHIPELAGO

One of UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR), the Berlengas archipelago off the Portuguese coast is home to several species of marine birds and hosts a diverse but fragile ecosystem. Unfortunately, the area is rapidly deteriorating – one key reason being the spread of invasive alien species which threaten native biodiversity. Last year, SPEA, our Partner in Portugal, launched the project "LIFE Berlengas" with the aim to restore the archipelago's endemic natural resources. Activities will involve control and eradication of invasive mammals which predate some of Berlengas' iconic birds, such as the Common Guillemot.



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FROM THE BRUSSELS BOARDROOM TO YOUR BACKYARD

The EU plays a crucial role in the protection of European and global biodiversity. Most existing national environmental legislation in Europe originated in Brussels. Today, these policies have a huge impact in sectors that affect nature deeply: agriculture, fisheries, energy and many others. For this reason, BirdLife Europe makes it a priority to ensure that decision makers are informed about the impact their decisions could have on the health of nature. Also, that they take an active role in protecting the environment from current and future threats.

THE ELECTION OF A NEW EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE DESIGNATION OF A NEW COMMISSION

2014 was marked by two key events in the European agenda. The first was the European elections in May which led to the election or re-election of 751 Members of European Parliament for a new 5 year mandate (2014 – 2019). The BirdLife Partnership in Europe engaged with candidates and their electors before the vote, raising their awareness on the need for better nature and environmental policies in the EU. They also called on elected candidates to take action during their term.

The second key moment of the year was the establishment of the new European Commission. In October 2014, Mr. José Manuel Barroso handed over the Presidency of the Commission to his successor, Luxembourgish Mr. Jean-Claude Juncker. BirdLife Europe has been at the forefront of the environmental move-

ment's reaction to the new Commissions downgrading of the importance of our environment and its drive for environmental deregulation.

THE PRESIDENCIES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Every six months, the EU Presidency is held by one of the 28 Member States. The EU Presidency is very important because it coordinates the Council's work and negotiates the joint positions of Member States on EU dossiers. With each new Presidency, BirdLife Europe and its Partner in the country holding the Presidency, sends recommendations to its government in hopes of inspiring an environmentally conscious term. In 2014, this happened first with BirdLife's Greek Partner HOS and next with its Italian Partner LIPU.





RECONNECTING NATURE AND PEOPLE

BirdLife Partners re-connect citizens with their environment through a wide range of activities.

INFORMING, EDUCATING AND RAISING AWARENESS

Last year, BirdLife Europe and its Partners produced many informative materials to raise awareness about the importance of nature for people's lives. We placed much of this effort into education, especially for children, as we know that the state of our planet rests in their young hands. BirdLife Partners gave presentations in schools and provided educational materials to teachers. Extra-curricular activities to teach students about biodiversity were organised, including visits to forests and the countryside. Also, we developed many educational materials totally dedicated to children.

INVOLVING LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN OUR PROJECTS

Our projects involve and respect local communities. The activities we pursue are always developed in ways that improve site protection without negatively impacting local traditions or ways of life. Sustainability is at the core of our work so we place much importance on involving communities because we know that this is essential for guaranteeing environmental conservation in the long term.

INVITING BIRD LOVERS AND FAMILIES TO EXPLORE NATURE

We offer as many opportunities as possible for people to explore the natural world around us. Each year, BirdLife Partners organise a wide range of bird and wildlife related events and activities across Europe and Central Asia. From birdwatching events to bird fairs, these activities are becoming more and more popular among children, families and schools because it gives them a chance to learn about their environment while having fun. Two of our birdwatching events; "Spring Alive" and "Eurobird-Watch" are now highly anticipated yearly occasions.

OFFERING UNIQUE NATURE EXPERIENCES

The BirdLife Division of Europe and Central Asia offers people who are inspired by conservation the opportunity to get involved with on the ground projects. Enabling committed people to have unique conservation experiences contributes greatly to creating future environmentalists and an environmentally conscious society. This is why every year, our Partners welcome volunteers and interns who want to contribute to BirdLife's mission.



