



BirdLife
Cyprus

OUR STRATEGY 2023-2027



— *Our strategy* *2023-2027*

Here we present how far BirdLife Cyprus has travelled as an organisation and we set out a course of action under a new five-year plan (2023-2027). We remain focused on the four current BirdLife Europe & Central Asia strategy pillars, namely Species, Sites, Systems & Society.



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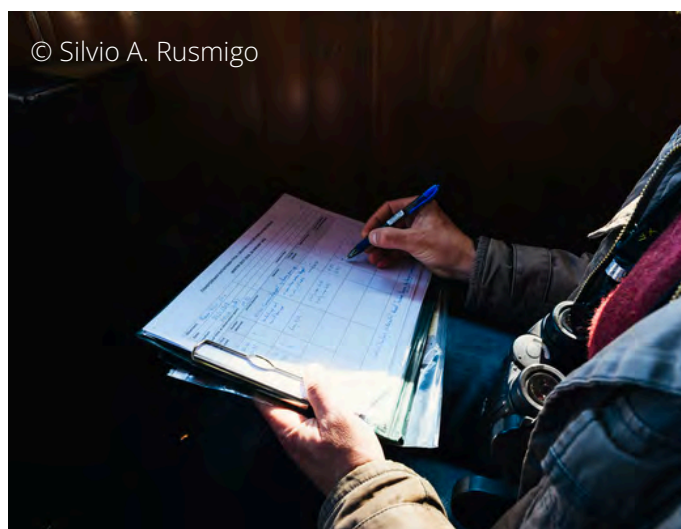
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— *Foreword*

The latest BirdLife International State of the World's Birds report, released in late 2022, shows that almost half of the bird species on our planet are in decline. Just over one in eight bird species are at risk of global extinction. That is over 1,400 bird species, from Sapphire-bellied Hummingbirds and Olive-backed Woodpeckers to more familiar Turtle Doves and Northern Lapwings, all about to disappear forever. Often, recorded declines involve common and widespread species such as Swifts and Rollers. Declines that may not be steep enough for these birds to be at risk of global extinction, but these declines can lead to local extinctions and which have big impacts on the healthy functioning of the ecosystems we all depend on.

The startling bird declines add to mounting evidence that we are entering what many scientists now agree is a sixth global extinction event, and the first to be largely anthropogenic in origin. Extinction has always been part of the natural order of things, but the current rate of extinction across all species is estimated to be between 100 and 1000 times higher than the background rate over the last 10 million years. One in eight bird species threatened with extinction is shocking, but among mammals the proportion is one in four, among amphibians one in three. Globally, the rate of biodiversity loss has been estimated at one species an hour.

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In Cyprus, we have lost six breeding species since 1950: the Black Vulture, Lesser Kestrel, Marbled Duck, Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Dipper and, as recently as the 1980s, the Eastern Imperial Eagle. The Griffon Vulture could be next, unless we can save it through our ongoing restocking programme and our 'end the poisoning' actions.

BirdLife International has declared that this must be the decade of decisive action to save nature and biodiversity, and BirdLife Cyprus aims to play its part. We must turn the tide from rear guard action to protect what's left, to pioneering action to bring back what has been lost.

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© Albert Stoecker



The fifth BirdLife State of the World's Birds report is not all bad news. The report is packed with evidence of how action to save species and restore nature can work. It is a call to action backed with encouraging examples – including our notable success in combating illegal bird trapping in Cyprus – of how things can be turned around.

In mid-2022, BirdLife Cyprus began a process of in-depth review of progress against the targets we set in our previous strategy (2013-2020). Our aim was to use this review as a basis for the setting of clear, ambitious, and achievable objectives and targets for the period up to 2027. This document is the result of this exhaustive process, which involved both the office team and the elected Council. Here, we present how far we have travelled as an organisation and set out a course of action under a new five-year plan (2023-2027). We remain focused on the four current BirdLife Europe & Central Asia strategy pillars, namely **Species, Sites, Systems & Society**.

We aim to meet the challenging targets set out here by speaking out for birds and nature and pushing decision-makers and responsible authorities to implement EU nature laws in full, as a key prerequisite to reversing biodiversity declines. We will aim to spread the 'save nature' message as widely and as effectively as we can, encouraged by growing public support for this vital cause in Cyprus. We will also continue to work with our partners to implement change through practical conservation action and projects. We will rely on the invaluable support of our funders and on the continued support of our members and supporters. Ours is a journey of hope rooted in a conviction that things must and can change.

