



2015 HIGHLIGHTS



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EDITORIAL

Dear reader,



Note, to-day, an instructive, curious spectacle and conflict. Science, (twin, in its fields, of Democracy...) – Science, testing absolutely all thoughts, all works, has already burst well upon the world – a sun, mounting, most illuminating, most glorious – surely never again to set. But against it, deeply entrenched, holding possession, yet remains, (...) the fossil theology of the mythic-materialistic, superstitious, untaught and credulous, fable-loving, primitive ages of humanity.



Walt Whitman, the American poet of the late 19th century, wrote these provocative and prescient words well over 150 years ago, yet they remain as insightful today. For BirdLife Europe, 2015 has continued to be a year where science, rigorously and objectively analysed, produced knowledge and led us in our efforts to protect biodiversity and nature. This is the foundation of the BirdLife approach and it has served us well. But as Whitman so astutely points out, Science's twin ultimately is Democracy, and its mobilisation to overcome the 'untaught and credulous' as we build and strengthen our communities.

And for us, 2015 marked a new era and a new approach to scientifically grounded, evidence-based and democratic policy making. A large part of our work has been devoted to the European Commission's review of Europe's successful and vital nature laws, the Birds & Habitats Directives. EU BirdLife Partners and many stakeholders from different sectors gathered massive evidence, stemming from their experience on the ground, that these nature laws are fit for purpose and work well when properly implemented. We have also led a coalition of environmental NGOs across the continent in a public facing campaign to solicit citizen support for the Directives.

And what a campaign it was! Never before have EU leaders and politicians received such an outpouring of public opinion on a matter before them. Well over half a million citizens expressed support for the Nature Direc-

tives and, in response to that, the European Parliament and 12 EU Ministers on the Environmental Council gave their own unequivocal support for the nature laws. Although the issue remained in flux, there can be no doubt but that this new and innovative approach of the BirdLife Partnership, combining science, democratic participation and a large alliance of different sectors, changed the terms of the debate. And it changed the way we work together.

This is just the tip of the iceberg of work that, though less under the spotlight, has been equally important to fulfil our nature conservation mission. In the following pages, we highlight the vast range of activities of the BirdLife Partnership across Europe and Central Asia. From looking forward to a completely reformed Common Agricultural Policy to invigorating our important work on the illegal killing of birds; from launching a flyway approach to Species Action Plans to continuing to engage citizens through local empowerment and education programmes; the BirdLife approach of local to global and the power of many bears fruit.

In troubled times, when clouds gather across our beloved continent, with unprecedented challenges from East to West and South to North, one thing remains stable: The strong commitment of the BirdLife Partnership in Europe and Central Asia to put our passion, creativity, intelligence, scientific credibility and thriving network of democratic Civil Society Organizations at the service of our nature and birds. Enjoy reading.

Angelo Caserta
Regional Director of BirdLife Europe

OUR PARTNERSHIP

KEY FACTS

4,100 staff

2 million members

Tens of thousands of skilled volunteers

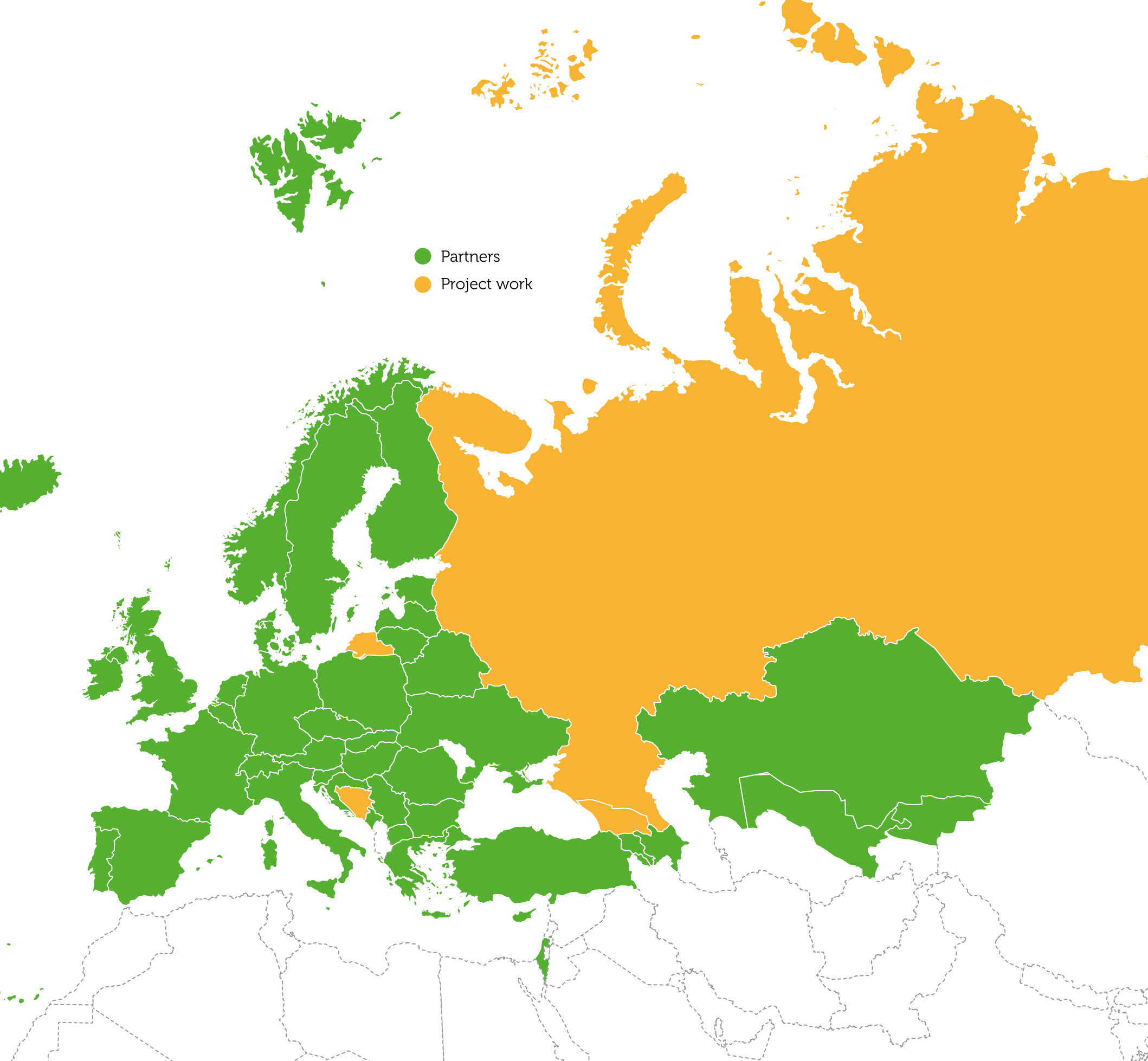
Partners own or manage more than

6,000 nature sites totalling

320,000 hectares

BirdLife Europe is a leading Partnership of bird and nature conservation organisations in 47 countries, including all EU Member States. Through its unique local to global approach BirdLife Europe delivers high impact and long term conservation for the benefit of nature and people.

- 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 coal 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.

THE LIFE EUROSAP WAS BEGUN TO PROTECT 16 BIRD SPECIES ON A FLYWAY SCALE

In April 2015 we launched the project LIFE EuroSAP. This is a 3-year project that aims to tackle one of the recurrent problems in species-conservation: the deficient national and international coordination and implementation of species action plans (SAPs). These documents set out the conservation measures and actions needed to ensure the survival of a particular species, but are often poorly monitored and/or funded.

LIFE EuroSAP plans to reverse this situation by applying a flyway-scale approach to all the 16 species targeted

by the project; that is, all Member States and experts will meet, discuss and agree on international SAPs, which will be then monitored to ensure real action on the ground and tangible results. LIFE EuroSAP is coordinated by BirdLife Europe, but implemented by 13 partners, including the Vulture Conservation Foundation, FACE (European Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation) and the BirdLife Partners from Greece, Lithuania, France, Germany, the UK, Spain, Sweden, Portugal and the Netherlands. The project is financed by the EU and the Secretariat of the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA).