© HOS (BIRDLIFE IN GREECE)



THOUSANDS GATHER, LOOKING UP AT THE SKIES

Spring Alive & Eurobirdwatch are BirdLife's annual birdwatching events that attract many bird lovers and families. They happen when people can watch the fascinating migration of millions of birds to and from Africa. During Spring Alive in 2014, national and local events were organised in 54 Eurasian and African countries. They attracted over 67,000 children, 1205 teachers and supervisors, and were supported by over 640 volunteers. Last autumn, Eurobirdwatch attracted more than 23,000 adults and children who took part in more than 890 events organised by our Partners in 40 Eurasian countries.

CROWDFUNDING CAMPAIGN TO TEACH CHILDREN ABOUT NATURE

Last year, our Portuguese Partner SPEA launched a crowdfunding campaign to support an educational initiative. This project focused on birds but aimed to show Portuguese children the importance of all wildlife. The money raised supported 50 conferences in local schools where nearly 1500 students became involved.

EDUCATION INITIATIVE RAISES SUPPORT FOR NATURA 2000

The Natura 2000 network, Europe's largest network

of protected areas is composed of 27,000 remarkable places, covering about 1 000 000 km². Sadly, many of these places are not being protected properly and so are deteriorating and being destroyed every day. To address this issue, BirdLife's Spanish Partner SEO-BirdLife and the Spanish news agency EFE are implementing the project "Connecting people with Biodiversity" to spread the word to EU citizens about the stunning riches of Europe's Natura 2000 sites and why we need to protect them.

CONSERVATION CAMPS PUT THE SPOTLIGHT ON ILLEGAL KILLING OF BIRDS

The illegal killing and trapping of birds is rampant in Malta and Italy, threatening the survival of emblematic migratory birds and majestic raptor species. Our Maltese and Italian partners have been campaigning for years to put an end to this. In the spring and fall, when illegal killing reaches its peak, both organisations organise "illegal killing of birds" camps. Last year, over 40 volunteers attended and joined Maltese conservationists.

They found and reported 895 incidents of illegal killing. The Italian camps had 31 volunteers who reported incidents and helped remove over 3000 illegally set traps.



© BIRDLIFE EUROPE



BUILDING A STRONGER VOICE FOR NATURE

For over 90 years, BirdLife has been a voice for nature, translating scientific facts and field experiences into conservation success stories.

IN 2014, WE FOCUSED ON STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF BIRDLIFE PARTNERS IN 2 SUB-REGIONS:

THE CAUCASUS

The Caucasus is a biodiversity hot spot of global importance, but biodiversity conservation is lagging behind in this region. It is a crucial stopover for migrating birds that need to feed and rest during their long journey between Europe and Africa. Supporting the protection of birds and wildlife in the Caucasus is essential for the conservation of biodiversity and European birds, especially migratory species. This is why BirdLife supports Partners and Affiliates who are part of the Caucasus in Armenia and Azerbaijan. We are also supporting SABUKO, the Georgian Society for Nature Conservation, which has applied for BirdLife membership.

WESTERN BALKANS

The Balkan Peninsula is home to unique and rich wildlife. Because of weak economies and the desire to catch up with the rest of Western Europe, biodiversity conservation is not considered a top priority and very little funding has been dedicated to it. Even worse, current development models pollute the environment and promote energy and land consumption, leading to increasing biodiversity loss.

IN 2014, OUR PARTNERS RECEIVED HIGH-LEVEL PRIZES IN REWARD FOR ADMIRABLE WORK:

BIRDLIFE IN BULGARIA BSPB RECEIVED TWO INTERNATIONAL AWARDS FOR ITS WORK TO PROTECT THE IMPERIAL EAGLE

By the end of the 20th century, Bulgaria was known as the "country of eagles". Nowadays, only eight Imperial Eagle nests remain in the country. So few, yet they account for 20% of the EU population.

Our Bulgarian Partner has been implementing a range of activities to reverse this loss, including working with local communities, farmers and electricity supply companies. Last May, our Partner's efforts were rewarded because they won both the Whitley Award, donated by Foundation Segré, and also the new Natura 2000 Award for Conservation, given by the European Commission.

BIRDLIFE PARTNERS ARE LIFE MASTERS

Each year, the European Commission evaluates all completed projects funded by the LIFE programme. In 2014, 4 out of the 11 Best LIFE Nature projects receiving the award were implemented by five BirdLife Partners: OTOP (Poland), the RSPB (UK), BirdLife Finland, HOS (Greece) and SPEA (Portugal).