Dr Martin Hellicar
Director

Melis Charalambides
Council Chairman

— *Who we are*

Founded in 2003, BirdLife Cyprus is one of the most active non-governmental, non-profit nature conservation organisations in Cyprus.

Through science, advocacy, education and on the ground conservation work, we work to protect wild birds, their habitats and wider biodiversity in Cyprus.

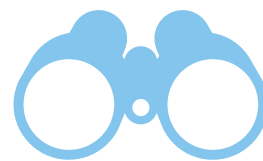
To achieve this, we work to influence decision-makers and to pressure for positive change; we speak out for birds and their habitats and communicate the urgent need for their protection; we implement practical conservation actions and we look to inspire people about the wonders of the natural world.

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Our vision

An island with healthy ecosystems, rich in biodiversity, where people actively safeguard nature for a sustainable future.



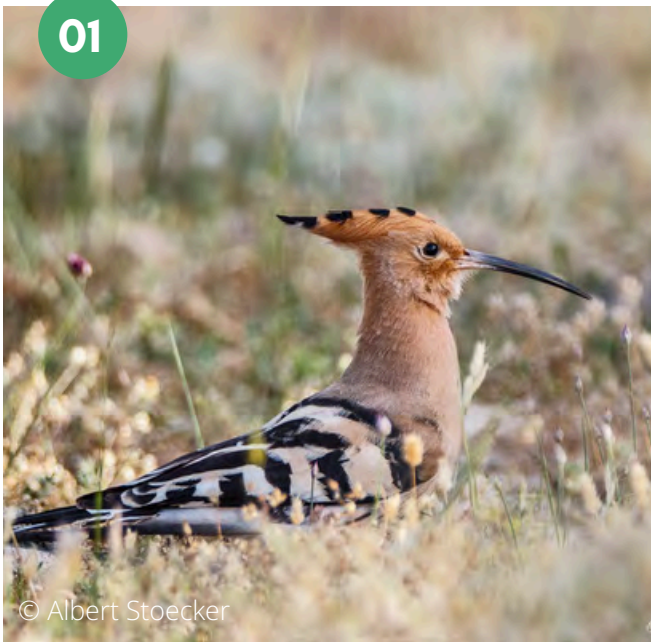
Our mission

Protecting the wild birds of Cyprus, their habitats, and wider biodiversity, through monitoring, conservation and education actions, and by developing people's appreciation of nature.

— *A journey of conservation progress*

In our ongoing pursuit of a thriving and sustainable environment, BirdLife Cyprus celebrates significant achievements that form the foundation of our growing conservation legacy. As we reflect on our journey, it becomes evident that collaboration, innovation, advocacy and unwavering dedication have propelled us forward. Here's a glimpse of our milestones:

01



Contributing Vital Bird Data to EU and Beyond

We've significantly enhanced the understanding of bird distribution, trends, and populations. Our systematic monitoring schemes for Wetlands, Common Birds, Nocturnal Birds, and specific species have provided crucial data for, among others, the European Breeding Birds Atlas 2 publication, strengthening the foundation of our research-driven initiatives.

Efforts to Save the Griffon Vulture

Over the past decade, our relentless efforts, most recently supported by the EU's LIFE funding, have prevented the extinction of the Griffon Vulture in Cyprus. Tackling threats such as poisoning, collisions and electrocutions, we've not only helped preserve the species, but also worked towards boosting the local population through strategic restocking initiatives.

02



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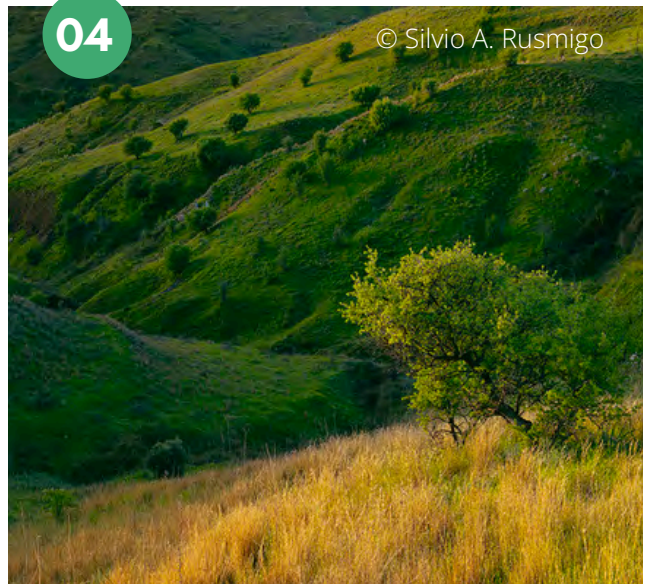
Remarkable Reduction in Trapping Levels

Through persistent monitoring, awareness-raising and advocacy, bird trapping levels have seen a remarkable 90% reduction since 2002, marking a substantial win in our commitment to curbing bird trapping. Our BirdLife partners have provided crucial support here.