LAUNCH OF THE EUROPEAN NETWORK AGAINST ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME

Environmental crime – including the illegal killing and taking of wildlife, use of poisoned baits, habitat destruction and the illegal shipment or dumping of waste – not only causes economic losses, it is also a serious and growing international problem that has devastating effects on nature and human health.

In 2008, the EU adopted Directive 2008/99/EC on the protection of the environment through criminal law, to be implemented in Member States by December 2010. But the implementation and enforcement of this Directive is not the same in all EU Member States, creating the perfect opportunity for offenders to exploit the existing differences to their advantage.

To promote better enforcement of these laws and help in the prosecution of offenders, SEO/BirdLife (BirdLife in Spain) and the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK) launched the European Network against Environmental Crime (ENEC). They are supported by BirdLife Europe, the Hellenic Ornithological Society (BirdLife in Greece) and the Czech Society for Ornithology. With the backing of the Criminal Justice Support Programme of the EU, ENEC brings together European associations of prosecutors, judges, police and hunters.

ENEC's work focuses on those species and habitats that are in the greatest danger, tackling the causes of decline, including wildlife crime and habitat loss. In 2015, the project published the manual *Illegal use of poisoned-baits: Legal analysis and investigation* with the support of the Life+ VENENO project to stop the use of poisoned baits and offer guidance on how to detect its use and prosecute illegal users in court.

VETERINARY DICLOFENAC IS STILL SOLD IN EUROPE

2015 was a difficult year for vultures: our science proved that 75% of old-world (Europe and African) vultures are slipping toward extinction. Yet veterinary diclofenac, the vulture-killing drug that caused the catastrophic 99% decline of several species of vultures in South Asia, is still legally sold in Italy and Spain. Veterinary diclofenac is used as an anti-inflammation medication on livestock and is harmless to them. However, the drug is harmful to vultures so when they eat carcasses of livestock treated with diclofenac, the results are fatal.

Despite our intense lobbying work and the availability of alternate drugs that are not toxic to vultures, the Standing Committee on Veterinary Medicinal Products did not ask for a ban on diclofenac. The Commission systematically ignored our request for a full ban of this product. Instead it has asked Member States to propose

action plans to mitigate the risks of using vet diclofenac at vulture-rich areas. This request in both unrealistic and highly risky, as it cannot prevent massive vulture deaths if diclofenac poisoning occurs.

The European vulture coalition (BirdLife Europe's partners, the Vulture Conservation Foundation, the Wildlife Conservation Society and the International Fund for Animal Welfare) has presented the case repeatedly both to senior officers in Spain and in the European Commission and has also continued to work alongside key international bodies such as the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS) to develop a multi-species action plan for vultures.

Work on the ground has included meetings with both veterinary and farmers associations (led by SEO/BirdLife) as well as successful collaborations with Spanish and British universities in understanding diclofenac exposure to vultures and other scavenger birds in Spain. We have also continued to gather public support through our website and an online petition from MEP Catherine Bearder and raised awareness of the issue internationally in a shared editorial in *the Huffington Post*. BirdLife and its allies will continue to work towards a ban on veterinary diclofenac in 2016. Every single minute counts in our fight against this major threat.

EUROPEAN RED LIST

The EU-funded European Red List of Birds project was concluded with the launch of the European Red List of Birds in June 2015 at Green Week, the annual conference on EU environment policy in Brussels. The publication consists of regional Red List assessments (at EU27 and pan-European scales), geographic distribution, population size and trend, major threats to and conservation measures for each of the 533 wild bird species occurring in Europe.

The project was coordinated by BirdLife with the involvement of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Wetlands International (WI), the European Bird Census Council (EBCC), the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB, BirdLife in the UK), the Czech Society for Ornithology (CSO, BirdLife in the Czech Republic), the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and Sovon Vogelonderzoek Nederland. For the first time ever, the data-set for the EU was almost fully based on official reporting by Member States under the Birds Directive.

The results of the European Red List of Birds have been used by several BirdLife Partners to feed into national Red Lists, conservation efforts and national policy campaigns. The results have also had a direct impact on the global Red List of birds, which was updated in October 2015.



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ADVOCATING FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is considered to be the most important factor driving biodiversity loss in Europe. Because of inappropriate land management practices farmland birds have declined by 50% in Europe since the 1980s. BirdLife's data show that farmland birds are the most threatened birds, with the same also true for butterflies, bees, other pollinating insects, annual plants and many other groups. That is why in 2015 BirdLife and Partners have continued to advocate for sustainable agriculture.

IMPROVING THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS (RDPS)

During 2015 we continued our work to improve the design of the EU's Rural Development Programmes (RDP) aiming to ensure that rural development funds deliver for biodiversity. Our Partners argued for funding allocation to biodiversity and environmental schemes and worked closely with their national authorities to develop targeted schemes for the protection of birds and biodiversity. Having campaigned in most EU Member States, we have achieved tangible results in dozens of national/regional plans. For example, thanks to campaigns by our Partners in collaboration with other NGOs, cuts in biodiversity spending were averted in Austria, Bulgaria and Poland. More examples of improvements driven by our campaigning are new regionally targeted agri-environment measures for priority birds in Ireland with a new budget of over €340 million, measures for grassland species in Poland, Red-breasted Geese in Bulgaria and meadow birds, including those in rice fields in Italy. To help deliver success our Partners also engaged in the implementation of the RDPS; participating in the monitoring committees, working with farmers to ensure biodiversity schemes get good enrolment and preparation of RDP projects.

REFORMING THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY (CAP)

Despite rounds of reform of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the subsidies system and the farming practices supported by the CAP are dysfunctional and not tied to sustainable land management practices. In 2015 BirdLife Europe assessed and sought to influence the wider implementation of CAP reform. We have worked on getting more information into the public domain. We exposed the fact that pillar 1 of the CAP, measures that provide "green direct payments", are failing both the environment and biodiversity. In many Member States, farmers have been offered exemptions from their greening obligations and so have not increased their environmental contributions at all. For example farmers have been allowed to continue crop production using crops that are not necessarily beneficial to biodiversity and been permitted to use fertilisers and pesticides in ecological focus areas (EFAs).

PILOTING SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION BY BIRDLIFE PARTNERS

Many BirdLife partners, for example in Austria and Spain, have been working with farmers, food companies, retailers and consumers to pilot better ways to produce food in harmony with nature. BirdLife Austria set up, together with Austrian supermarkets (BILLA, MERKUR, ADEG), a farmland funding scheme that focuses on existing high-nature-value farms, where landowners are paid for the existing ecological value of their fields. The scheme is organised under the non-profit foundation *Blühendes Österreich* ("blossoming Austria") and around 100 land owners have joined it. The scheme is funded by sales of regional fruits and vegetables in Austrian supermarkets, where consumers are informed that their purchases help preserve biodiversity. Since 2001 Riet Vell, founded by SEO/BirdLife (BirdLife in Spain), produces and sells organic food from wildlife-friendly farming in Spain's Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBA) and Natura 2000 sites. Following the success of its rice and pasta brands, in 2015 Riet Vell expanded their product line and started selling lentils and chick peas from high nature value farmland in Central Spain. SEO/BirdLife also organized events at the Riet Vell Nature Reserve in the Ebro Delta, where both tourists and local consumers got the opportunity to learn more about traditional, non-intensive rice cultivation methods.

PEGASUS - PUBLIC ECOSYSTEM GOODS AND SERVICES FROM LAND MANAGEMENT

In March 2015 BirdLife Europe joined 13 other organizations from across the EU representing academia, research institutes and nature conservation partnerships to set up the PEGASUS project. PEGASUS is a European research project aiming to develop innovative approaches and new ways of thinking about the way farmland and forests are managed. It is investigating 34 case studies in 10 Member States, covering different farming and forest systems. RSPB (BirdLife in the UK), SPEA (BirdLife in Portugal) and DOPPS (BirdLife in Slovenia) are contributing to the research with case studies from their countries. The project receives funding from the EU's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme and is coordinated by the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP).