OUR LOCAL TO GLOBAL APPROACH IS UNIQUE AS SHOWCASED BY OUR ON THE GROUND SUCCESSSES

The unique experiences and knowledge of our Partners helps the BirdLife Partnership and nature conservation community understand cultural sensitivities and determine the main environmental issues countries face from a regional and global context.



© PIERRE COMMENVILLE



ENGAGING WITH BUSINESS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

A focus on BirdLife Partnerships with leading companies in the cement and building materials industry

BirdLife Europe believes in a future where the world's pressing development needs are met sustainably. Our corporate relationships allow us to enter into open dialogue with conscientious business leaders to find constructive solutions to tackle some of the environmental challenges we face today. For the past 10 years, BirdLife's partnership with the cement and building materials companies CEMEX and HeidelbergCement (since 2011) has really changed the way we look at the extraction and management of natural resources. Together we have seen that carefully designed mineral extraction operations not only have less harmful impact on nature but also creates opportunities for the return of rare species and for the restoration of vanishing habitats.

THE BIRDLIFE – HEIDELBERGCEMENT PARTNERSHIP

BirdLife and HeidelbergCement's biodiversity partnership began in 2011 and ran for 3 years in an effort to reduce the impact of the company's mining activities on nature. The 16 different joint projects that were implemented in Germany, Czech Republic, UK, Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Poland and Israel were so successful, that in 2014 they decided to extend their cooperation for another 3 years and expand their efforts geographically to Asia and Africa.

BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL AND HEIDELBERGCEMENT COMMIT TO ANOTHER THREE YEARS OF PARTNERSHIP!

In 2014, BirdLife and HeidelbergCement celebrated their 3 year partnership. During this time, we developed and began implemented a biodiversity strategy which reduced the impact of mining activities on nature. With support from local BirdLife Partners, 16 conservation projects were developed in quarries in 7 European and Central Asian countries. From eradication of invasive alien species to creation of new habitats, these projects have seen the successful preservation and restoration of nature in mining sites! Building on this realisation, the partners have decided to keep the relationship going for another 3 years, and extend our activities to Africa and Asia. We are also broadening the scope from the management of

local biodiversity and restoration of quarry sites to wider natural resource and environmental management.

RESTORATION OF LAKE SAGSJÖN,

A BIRD HABITAT IN SWEDEN'S GOTHENBURG AREA

Lake Sagsjön borders Jehander's quarry near Källered, on the west coast of Sweden. Several decades ago the lake was a good breeding habitat for several bird species, but most birds have disappeared from the area. The key reason is the storm water which flows from the quarry into the lake. It carries large amounts of sediment which suffocates aquatic plant and animal life. HeidelbergCement and BirdLife Partner in Sweden SOF-BirdLife Sverige are working together to improve water quality in the lake as well as restoring habitats that provide food for birds and other wildlife.

“ We share many common interests: from the implementation of consistent environmental policies and stable legislation, to engagement with local communities on the ground in finding better ways to manage and conserve natural resources. In all these aspects businesses and NGOs bring added value to each other. ”

Boris Barov,

Conservation Programme Coordinator BirdLife,
HeidelbergCement Partnership

“ Nature conservation has a special place at HeidelbergCement. Quarries and gravel pits transform the existing landscape, therefore we want to minimize our impact on nature and compensate it. We focus on biodiversity protection and sustainable land use because we believe that this is the best way to generate real value for nature and society. In BirdLife, we found a trustworthy and honest partner to help us achieve this. ”

Dr. Bernd Scheifele,

CEO of HeidelbergCement



THE BIRDLIFE – CEMEX PARTNERSHIP

In 2007, BirdLife embarked on a 10 year partnership to help CEMEX meet their biodiversity and environmental commitments. This happened initially by helping them understand the biodiversity risks and opportunities at all of CEMEX's operations worldwide, and then by developing a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) standard. Eight countries, from Mexico to Malaysia, now have collaborative projects and BAP pilots at high priority CEMEX sites. All this is helping BirdLife Partners achieve their conservation goals.