Identification and Protection of Important Bird & Biodiversity Areas (IBAs)

Our efforts in identifying IBAs island-wide and securing their legal protection under the Natura 2000 network stand as a pivotal achievement in preserving critical bird habitats. We were also involved in drawing up management plans for these designated sites.

04



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05



Influence on Spatial Planning, Including Renewables

Our participation in advisory committees for Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) and Appropriate Assessments has facilitated proper assessment of developments affecting Natura 2000 sites. A notable win was the securing of spatial planning for renewables that excludes protected areas. Advocacy efforts have also yielded notable successes in spatial planning for key sites, ensuring protection for the Akrotiri and Akamas Peninsulas.

06



© Albert Stoecker

Transformative Restoration Projects

Collaborative restoration projects at Oroklini and Akrotiri have transformed important wetlands into vital wildlife refuges, showcasing the symbiotic balance achievable between nature and local communities. Our strong connections with the Oroklini and Akrotiri communities underscore the importance of community engagement in our conservation journey.

Growing Impact of the Barn Owl Project

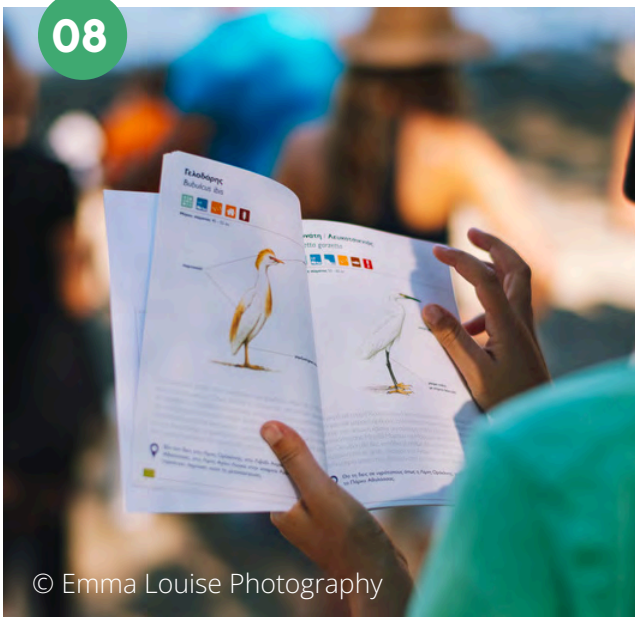
Our Barn Owl project, embraced by farmers, not only aids in wildlife conservation but also promotes farming practices harmonious with nature, by reducing the need for rodenticide use in the countryside.

07



© Zoltan Tolgyesi

08



© Emma Louise Photography

Educational Programs Shaping Active Citizens

Our burgeoning education program, designed to bring children closer to nature, has expanded significantly reaching on average up to 2000 children annually, laying the foundation for nurturing environmentally conscious citizens of tomorrow.

— *Our conservation priorities for 2023-2027*

SITES

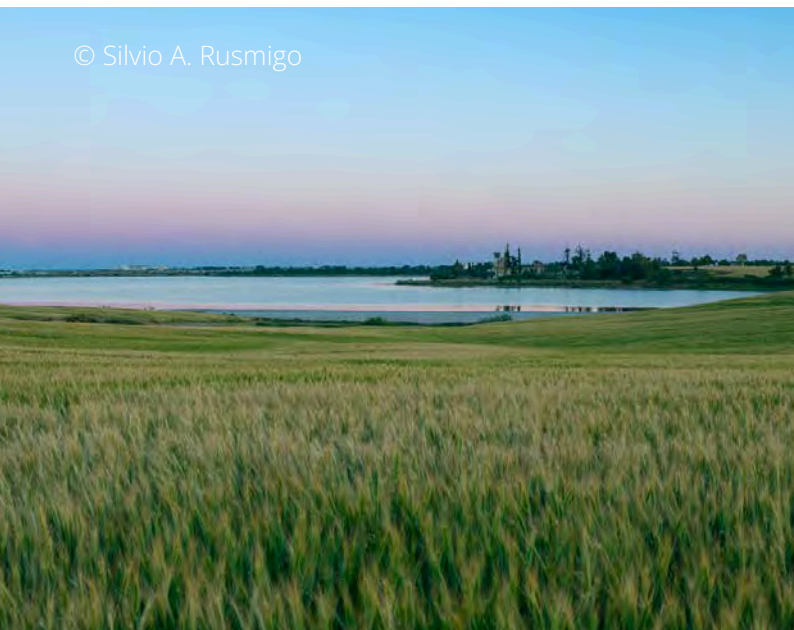
Setting priorities for action is about understanding urgency: with limited resources, where should the investment be made first?