PROTECTING IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS

Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) are priority sites for conservation because they regularly hold significant populations of one or more globally or regionally threatened bird species, or highly representative bird assemblages. IBAs are more than a collection of separate sites: they form a global network which, if sufficiently protected and managed, is designed to provide suitable breeding, stop-over and wintering places for threatened migratory birds in order to ensure their survival. BirdLife International identifies IBAs on the basis of internationally agreed and standardised criteria. In Europe, the IBA criteria also considers the requirements of regional conservation treaties, such as the EU Birds Directive, the Ramsar Convention, the Emerald Network under the Bern Convention, the Helsinki Convention and the Barcelona Convention.

CARING FOR OUR IBAS

The European IBA Programme is the longest running of BirdLife's regional Programmes; in Europe and Central Asia 5271 IBAs have been identified. Together they cover almost 200 million hectares. Monitoring such a vast number of sites is a demanding task, but BirdLife receives the support of thousands of active volunteers and regional IBA coordinators who collect data on the ground and fight against site threats while networking across regions, countries and continents.

Many BirdLife European partners have well developed IBA Caretaker Networks. As an example, in 2015 BirdLife Cyprus received support from the EEA (European Economic Area) funds to provide additional capacity to its volunteer network operating in the 34 IBAs in Cyprus. Also in 2015, DOF (BirdLife in Denmark) published a comprehensive report of the Danish IBA Caretaker Project. The report reviewed, for the first time, the data provided by more than 900 volunteers covering their entire IBA network. The results showed that half of the roosting and breeding IBAs were in an unsatisfactory condition, especially those located in open country or on the coasts. It also highlighted that most of the IBAs that had been classified as having 'good conservation status' were those that were already protected by law. This further stresses the need and importance of strong and well-implemented nature legislation in Europe to ensure the survival of our wildlife.

Other BirdLife partners completed and/or published their IBA national reports during 2015: SVS (BirdLife in Switzerland) assessed the threats affecting their 31 Swiss IBAs. NOF (BirdLife in Norway) completed an update of the IBA sites in Norway, which increased to 76 IBAs in total, including 17 IBAs in the Svalbard and Jan Mayen Islands. The BirdLife Affiliate, Nature Kyrgyzstan, presented a series of IBA booklets in 2015, aimed at raising public interest and gathering support to protect and monitor their national network.

Doğa Derneği (BirdLife in Turkey), made a major effort on IBA monitoring in 2015 by assessing threats, hab-

itats, trigger species and conservation actions in the country's 82 IBAs. The IBA monitoring data that Doğa Derneği collected was mainly used in the IBAs in Danger initiative. IBAs in Danger are sites that have been identified nationally through IBA monitoring as being at severe risk of destruction. The initiative builds on the decades of work undertaken by the BirdLife Partnership to identify and safeguard the most important sites for birds and biodiversity. Also Estonia, Iceland, Slovenia, UK, Uzbekistan contributed to the IBAs in Danger initiative in 2015.

OUR PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION: SAVING ULCINJ SALINA IN MONTENEGRO

Ulcinj Salina is part of the Bojana-Buna Delta, at the mouth of the Bojana River; a natural border between Montenegro and Albania. Millions of birds rely on this bird paradise each year. It's one of the Adriatic's most important IBAs. 250 species either nest or roost here in spring and autumn as they travel along the eastern Adriatic's migratory flyway. This vital IBA has been threatened several times during the last decade, threats included the development of an ill-planned hotel and golf course and even a so-called "eco-resort". A coordinated effort across several Montenegro NGOs, including CZIP (BirdLife in Montenegro) has resulted in popular national as well as international attention and support.

This led to the European Commission's Montenegro Progress Report 2015 (which the Commission uses to determine if a country is eligible to be part of the EU) which stated that "In the coming year [2016], Montenegro should in particular... make resolute efforts to protect and manage the Ulcinj Salina nature and bird reservation site, in line with the requirements of nature conservation". An EU delegation is expected in 2016 to measure the success of the government in protecting the site. Meanwhile CZIP and the whole Birdlife Network will continue its work on the protection of Ulcinj Salina at both the national and international level.



THE NATURE ALERT CAMPAIGN #NATUREALERT

The Birds and Habitats Directives (Europe's nature laws) are recognised as some of the strongest in the world to conserve animals, plants and habitats. The laws protect over 1,000 key species and over 27,000 natural sites in Europe. They have been credited with saving a number of iconic species native to Europe such as the Grey Wolf, the White-Tailed Eagle and the Common Seal. As a result, the EU is now home to the world's largest network of protected areas, Natura 2000, which covers almost a fifth of the EU's land.

Over the last two years, the European Commission has been running an in depth assessment of this legislation that could have resulted with its reopening and possible weakening. BirdLife Europe has vigorously campaigned to preserve and strengthen implementation of the EU nature laws helping mobilise overwhelming endorsement of the Birds and Habitats Directives by Member States in the European Council, by the European Parliament, and by over half a million citizens.

FROM FITNESS CHECK TO 'FIT FOR PURPOSE'

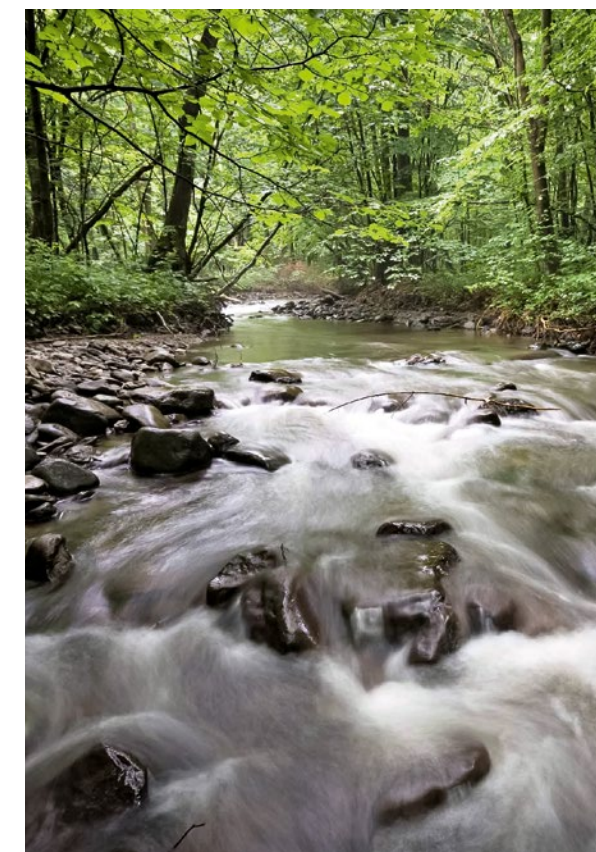
Already in October 2013, the European Commission announced that it would be carrying out a "fitness check" of the Birds and Habitats Directives, in order to assess whether these important laws were still "fit for purpose". BirdLife Europe and its partners rapidly mobilised, collecting, analysing and presenting a vast body of scientific evidence, case studies and concrete information from across Europe, building a solid case that the directives are extremely effective when properly implemented and that continued biodiversity loss is mainly due to lax enforcement, poor implementation, lack of funding and the overwhelming impact of other policies, most prominently the EU's deeply flawed Common Agricultural policy (CAP).

In 2015 the European Commission opened the public consultation on the Birds and Habitats Directives and asked individuals, businesses and civil society to give their input. In response, BirdLife Europe, WWF, the EEB and Friends of the Earth Europe set up [Naturealert.eu](http://naturealert.eu), an e-action to help citizens bring their voice to the Commission against the dismantling of the directives. At the end of July 2015, when the Commission closed the public consultation, the response was overwhelming: 520,325 citizens (about 94% of participants), from the EU and beyond, said they did not want the Birds and Habitats Directives to be tampered with. Instead, they wanted them fully implemented and enforced.