CEMEX & BIRDLIFE STAND UP FOR EU NATURE PROTECTION

After working closely together for several years to implement site Biodiversity Action Plans, 2014 marked a milestone for the Global partnership between CEMEX & BirdLife when they signed a joint statement supporting EU's Nature Conservation laws. From the business side, the statement recognises that good regulation gives certainty to and drives innovation in industry. Clearly on the conservation side, sites protected under the EU Birds & Habitats Directives represent the very best of European wildlife. This joint statement has been a catalyst for wider endorsement by the cement and aggregates sector and sends a clear message that it is not only civil society, but also businesses which support this critical legislation, showing that economic activities and conservation can go hand in hand.

CEMEX HELPS CONSERVE TWITE IN THE BRITISH UPLANDS

The Twite is a small passerine native to Britain. It is on the UK's Red List of birds of conservation concern and has Unfavourable Conservation Status in the EU. Nowadays, about five pairs breed in the Dove Hole area – a large CEMEX quarry in England. Here, the birds make use of the numerous fissures and holes within extensive bare cliff faces for nesting. Five is a significant number since the entire English Twite population is less than 100 pairs. CEMEX and the RSPB (BirdLife Partner in the UK) joined forces to protect the Dove Hole colony. Twite feed almost exclusively on seeds so a constant supply is required throughout its breeding period. Project partners have created a five hectare flower-rich meadow next to the breeding area as a natural food supply and have provided supplementary feeding where needed.

“ We are impressed by the conservation efforts taking place because of collaborations in Europe, from farmland wildlife conservation through to agricultural restoration in France, to Stone Curlew protection in Austria. These partnerships are maturing, helping to foster the next generation of collaborative efforts. ”

Charlie Butt,
Partnership Manager, CEMEX,
BirdLife Global Conservation Programme

“ CEMEX has been working in partnership with BirdLife since 2007 and we keep extracting mutual benefits. Our linkages with local BirdLife Partners have grown stronger globally. As a result, we are much better positioned to conserve biodiversity within and beyond our fences, which helps the company by creating shared values. ”

Pedro Fernandez-Diaz,
CEMEX Biodiversity Analyst

COMMUNICATIONS



› NEWSLETTER

Our monthly e-newsletter is distributed to over 2,000 Birdlife members, to all of 751 MEPs, their assistants, the European commission and the Brussels' media.



› SCIENCE AND POLICY PUBLICATIONS

Birdlife produces every year a number of publications dedicated to our conservation, science and policy work.

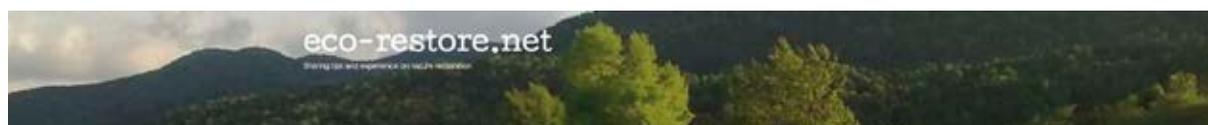
COMMUNICATING NATURE CONSERVATION IN A POLITICALLY CHARGED ERA

Social and cultural contexts, and therefore languages, can change rapidly. Communications work must interpret its time and adapt quickly. Old narratives, messages and technologies can become mute and ineffective in no time. And what was taken for granted (the need for nature conservation) can suddenly be put into question by new political narratives. Since the beginning of the recession, in 2008, Europe has undergone a profound social, economic and cultural mutation.

To respond to the changing environment we have embarked upon a restructuring process to overhaul our comms tools. We have completely re-designed our monthly newsletter, changed the language to address

policymakers in this very “politically charged” era we’re living in. The language we use to communicate to the media has also changed to better convey the “urgency” of the environmental crisis we are living. We have re-vamped our social media strategy, to better target both the wider public, the media and policymakers. We have launched three dedicated blog-minisites to target specific market “niches”: the habitat restoration practitioners, the marine conservation professionals and the bioenergy community. And we are leading a public facing campaign to defend the Birds and Habitats Directives (#itsmynature #naturealert). It is only the beginning of a journey, but a very promising one.

H T T P : / / E C O - R E S T O R E . N E T



H T T P : / / E U B I O E N E R G Y . C O M



H T T P : / / S E A B I R D B Y C A T C H . C O M



BIG THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

BirdLife's strategy for protecting species, conserving and restoring natural habitats and empowering people is driven by solid science, clear priorities and a strong determination for achieving high impact on the ground. Our programmes are implemented through the unique structure of the BirdLife Partnership, ensuring connectivity and coordination, long-term sustainability and cost effectiveness. We are grateful for the generosity of our donors. Together we are truly making a difference.