One way to think about this is to consider the potential impact on biodiversity if no effective intervention is made at a site. Simply put, this depends on the relative biodiversity importance of a site and the degree of threat, or vulnerability. Where a site has high importance and high threat, it represents a potential large loss of biodiversity in the near future. Intervention at such a site is more urgent than at a site with lower importance and/or lower threat.

Based on this, we have prioritized and identified the following Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) as among our top priorities for conservation and policy work:

- Larnaca Salt Lakes
- Akrotiri Peninsula & Episkopi Cliffs
- Akamas Peninsula
- Xeros Valley & Hannoutaris Cliffs
- Oroklini Lake
- Diarizos Valley
- Paralimni Lake
- Ezousa Valley and Cliffs
- Pentashoinos River
- Adelphoi Forest-Papoutsas

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SPECIES

Based on existing best knowledge of status of our birds, the following species have been identified as priority for the next years. A full threat status (the first ever Cyprus Red List for Birds) analysis is pending and is due for completion by 2026.

- Griffon Vulture
- Raven
- Roller
- Black-headed Bunting
- Cyprus Warbler
- Turtle Dove
- Calandra Lark
- Woodlark
- Audouin's Gull
- Shag

POLICY

With regards to our advocating and lobbying efforts, our policy-related work will focus on:

- Management of Natura 2000 sites
- Nature restoration and climate change
- Countryside planning and zonation
- Farming (and grazing) policy
- Combating illegal bird killing, including poisoning

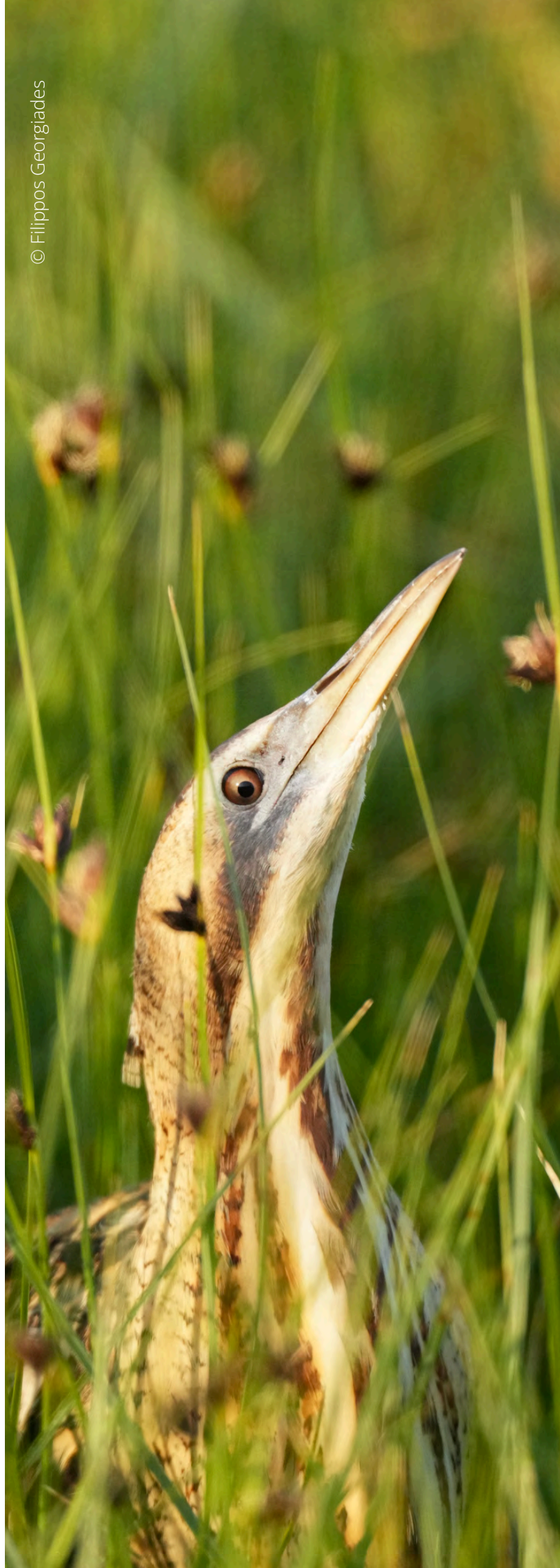
What we aim to achieve by 2027, with your help