BirdLife Europe and Partners continued being vocal and visible in the public debate around the Birds and Habitats Directives. We participated in Green Week 2015, where we presented the report *Halfway There?* our mid-term assessment of progress on the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy and also in the European Commission's Nature Summit "Conference on the Fitness Check of EU Nature Legislation".

At the end of 2015 we reached another milestone in the Nature Alert Campaign: thanks to our persistent

advocacy work, the European Council and the European Parliament supported our call. The European Commission also published the initial findings of its "fitness check" on the directives and the study found no reason for merging the directives, backing up our call for not re-opening them. But the Nature Alert campaign is not over yet – the European Commission is keeping its options open and the future of laws that protect nearly a quarter of EU land is still in doubt.



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PROTECTING MIGRATORY BIRDS

Bird migration is one of the most spectacular of natural phenomena, with hundreds of millions of birds travelling twice a year to and from their breeding and wintering grounds. Many migratory species travel thousands of kilometres along pre-determined routes known as flyways. 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. This is why BirdLife Partners aim to safeguard migrating birds, including protecting important sites as they travel along their flyways.

NGOS AND ELECTRICITY GRID OPERATORS PUBLISH HANDBOOK ON HARMONISING ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE AND NATURE PROTECTION

The BESTGRID consortium brings together grid operators (National Grid, Elia, TenneT, 50Hertz and Terna) and non-governmental organisations (the Renewables

Grid Initiative, BirdLife Europe and Germanwatch) from across Europe to co-operate in designing, implementing and evaluating pilot projects for renewables grid expansion in Germany, Belgium and the UK. In 2015, the second part of a two-part handbook, *Protecting Nature in Power Grid Planning*, was published.

The handbook aims to ensure transmission grid development contributes to protecting nature, while also allowing for the sustainable development of our energy systems. The review builds on lessons from the BEST-GRID project as a whole and offers practical advice and resources on improving engagement between developers, authorities, nature conservation organisations and the public.

PROTECTING MIGRATORY BIRDS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

We have built a growing network – including 21 NGOs in the Mediterranean – to protect the millions of migratory birds that migrate annually over the Mediterranean from natural and man-made obstacles. The network works together through the Capacity Development for Flyway Conservation in the Mediterranean project, generously funded by the MAVA Foundation.

In its second phase (2015-2016), the project has seen numerous successes. Association BIOM (BirdLife in Croatia) produced a report on the Lesser Kestrel and successfully lobbied the local government on the island of Rab, leading to officials shelving plans to build an airport less than two kilometres from a newly discovered colony (and on the exact location of the main feeding ground) of the Lesser Kestrel.

In June 2015, Center for Protection and Research of Birds (CZIP, BirdLife in Montenegro) and the Montenegrin Distribution Company (CGES) pledged to work together on adapting the Electric Transmission System of Montenegro to environmentally acceptable conditions for nesting birds, with special emphasis on setting up nesting houses for birds on transmission lines. By October 2015, the transmission lines of CGES hosted 30 houses for the Peregrine Falcon.

CZIP and the Montenegrin customs authority were also able to get the minister of agriculture to declare a three-year moratorium on the hunting of the Near Threatened Rock Partridge, which has been victim to illegal killing and cross-border trade.

Thanks to the efforts of Doğa Dernegi (BirdLife in Turkey), the Ceylanpınar IBA (one of the most important stopover sites of the Critically Endangered Sociable Lapwing) was declared a 'no hunting zone' at the beginning of the 2015-2016 hunting season.

RESEARCH AND AWARENESS RAISING USED TO SAVE MIGRATORY SOARING BIRDS

Migratory soaring birds, and birds of prey in particular, face numerous problems on the flyways, both natural and man-made. Often, it is the man-made ones – such

as wind turbines and power lines, illegal killing, habitat degradation and illegal use of poisoned baits – that are more dangerous.

In 2015, SEO/BirdLife (our Partner in Spain) began exploring the technology of bladeless wind turbines to replace the traditional three blade ones, which kill thousands of birds every year. SEO/BirdLife discovered that bladeless turbines would not only be good for birds, it's good for people too. A turbine without blades removes the threat of dangerous obstacles hitting birds as they try to fly through. Its structure also takes up less space and so would leave more land untouched and cause less habitat fragmentation. The bladeless turbines are completely silent, a plus for people living close by.

SABUKO, the Society for Nature Conservation in Georgia, have also been working hard with the Batumi Raptor Count to stop the killing of migratory birds in the Batumi area of Georgia, a bottleneck that sees hundreds of thousands of birds fly through it every year. Every year, about 30 international volunteers travel to Batumi to take part in the count of migrating raptors. They are joined by an increasing number of tourists, who stay in guesthouses run by local families. The income this generates has played a major role in convincing an entire village to stop killing migratory birds.

USING CITIZEN BIRDWATCHING TO UNDERSTAND BIRDS BETTER

2015 saw the launch of Euro Bird Portal, a tool that not only helps citizens collect their observations of migratory birds, but also uses that data to produce dynamic maps showing bird movements across regions and continents. It was developed by the European Bird Census Council (EBCC) and supported by BirdLife Europe.

The EBCC has already signed agreements with 29 ornithological institutions and biodiversity data centres from 21 European countries, including 15 European BirdLife Partners. The online data gathering portals run by EBP partners collect about 30 million bird recordings every year from more than 100,000 active observers.

This new tool will help European ornithologists understand when, how and why birds migrate. With this information, we will be closer to tackling the impacts of climate change and to understanding how the spread of invasive or non-native species can affect bird species, and we can better plan the location of the next big infrastructure project.



EXPOSING THE ILLEGAL KILLING OF BIRDS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Unlawfully shot, trapped or glued: 25 million 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 and its Partners, who have put together a list of the ten Mediterranean countries with the highest estimated annual death toll. This further demonstrates why the Birds Directive, currently under review by the European Commission, should be better implemented, rather than re-opened.

THE TOP 10 'BLACK SPOTS' FOR MIGRATORY BIRDS

The publication of the report: *Review of illegal bird killing in the Mediterranean* came just in time for the Birdfair 2015, which took place in August at the Rutland Water Nature Reserve in the UK. The scientific paper on the illegal killing of birds: *Preliminary assessment of the scope and scale of illegal killing and taking of birds in the Mediterranean* came out in March 2016.

The review lays bare the areas where conservation efforts need to be stepped up. The highest estimates of birds illegally killed or taken in the region were for Italy (3-8 million birds), Egypt (300,000-11 million) and Syria (3-5 million), while the density of illegal killing/taking was highest in Malta (18-667 birds per year per sq km) and Cyprus (146-351 birds per sq km).

Other European countries featuring in the top 10 are Cyprus, Greece, France, Croatia and Albania. Lebanon and Libya complete the top 10. The Famagusta area of Cyprus was named the single worst location in the Mediterranean where birds are being illegally killed.

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.

HOW WE DID IT AND WHAT WE'RE DOING ABOUT IT

27 BirdLife Partners in the Mediterranean region, plus Georgia, collected information on the species and numbers of birds illegally killed for this much needed scientific review. The data were collected by BirdLife Partner organisations across the region using a variety of sources, including targeted monitoring data, police records, publications, reports and expert opinion.

From this data, BirdLife collected a minimum and maximum approximate estimate of the total number of individuals killed illegally per year in the country. The 10 worst locations were chosen from data on the approximate percentage of all birds killed illegally each year in the country that are killed at each of these locations.

BirdLife is trying to tackle illegal killing on all levels. Our Partners are working on monitoring, raising awareness and education nationally and internationally, trying to save individual birds, as well as supporting law enforcement authorities. We are also supporting the implementation of the Tunis Action Plan, the EU Roadmap to tackle illegal killing and other important initiatives to stop the illegal killing of birds.