Council of Europe,
European Commission,
The David and Lucile Packard Foundation,
MAVA – Fondation Pour la Nature,
Fondation Segré,
International Sustainability & Carbon Certification – ISCC System GmbH,
The Arcadia Fund,
The Mitsubishi Corporation Fund for Europe and Africa,
Smart Energy for Europe Platform

EUROPEAN COMMISSION DIRECTORATE GENERAL ENVIRONMENT

The European Commission, through the NGO Operating Grant of DG Environment, supported BirdLife Europe in its advocacy and conservation work on biodiversity protection and nature conservation. Moreover, this grant enabled BirdLife Europe to strengthen its European Partnership both on governance and policy related issues.

THE DAVID AND LUCILE PACKARD FOUNDATION

The David and Lucile Packard Foundation supported BirdLife Europe in its work on EU bioenergy policies which aimed to ensure that they effectively contribute to climate change mitigation while minimizing adverse effects on biodiversity, ecosystems and vulnerable human populations.

MAVA – FONDATION POUR LA NATURE

MAVA supported BirdLife Europe's advocacy efforts in influencing Rural Development Programmes (RDP) related to the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) so that they deliver real and substantial ecological benefits. BirdLife Europe focused on the Alpine programmes in Italy and Austria with spill over effects for all of Europe.

In particular, MAVA supported BirdLife Europe and its Partners to advocate for better Rural Development Programmes through environmentally strict implementation of the CAP rules of rural development and an increase in actual spending by national and regional governments to support environmental measures.

FONDATION SEGRÉ

Fondation Segré has supported BirdLife Europe's conservation efforts through the establishment of a dedicated Seabird Task Force which is now working with fishermen to determine baseline information on seabird bycatch and effective mitigation measures that would reduce the number of birds caught.

ISCC SYSTEM GMBH

The International Sustainability & Carbon Certification supported BirdLife Europe in testing how a certification scheme could be used to address biodiversity concerns. The testing phase was implemented in the Czech Republic by the Czech Society for Ornithology (CSO), BirdLife Partner in the Czech Republic. It involved interviewing farmers about the feasibility of the scheme as well as field research where management practices were compared for their biodiversity value.

GOVERNANCE AND FINANCES

The European and Central Asian Committee guides and advises BirdLife Europe on behalf of the BirdLife European and Central Asian Division and of the Global Council. Members of the European and Central Asian Committee 2014: Fred Wouters (VBN; BirdLife in the Netherlands), Gergő Halmos (MME; BirdLife in Hungary), Harry Mardulyn (Natagora; BirdLife in Belgium, Wallonia), Luis Costa (SPEA; BirdLife in Portugal), Nada Tosheva (BSPB; BirdLife in Bulgaria), Sergey Sklyarenko (ACBK; BirdLife in Kazakhstan), Tim Stowe (RSPB; BirdLife in the UK).

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ciety (MME); Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli (LIPU); natur&mwelt; Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO); Natagora; Naturschutzbund Deutschland (NABU); Natuurpunt; Ogólnopolskie Towarzystwo Ochrony Ptaków (OTOP); The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB); Schweizer Vogelschutz (SVS/BirdLife Switzerland); Slovenská Ornitologická Spoločnosť/BirdLife Slovensko (SOS/BirdLife); Sociedad Española de Ornitología (SEO-BirdLife); Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves (SPEA); Societatea Ornitologica Romana (SOR); Sveriges Ornitologiska Forening (SOF-BirdLife Sverige); Vogelbescherming Nederland (VBN).

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE (€)

INCOME		EXPENDITURE	
Partners	561,674	Staff Cost	859,349
Grants and Donations	500,952	Travel Conference Events	46,397
EU Commission Funding	358,777	Rental Equipment & Premises	98,761
Grants from Corporates	240,401	Support Grants	334,524
Other Incomes	12,281	Professional Services	185,002
		Other Costs	38,828
		Overheads	111,226
TOTAL INCOME	1,674,086	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	1,674,086

The BirdLife International European and Central Asian Division is a Dutch Foundation, Stichting BirdLife Europe, and its operating office is located in Brussels.





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