Species

Improve knowledge of the status of birds in Cyprus

We aim to assess the status of birds in Cyprus under the EU Birds Directive by mid-2025 and to publish the BirdLife-approved Red Data List for Cyprus birds in collaboration with Game and Fauna Service by the end of 2026. Additionally, we aim to ensure long-term bird monitoring by increasing the number of competent volunteer bird recorders, to continue collating and reporting birding records and support bird ringing efforts, among others. We will also seek to enhance collaboration with local academic institutions to promote more ecological studies on priority bird species.

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A large flock of birds, likely storks or similar large wading birds, is captured in flight against a clear, vibrant blue sky. The birds are scattered across the frame, with some in sharp focus and others appearing as smaller silhouettes in the distance. Their wings are spread, showing dark feathers on the underside and lighter feathers on top. The overall scene conveys a sense of natural beauty and wildlife abundance.

Species

© Jane Stylianou

Improve conservation status of key bird species in Cyprus

We will continue working for the protection of the Griffon Vulture, addressing key threats such as poisoning and collisions, while ensuring sufficient food availability through improved grazing and livestock management practices. Simultaneously, we will continue our efforts under the LIFE IP project for the Roller and seek funding for a project focused on farmland management, with the Roller as our flagship species. To safeguard the endemic Cyprus Warbler, we will design and aim to secure funding for a grazing management project. We will continue our collaboration with Turkish-Cypriot conservation organisations for the conservation of the Audouin's Gull. We will actively support the Game and Fauna Service in identifying the regional Turtle Dove flyway, and seek to address the problem of hunting of this threatened species. Additionally, we will work closely with authorities to tackle invasive alien species, including acacia and the Common Myna.

Reduce levels of illegal bird killing in Cyprus

We will strive to secure a continued reduction in trapping levels, aiming for a 50% reduction from 2022 levels by the end of 2027, which we will monitor regularly. To achieve this, we plan to secure the re-establishment of the Police Anti-poaching Unit for effective action against big trappers, while also expanding our awareness raising and education efforts. We will also investigate illegal hunting, particularly focusing on poaching 'black spots' and on banning lead shot. We will work closely with Turkish-Cypriot conservation organisations and CABS in the area north of the dividing line, to identify the extent of illegal killing of birds there, and take necessary measures to address the issue. To address the issue of poisoning, we will publish a road map under the LIFE with Vultures project and continue our anti-poison efforts. Additionally, we will aim to establish a database on illegal bird killing mortality and publish a comprehensive report in collaboration with the Game and Fauna Service for effective communication and policy development.

Sites

Improve the status of our most threatened and important IBAs

We will continue advocating for the proper implementation of management plans for all the Special Protection Areas (SPAs), while ensuring thorough assessment of all projects affecting Natura 2000 sites. We'll explore legal action, if needed, for stronger protection. Our focus will be on restoring and managing key areas while supporting flagship species. We'll also push for full designation of marine IBAs/SPAs and collaborate with Turkish-Cypriot conservation organisations for enhanced site protection island-wide. Engaging in forest policy, we aim to establish a joint project with relevant departments for improved wildlife management and biodiversity.





Systems

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Engage in policy reform and implementation for biodiversity

Our strategic approach encompasses effective lobbying for full implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy and restoration regulation, fostering stronger engagement with planning policies, while refining our involvement in national and European Parliament elections for maximum messaging impact. Through targeted efforts, we aim to influence policy implementation, shape planning decisions, and elevate environmental concerns in electoral discourse, on a national and European level (while always remaining apolitical).

Reform the Common Agricultural Policy

We will actively support EU-level actions for radical reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), following the BirdLife Europe lead in this crucial area. Our advocacy efforts locally

focus on engaging with the Ministry of Agriculture to promote wildlife-friendly schemes, such as the implementation of the Barn Owl project. To amplify our conservation impact, we will design and implement farming and grazing-related projects in key IBAs, using flagship species like the Griffon Vulture, Roller, and Cyprus Warbler.