In December 2015, a project to work on "Reducing illegal trapping in Italy, Cyprus and Malta" was also approved. BirdLife Europe will implement this project together with LIPU (BirdLife in Italy), BirdLife Malta, BirdLife Cyprus and BirdLife International for the next three years. The main actions of the project will be: site-based action in Basso Sulcis (Sardinia, Italy) and Ballarò market (Sicily, Italy), Famagusta and Larnaca areas (Cyprus) and Malta to deter illegal trapping of birds; educational activities and training of local people, especially young people, in efforts to reduce illegal bird trapping and protecting biodiversity; and finally communication and training activities to governments and law enforcement agencies.



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PRESERVING MARINE ECOSYSTEMS

Marine ecosystems and biodiversity are facing pressure from a wide range of human activities such as over-exploitation of fish stocks, habitat destruction and pollution. In 2015, BirdLife Partners in Europe and Central Asia continued to work on the ground and through advocacy with European institutions and Member States to ensure that marine habitats are better protected, fisheries are managed sustainably, seabird bycatch is reduced and we better understand the impact of human activities such as aquaculture on marine life.

BIRDLIFE MALTA IDENTIFIES NEW MARINE IBAS AT INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP

More than 100 conservationists and government officials from 17 nations attended a three day international workshop in Malta in November to discuss Marine Protected Areas and the future needs for seabird conservation across the Mediterranean. The discussions included identifying the current gaps in knowledge across the sea basin, the main conservation actions and policy measures needed, and the opportunities to identify and designate shared 'transboundary' protected areas. In addition to the international discussions, BirdLife Malta publicly declared the identification of seven new marine Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) for the country – the culmination of years of field observations and data analysis. Half of Malta's seas have been found to be internationally important for seabirds, such as the endemic Yelkouan Shearwater.

These identified IBAs have now been submitted to the Maltese government for consideration as proposals for Special Protection Areas, and we expect these to be declared during 2016. Once designated it won't end there. As the Maltese government pointed out, correct conservation objectives need to be set and sites managed according to that. This matches EU Environment Commissioner Karmenu Vella's statement at the workshop, where he pointed out the two challenges ahead: effective management and effective international cooperation.

PORTUGAL EXPANDS ITS MARINE NATURA 2000 NETWORK OF SITES

There has also been progress in turning IBAs into Natura 2000 sites. For example, the Portuguese government designated two new Special Protected Areas (Cabo Raso and Aveiro/Nazaré) and expanded the boundary of two existing sites (Cabo Espichel and Costa Sudoeste), adding to the existing Portuguese marine SPA network. This is a special feat as they have been sitting on the list of areas to be designated since 2008. The decision was based on marine IBAs and seabird tracking data, collected along the Portuguese coast over the past ten years. BirdLife's Portuguese Partner SPEA, the Portuguese Society for the Study of Birds, says the Portuguese Government's decision is

the first step towards comprehensive marine conservation and seabird protection in Portugal. There are around 30 seabird species regularly occurring along the Portuguese mainland coast, including the Critically Endangered Balearic Shearwater.

DESIGNATION OF NEW MARINE IBAS BY FINLAND, SLOVENIA, ITALY AND ICELAND

Marine Protected Areas are an important tool for protecting species, their food sources and the habitats they rely on to survive. To successfully protect areas at sea, governments and the scientific community need to know the most vital areas – the sites where biodiversity is highest or most vulnerable. For over 10 years, BirdLife Partners have been working to identify marine Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas for seabirds that then can be used as a 'shadow list' for the Marine Protected Area identification by national governments. This has been particularly useful in the EU's Natura 2000 network.

Throughout 2015, there has been considerable progress by the BirdLife Partnership in identifying new marine IBAs, including the Maltese IBAs mentioned above. BirdLife Slovenia (DOPPS) completed an EU LIFE project (SIMARINE-NATURA) together with the Slovenian government to identify marine sites for the protection of the European Shag (Mediterranean Shag). In Italy, LIPU identified foraging areas at sea as marine IBAs for breeding Scopoli's Shearwaters and new marine IBAs have also been identified in Finland (mostly for sea duck species) and Iceland (seabird colonies and coastal extension areas).

LAUNCH OF THE EUROPEAN SEABIRD TASK FORCE AND WORK ON MITIGATING SEABIRD BYCATCH

With an estimated 200,000 seabirds accidentally killed every year during fishing activities, seabird bycatch is a critical environmental issue in Europe. In order to tackle this problem, detailed knowledge of bycatch hotspots, and a strong collaboration with willing fishermen are necessary. So in February 2015, Fondation Segrè and BirdLife Europe launched the Seabird Task Force to reduce seabird bycatch in Europe. The team is based on the model of the Albatross Task Force, which has been extremely successful in other parts of the world in collaborating with fishermen on seabird bycatch. The Sea-

bird Task Force has focused on quantifying the levels of seabird bycatch off the Spanish Mediterranean coast (in demersal longlines) and in the inshore waters of Lithuania in the Baltic Sea (gillnets) and testing mitigation measures that can be adopted by fishermen at minimum costs. Since its inception, the Task Force has built relationships with the fishing industry in each of these countries, with our observer team out on boats to monitor bird bycatch and begin testing mitigation solutions alongside fishers. Our Partners in Portugal and Germany have also been working with fishermen on bycatch, and we plan to expand our work further in 2016 to include work in the Gran Sol fishery (off Ireland) and thanks to a new project with the European Commission enhance our work on gillnets in Poland and Portugal.

In our continued efforts against bycatch, BirdLife presented to the European Commission a position paper with the primary aim of securing new (and unprecedented) technical measures for mitigating seabird bycatch. We also responded to the Commission's consultation on a new Technical Conservation Measures Framework Regulation and had joint NGO meetings with the Commission. However, the Commission has delayed its proposal so we are still having discussions with them to see how this regulation will work towards implementing the Seabird Plan of Action.

NEGOTIATIONS ON THE BALTIC FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PLAN INCH FORWARD

The management of European fisheries was a hot topic for debate in 2015, the same year by which the EU should have ended overfishing. A consensus on how fisheries in the Baltic Sea will be managed would set the basis for all the other sea basins. BirdLife Europe, through its advocacy, ensured that the Fisheries Committee in the European Parliament voted in March to take a position that the Baltic Sea fisheries should be managed through an ecosystem based approach, minimising the impacts of the fisheries on seabirds. The committee also voted to reach healthy fish stocks above levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yield and set standards for the Council to set catch limits below their exploitation rates to prevent overfishing. However, Fisheries ministers in the Council voted to allow catch limits to be set above scientific recommendations, although it did make reference to minimising the impact of the fisheries on the wider environment.

In the end, after different EU institutions adopted their positions, there was a general agreement that the actions in the Baltic plan should also deliver on minimising the impact of fisheries on the wider environment.

However, negotiators could not agree on how to ensure that catch limits of fish would respect scientific advice. The fight continues into 2016.

REVAMPING HOW WE COLLECT DATA ON MARITIME ACTIVITIES

The environmental impact of maritime activities can only be determined once we have transparent access to enough and better data, as well as a standardised method of data collection. The key to ensure we get this information sits in the Data Collection Framework (DCF) Regulation. In June 2015, the European Commission proposed a revision of the regulation and for the first time, they proposed that the data on the impact that fisheries and aquaculture (farming of aquatic organisms) have on the wider ecosystem should be collected. This includes knowing if an aquaculture site is causing water pollution, marine litter, or disturbing nature in any way. Birdlife is working with other NGOs, more specifically Seas at Risk, in its DCF advocacy. Apart from ensuring the systematic data collection on seabird bycatch, including through independent observers, we are also promoting the collection of wider ecosystem data under the DCF to support implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, notably data on fisheries impacts on the marine environment (Natura2000 sites, seabed habitats) and we are calling for more data on the environmental impacts of aquaculture.

Furthermore, it is our utmost priority to see an improvement in the transparency and accessibility of this data, ensuring that a database will be established that would allow EU citizens to learn more about EU fisheries and aquaculture, especially their impact on the environment.



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CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is a huge threat to wildlife, as well as to human wellbeing, with devastating losses of species and habitats a potential outcome. It is already adding to the rapid, accelerating loss of global biodiversity we see today. BirdLife Europe advocates for swift and decisive reduction in greenhouse gas mitigation and for working with nature to adapt to already unavoidable change. BirdLife also works to ensure that human response to climate change does not exacerbate the biodiversity crisis, as can happen when energy infrastructures are deployed without appropriate and strategic planning.

FIGHTING CLIMATE CHANGE PROTECTING NATURE

How the EU responds to climate change will greatly affect the world's chances of averting a climate driven eco-disaster. At the beginning of 2015 BirdLife Europe published the report *Fighting climate change – protecting nature* where we presented our priorities for the EU's climate and energy policy to 2030. BirdLife Europe and Partners demand action at EU level in the areas of climate change mitigation, energy saving, renewables, bioenergy and infrastructure to put Europe at the forefront of building ecological resilience into its climate and energy policies to 2030.

BirdLife Europe continued influencing EU policies during 2015. We replied to the European Commission consultations on the role that land, forests and agriculture should play in the EU's new climate and energy policy 2030 package as well as to the consultation on measures needed in the non-ETS sectors which include agriculture.

We were also active in the global climate change debate. A delegation of BirdLife Partners and BirdLife International took part in the UN Climate Change Conference (COP 21) in Paris. Ahead of COP 21, BirdLife International and the Audubon Society (BirdLife in the USA) published the report *The Messengers: what birds tell us about the threats from climate change*. The report gathers hundreds of peer-reviewed studies illustrating the many ways climate change threatens people and birds.

THE ROLE OF BIOENERGY IN THE EU CLIMATE AND ENERGY POLICY POST 2020

Bioenergy is energy derived from recently grown organic material known as biomass. It can be used in liquid forms such as biofuels for transportation, in gaseous forms like biogas or in solid forms as is the case when burning wood for energy. BirdLife Europe acknowledges that sustainable bioenergy has a role to play in Europe's transition to a renewable and more efficient energy system. However, we are also working actively to highlight the dangers and the fact that the current use of bioenergy in the EU is not sustainable. For example unsustainable practices include biomass taken from

food and energy (non-food) crops grown on agricultural land, and biomass taken directly from forests. That is why in April, BirdLife Europe together with nine other NGOs published the report *Pitfalls and Potentials – The Role of Bioenergy in the EU Climate and Energy Policy post 2020*. The report presents our four policy recommendations to the EU on its bioenergy use.

BirdLife Europe continued cooperating with NGO partners on bioenergy policy. We have co-organized meetings in Brussels with Bioenergy NGOs from around the world. We also hosted a delegation of US NGO representatives from Dogwood Alliance, NRDC and Southern Environmental Law Centre, who all work to fight against the destructive impacts of the new pellet industry in Southern US exporting bioenergy to the EU. Together with the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) and Transport & Environment (T&E) we launched EUbioenergy.com, which provides the latest news on bioenergy use in Europe.

After years of campaigning by BirdLife Europe, the legislative proposal on Indirect Land Use Change (ILUC) related to biofuels was finally concluded, starting Europe's shift away from food based biofuels. We continued to work with partner organisations to make sure that this decision is followed by broader and more fundamental reorientation of a policy that until now has been increasing greenhouse gas emissions and piling up further pressure on biodiversity and natural resources.



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TACKLING INVASIVE ALIEN SPECIES

Alien species are those which have been introduced by humans, either accidentally or deliberately, into an environment in which they are not normally found. Usually, they are harmless to their new environments. Indeed; as they have not evolved within these new conditions, they are often maladapted and are unable to survive within them. However, occasionally, alien species are adapted to the new conditions they find themselves in. In such cases they can survive and, if no predators or diseases within their new environments are able to control their numbers, they can even thrive. It is when an alien species begins to thrive within its new environment that it is referred to as an Invasive Alien Species (IAS).

FIRST EU REGULATION ON INVASIVES ADOPTED

IAS are capable of causing widespread and significant environmental harm, as the new environment is simply not adapted to cope with the influx of the new species. Consequently, IAS are a major driver of biodiversity loss, responsible for extinctions of 71 of the 134 bird species that have gone extinct since 1500. Invasive alien species can also cause significant economic harm, costing the EU €12 billion a year to manage.

Following successful advocacy by the Birdlife European Secretariat, Birdlife Partners and other partner NGOs; the EU's first regulation on IAS was finally adopted in January 2015. This ground-breaking piece of legislation restricts the presence and use of IAS across the EU. However, it only applies to species explicitly listed in the legislation. Throughout 2015, Birdlife Europe has strongly advocated for the listing of species we consider to be the most damaging and the most immediate threat to the EU's biodiversity. As a result, we eagerly await the listing of the first 37 species on this list.

The process for further listing of IAS is well underway and Birdlife Europe, along with our partners, is working closely with the Commission to ensure the best outcome. However, the creation of the risk assessments,

which are a requirement for listing, is a complicated and time-consuming affair. With 1,500 IAS known to be present within the EU, and the commission only able to process a few dozen applications for listing a year, prioritisation of which species to assess is urgently needed.

USING RESEARCH AND LOBBYING TO MAP AND ERADICATE THREATS

Consequently, Birdlife Europe has led an innovative project, along with scientists from across the world, to assess which of the 1,500 known EU IAS should be listed first. The research has now concluded and we are proud to say the European Commission has warmly welcomed our findings. We also eagerly await the imminent publication of this research in a world-leading academic peer-reviewed journal. Looking forward to 2016, Birdlife Europe intends to keep the pressure on the institutions of the European Union to deliver on the 2020 Biodiversity Targets and ensure a comprehensive listing of the most dangerous IAS is achieved as soon as possible. We are also broadening the scope of our work to assist Member States with their implementation of the regulation and assisting Birdlife's European Partners in lobbying their own governments to effectively implement the regulation.



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LOCAL EMPOWERMENT AND EDUCATION

BirdLife Partners in Europe and Central Asia connect citizens with nature through a large range of activities. We offer unique nature experiences and our projects on the ground are run in collaboration with and in the respect of local communities. Every year in spring and in autumn, when birds migrate from and to Africa, BirdLife Partners in Europe and Central Asia organise birdwatching events and activities in the frame of our projects Spring Alive and Euro Birdwatch.

EDUCATING, INFORMING AND RAISING AWARENESS

Throughout the year BirdLife Partners in Europe and Central Asia produced a wide range of information material to raise awareness and promote protection of the environment. Our Partners organized and developed several successful educational programs for children, student and the general public.

ASPB (BirdLife in Armenia) opened its first Nature Visitor Center in Dsegh Village which is located in an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA). The center provides educational events to local schoolchildren and it also promotes activities to protect the flora and fauna of the region. DOPPS (BirdLife in Slovenia), opened a visitor facility in the Škocjanski zatok Nature Reserve. The nature reserve is a Natura 2000 site and the area is particularly important due to its large variety of birds; 245 bird species have been recorded in the past decade. The facility is the first ornithological nature reserve in Slovenia fully equipped for an informative visitor experience.

Thanks to BirdLife Malta's major educational initiative "Dinja Wahda" (One World), the Education Department in Malta included visits to nature reserves as part of the school curriculum of Maltese primary schools. In 2015 over 6000 students visited nature reserves managed by BirdLife Malta, getting a first-hand experience of the beauty of nature and ecology.