Habitat restoration for Climate Change Mitigation

In alignment with BirdLife Europe, we will actively engage with climate change initiatives, placing particular emphasis on the new EU Restoration regulation. At the local level, we will advocate for ambitious restoration actions on both land and sea by lobbying decision-makers and through media work. Our commitment extends to the design and implementation of restoration projects for diverse habitats, ensuring a hands-on approach to conservation efforts. Furthermore, we persist in our dedicated work on wetland restoration, recognizing the crucial role these ecosystems play in preserving biodiversity and mitigating environmental impact.



Society

Engage people and raise awareness about birds and biodiversity

Continuing the growth of our education programme remains a priority. Simultaneously, we will be actively working on the development of 'Thkio Mosfilies' (Safe Haven project) into a fully functional outreach and outdoor education site, fostering hands-on learning experiences. To enrich our educational offerings, we will be focusing on the expansion of our Bird ID course. As part of our outreach efforts, we will continue prioritizing building a broad support base while maintaining and increasing our members.

Build public support for Natura 2000 site protection

We will prioritize maintaining and building community support at key Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs), with a particular focus on Akamas and Akrotiri Peninsulas. Through a combination of existing and new projects, we aim to actively involve local communities in the

preservation of these crucial sites. In tandem, our commitment to communication and advocacy involves the continuation and expansion of our efforts to highlight the need for the protection of sites and nature. This includes ongoing education work with schools, engaging students and fostering an understanding of the importance of environmental conservation.

Increase public and corporate support for our work

Our strategic priorities in communication, engagement, and fundraising include maintaining a strong media and online presence. We will be developing a corporate engagement and fundraising strategy, to enhance our financial sustainability. Promoting birdwatching remains a focus, with regular field trips for members. We will also be offering birdwatching tours to both locals and tourists for further outreach and income generation. Additionally, we will continue to develop and promote BirdLife Cyprus merchandise through our e-shop, contributing to both community-building and fundraising efforts.

Governance

Every three years, the BirdLife Cyprus members meet to elect a Council of up to nine members to govern the Society. The elected Council, which can also co-opt up to two additional members, must always have a minimum of five elected members. The Council – whose members are all volunteers – hires an Executive Director and staff to execute the affairs of the Society in accordance with the policy formulated by the Council. It is the role of the Council and Director to ensure BirdLife Cyprus operates as a non-profit-making, politically non-aligned and independent environmental organisation (NGO), dedicated to the protection of wild birds and nature.

President A. P. Leventis

CURRENT BIRDLIFE CYPRUS COUNCIL (2023)

Chairman Melis Charalambides

Vice Chairman Alan Douglas Turtle

Secretary Stavros Christodoulides

Treasurer Chris Charalambides

Social Secretary Loria Phylakti

Projects & Funding Officer Konstantinos Konis

Co-opted Member Alexandra Panayi

CURRENT BIRDLIFE CYPRUS OFFICE TEAM (2023)

Director Martin Hellicar

Financial Manager Myria Achilleos

Monitoring & Research Coordinator Christina Ieronymidou

Project Coordinator Melpo Apostolidou

Campaigns Coordinator Tassos Shialis

Communications Coordinator Elena Markitani

Nature Policy Officer Vasiliki Anastasi

Education & Development Officer Christia Alexandrou

Conservation Projects Officer Antaia Christou

Campaigns & Monitoring Officer Markos Charalambides

Administration & Membership officer Romina Constantinou

Conservation Projects Officer Martha Petrou

Project Coordinator for Darwin Plus Project Phoebe Vayanou

Conservation Projects Officer Athina Papatheodoulou

Project Monitoring & Research Assistant Stalo Leontiou

Field Monitoring & Volunteers Assistant Anders Gray

Main donors

BirdLife Cyprus' work is currently being supported by:

- The Tasso Leventis Conservation Foundation
- The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
- BirdLife International
- The EU's LIFE Programme
- NABU (BirdLife Germany)
- The Darwin Plus Fund
- The Oak Foundation
- BirdLife in Switzerland
- The A.G. Leventis Foundation
- The Republic of Cyprus
- The Cyprus Environment Foundation
- John Ellerman Foundation
- The Erasmus+ Programme
- OSME (The Ornithological Society of the Middle East)
- Amdocs



John Ellerman
Foundation





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BirdLife Cyprus is the national partner
of BirdLife International, the global Partnership
of nature conservation organisations.