INVITING BIRD LOVERS AND FAMILIES TO EXPLORE NATURE

In 2015 we celebrated the 10 year anniversary of Spring Alive, our international campaign to encourage children's interest in nature and the conservation of migratory birds. The campaign is organised by OTOP (BirdLife in Poland) on behalf of the BirdLife Partnership. By posting their first sightings of the five easily-recognised migratory birds on the Spring Alive website, children from Europe, Central Asia and Africa create a real-time map of the incredible journeys these birds take every year. In the 2015 edition of Spring Alive, we encouraged people to make their gardens, schools or balconies bird-friendly to help support tired birds on their magnificent migrations. Euro Birdwatch, promoted by SVS BirdLife Switzerland, aims to raise awareness of bird migration by showing people its wonders and dangers and promote conservation actions needed to save migratory bird species and their habitats. The project started in 1993 and in 2015 it was held in 41 countries, during two days in October, with more than 32.000 adults and children taking part in counting almost five million birds that migrated from Europe and Central Asia to the warmer south for the winter. BirdLife Partners from Armenia and Austria to Switzerland and Uzbekistan organized more than 1.000 local events; from bird ringing and hiking to environmental education workshops.



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ENGAGING WITH BUSINESS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

BirdLife engages with corporations to promote sustainable use of natural resources and responsible environmental practice across key industrial sectors. We work with leading companies who commit to address their impact on biodiversity and follow specific targets for nature conservation. Our partnerships with the cement and building materials companies CEMEX (since 2007) and HeidelbergCement (since 2011) have changed the way we see the mineral extractive industries and we recognise their positive contribution to biodiversity through habitat management and restoration activities.

THE BIRDLIFE – HEIDELBERGCEMENT PARTNERSHIP

We have cooperated with HeidelbergCement, one of the world's largest building materials producers, since 2011. Together we look for solutions that will make mining and mineral extraction an opportunity for thriving biodiversity in our landscapes. Over the years HeidelbergCement and BirdLife Partners in many European countries have implemented almost 20 local projects that contribute to this goal. The projects range from lake restoration, to studying the long distance migration routes of Whooper Swans by satellite, to developing and testing methodologies for control of invasive alien species and creation of species rich grasslands on former quarries.

That is why in 2015, the scope of our partnership was successfully extended to Africa. In October, the Ghana Wildlife Society (BirdLife in Ghana) and Ghacem (part of the HeidelbergCement Group) signed a Cooperation Agreement for three years, opening the doors to business and civil society collaboration in Africa. The partners will support each other in studying and protecting biodiversity in Ghana. They will ensure further the leading position of Ghacem in environmental performance. Ghana Wildlife Society will support the company in quarry rehabilitation, biodiversity protection and management measures as well as working with the local communities around the mining areas to develop biodiversity friendly farming and forestry activities.

THE CEMEX-BIRDLIFE GLOBAL PROGRAMME

In 2015, CEMEX and BirdLife renewed their global partnership for a further three years with much to celebrate, from global biodiversity policy development through to best practice conservation action on the ground. This global partnership has guided the development of many successful business and biodiversity-focused projects and collaborations with BirdLife Partners in Europe, Asia and the Americas, that have an emphasis on threatened species and habitats conservation. In the latter region, CEMEX Colombia is collaborating with Calidris to conserve four Alliance for Zero Extinction species that exist within the Important Bird & Biodiversity Area associated with the quarry.

Now fast-approaching its 10-year anniversary, the global programme continues to support and work with BirdLife Partners in over ten countries, from Mexico to Malaysia. In Europe, CEMEX UK succeeded in winning four Mineral Products Association awards for their work in partnership with the RSPB, including an award for 'Biodiversity Innovation' for their combined effort to conserve the Twite and the Turtle Dove by providing feeding and breeding habitat. Meanwhile, CSO is working with CEMEX Czechia close to a Natura 2000 area, to prioritise areas to safeguard and enhance, including creating small pools for priority aquatic invertebrates, during the life cycle of operations.

SPEAKING A COMMON LANGUAGE

In 2015, BirdLife Europe and CEMBUREAU (the European Cement Association) published a joint statement on the Birds and Habitats Directives – building on the widely-praised joint statement with CEMEX – calling on the European Commission to focus their efforts on improving the implementation of these vital nature laws in Europe. This joint statement demonstrated that nature conservation organisations and businesses that apply long term considerations into their business model, can not only work together but speak a common language to policy makers about biodiversity and the green economy.



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CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

BirdLife Europe and Central Asia's Capacity Development Programme relies on a mix of Partner-to-Partner and Secretariat-to-Partner support. In 2015, we worked together with RSPB (BirdLife in the UK), NABU (BirdLife in Germany), SVS/BirdLife Switzerland, BirdLife Austria, MME (BirdLife in Hungary), VBN (BirdLife in the Netherlands) and SPNI (BirdLife in Israel) to support our other Partners in the region through different initiatives.

FOCUS ON THE CAUCASUS

Last year, we launched the Caucasus Initiative to support and develop ASPB (BirdLife in Armenia), AOS (BirdLife in Azerbaijan) and SABUKO (BirdLife candidate in Georgia). With limited funding provided by BirdLife Partners in Switzerland, Germany, Austria and Hungary, we helped the Caucasus organisations achieve a number of successes, ranging from transboundary conservation of the Imperial Eagle to the establishment of the first Nature Visitor Centre in an Armenian IBA.

The Caucasus Initiative has provided seed funding to help the organisations stabilise, improve their governance, bring the organisational expenses in line with the available income and help them find additional resources.

The results are there for all to see: SABUKO and ASPB have set up ecotourism companies which generate unrestricted income for the organizations. And they have also started to address the lack of engagement with nature conservation in their countries by offering excursions, bird identification classes and photo competitions. These aim to build a support base for the organisations, which will boost membership and act as a recruitment pool for future staff and volunteer positions. They also have run substantial citizen science campaigns which reach out to thousands of schoolchildren. SABUKO and AOS have also launched a major transboundary initiative to restore a depleted Imperial Eagle population in Georgia and Azerbaijan, with technical support from MME.



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 to achieve the maximum impact on the ground. Our programmes are implemented through the unique structure of the BirdLife Partnership, ensuring connectivity and coordination between all stakeholders, long-term sustainability and cost effectiveness. We are grateful for the generosity of our donors. Together we are truly making a difference.

European Commission,
MAVA – Fondation Pour la Nature,
Fondation Segré,
UNEP/CMS
The Arcadia Fund,
The David and Lucile Packard Foundation,
The Mitsubishi Corporation Fund for Europe and Africa

MAVA – FONDATION POUR LA NATURE

The MAVA Foundation supported BirdLife Europe's campaign to defend the EU's nature legislation – the Birds and Habitats Directives – from being 'reopened' and possibly weakened by the European Commission. Through the campaign BirdLife Europe, in collaboration with the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), Friends of the Earth Europe (FoEE) and WWF, managed to gather evidence that proved the effectiveness of the EU's nature laws, stressed the importance of fully implementing them, and channelled mass public support (more than 500,000 citizens) for the legislation. MAVA also supported BirdLife Europe's advocacy efforts in influencing Rural Development Programmes (RDP) related to the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) so that the programmes 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 in advocating 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. BirdLife Europe and its Partners managed to reach substantial results in terms of influencing rural development planning and implementation in Austria and Italy.

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 collect baseline information on seabird bycatch in Europe and determine effective mitigation measures that would reduce the number of birds caught unintentionally in fishing gear.

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 minimising adverse effects on biodiversity, ecosystems and vulnerable human populations.

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. This grant enabled BirdLife Europe to strengthen its European Partnership both on governance and policy related issues.

GOVERNANCE AND FINANCES

The European and Central Asian Committee, elected by the European partners, guides and advises and the BirdLife Europe and Central Asia Division (BirdLife Europe) and reports to the Global Council. The members of the Europe and Central Asia Committee 2015 are: 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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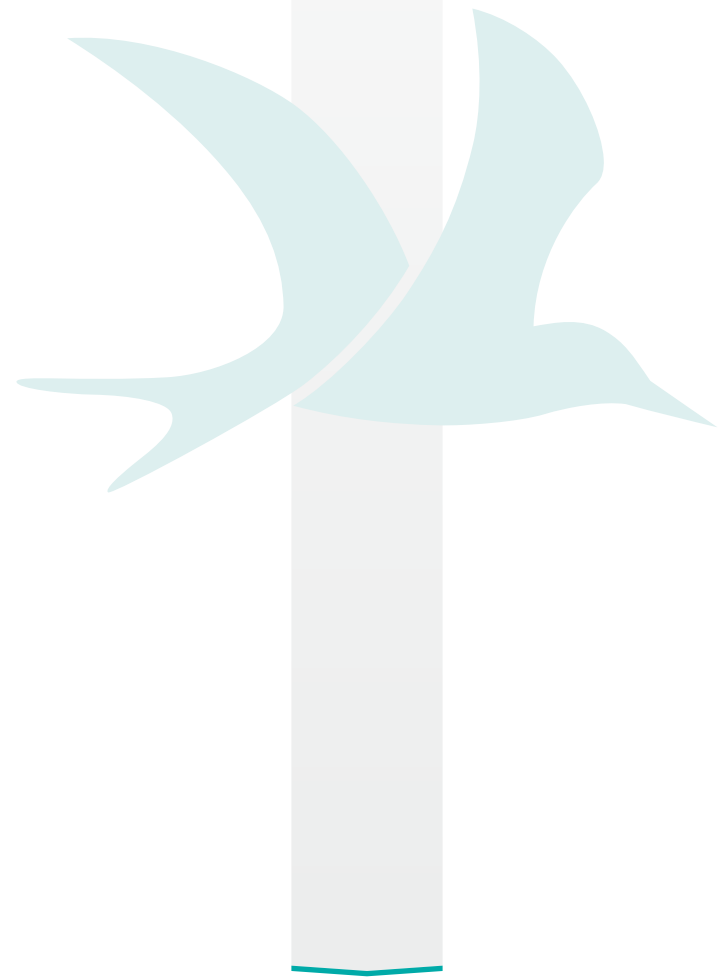
We would like to acknowledge the following BirdLife Partners, which have contributed through fundraising and unrestricted financial contributions to the work of the BirdLife European and Central Asian Division. BirdLife Austria; BirdLife Cyprus; BirdLife Finland; BirdLife Malta; BirdWatch Ireland; Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds (BSPB); Czech Society for Ornithology (CSO); Dansk Ornitologisk Forening (DOF); Društvo za Opazovanje in Proučevanje Ptice Slovenije (DOPPS); Estonian Ornithological Society (EOS); Hellenic Ornithological Society (HOS); Hungarian Ornithological and Nature Conservation Society (MME); Lega Italiana Pro-

tezione Uccelli (LIPU); Lëtzeburger Natur- a Vulleschutzliga (LNVL); 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); Slovenská Ornitologická Spoločnosť/BirdLife Slovensko (SOS); Sociedad Española de Ornitología (SEO) – BirdLife in Spain; Sociedade Portuguesa para o Estudo das Aves (SPEA); Societatea Ornitologica Romana (SOR); Sveriges Ornitologiska Forening (SOF); Vogelbescherming Nederland (VBN); Norsk Ornitologisk Forening (NOF); Lietuvos Ornitologu Draugija (LOD).

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE (€)

| INCOMING RESOURCES | | RESOURCES EXPENDED | |
|---------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|
| Partners | 1,147,621 | Staff Cost | 1,204,935 |
| Grants and Donations | 431,428 | Travel Conference Events | 48,653 |
| EU Commission Funding | 444,531 | Rental Equipment & Premises | 94,429 |
| Grants from Corporates | 271,842 | Support Grants | 517,952 |
| Other Income | 5,329 | Professional Services | 245,442 |
| | | Other Costs | 189,330 |
| | | Overhead | 111,226 |
| TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES | 2,300,751 | TOTAL RESOURCES EXPENDED | 2,300,751 |

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



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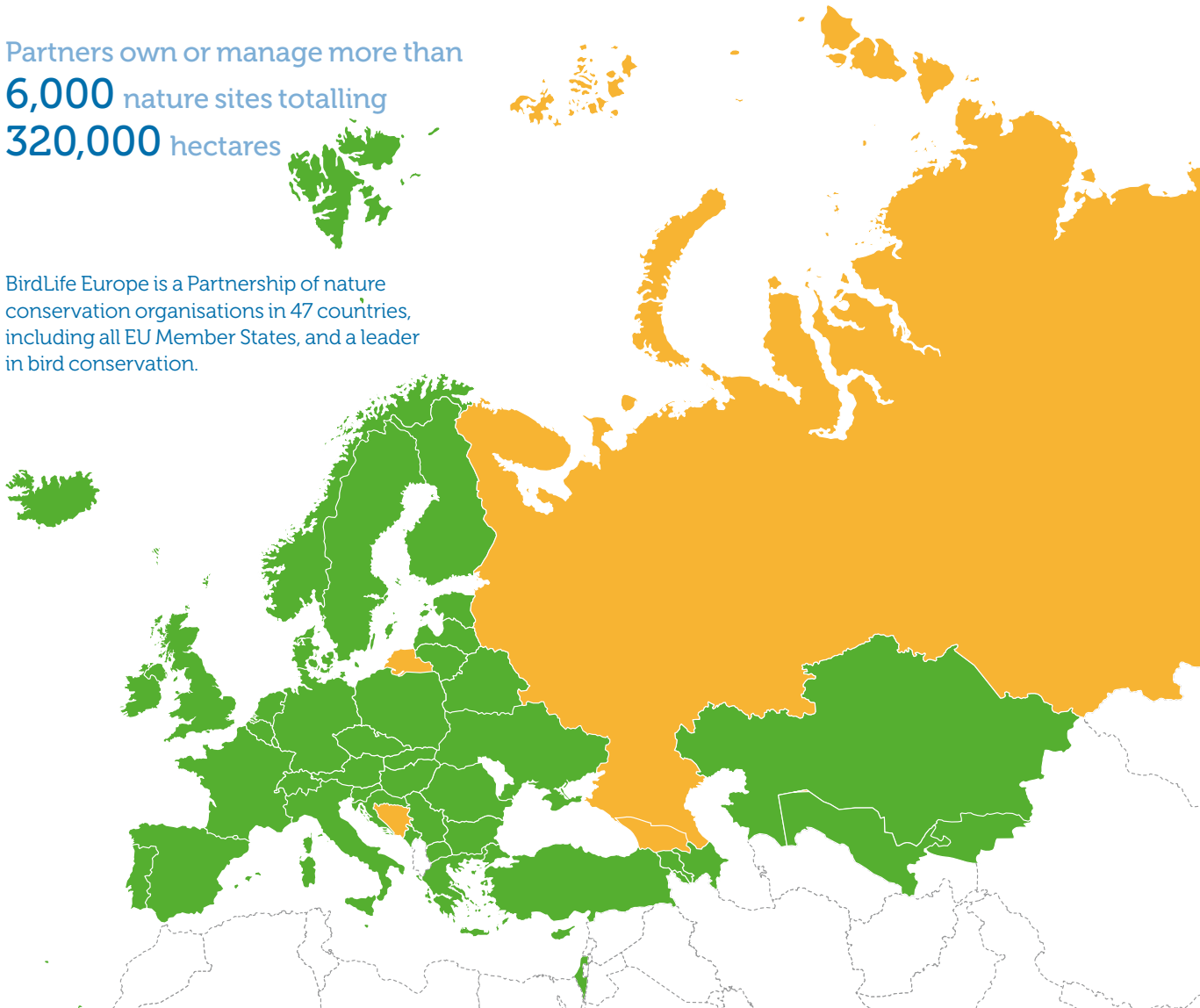
KEY FACTS

4,100 staff • 2 million members
Tens of thousands of skilled volunteers

Partners own or manage more than
6,000 nature sites totalling
320,000 hectares

- Partners
- Project work

BirdLife Europe is a Partnership of nature conservation organisations in 47 countries, including all EU Member States, and a leader in bird conservation.



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