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Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli

Conservation News from Italy

LIPU

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Winter 2021

We need renewable energy but at what price? see page 25

Cover: Collared Pratincoles, now protected by LIPU-UK in Sicily.

The much loved Puffin is now “endangered” – see page 13

Nothing Lasts Forever

Editorial

David Lingard

Your board of trustees is now having to decide the future long-term course for our charity, LIPU-UK.

LIPU-UK was founded in 1989 by Roger Jordan of Chelmsford with the help of a strong local team of people including his wife Jill who is still an active member. The aims were simple – to provide all possible support to the foremost conservation group – LIPU, the BirdLife Partner in Italy. After nine successful years, Roger’s health was failing and he advertised, in the *Ali*, for a successor and I was honoured and happy to take on the role of UK Delegate.

I have been fortunate in being able to continue the tradition of leading LIPU-UK as a volunteer and now, perhaps, we should look at what has been achieved. Since our foundation, we have campaigned and helped the work in Italy by raising funds and committing the money raised to a number of projects agreed each year. Initially we supported just four, two Major projects and two which we called Minor but that reflected the level of funding rather than their importance.

After a few years it became clear that we could do more and working in harmony with Claudio Celada, the Conservation Director, we have now enabled over 150 projects – work which Claudio admits would have been unlikely without our help. A sum well in excess of one million pounds has been devoted to projects ranging from the reintroduction

of Griffon Vultures in Sicily to the purchase of a small but important nature reserve near Milan, to nature education in schools and the successful struggle against the illegal killing of birds.

None of this would have been possible without the loyal and generous support of our members.

We have had disappointments. We have long had the ambition to buy a nature reserve for LIPU and a number of candidates have been found but all proved impossible for various reasons. Perhaps the most frustrating was an important wetland in the south of Sicily for which progress was being made when the regional authority decided to declare it a Regional Reserve and thus making our efforts futile. That ambition remains and we have substantial assets waiting to be spent on a project of outstanding ecological value.

However, we now return to the headline above. Although I am in no rush to retire I shall have to do so at some point, so I appeal once more for a potential successor. The work is enormously satisfying and in general requires between ten and thirty hours a week with the latter being infrequent. Some facility with computer work is vital as most of the work is done on a PC and the larger part of our communication is by email or Skype. I will be happy to describe the "job" in more detail without any commitment on anyone showing an interest.

THE ENCHANTMENT OF NATURE

Danilo Selvaggi

Experts talk of 'soft fascination': it is the creativity that arises when we are immersed in nature. To want to have a more natural world is to the benefit not only of people's well-being and of biodiversity, but also of our spiritual and artistic capacities, of our sense of wonder.

Moments before the alarm was due, I awoke. It was 4.15 a.m. On the terrace of a country cabin taken for a short holiday, the air was cool in spite of it being high summer. Darkness and silence. The night birds' calls were stilled, while those of the dawn were yet to stir. A hiatus. It fell to the lark, that mystic, to bring the day to life.

A short while later I was on the beach. Deserted, it was thick with the scent of sea daffodils, which clothed the dunes in white. At my shoulders stood a huge heavenly moon. The sun was still to rise, though that would come in a few minutes and give me to marvel once more. Here too there was silence, away from the backwash of the world's ills. I sat down with my notebook and began writing.

I wrote on, in an unstoppable flow. It was like a stream of consciousness, spontaneous but lucid, as if a chemical process had accelerated my mind. An enhancement, a powering up, as they say in technological education. Yet it was a natural energy boost, with no need for pharmaceutical intervention. I wrote notes on work and plans, things to be done, abstracts of papers, verses of poems, things I would normally take days, even weeks to do. Here it

took me a few tens of minutes. And when I reread them, all of it made sense. What had opened up my mind? What is it that opens it up every time I find myself writing outdoors, every time I take a breath of nature? Exactly this: nature itself. The power of nature to envelop me, to free up creative energies. It's power to enchant, its soft fascination.

Restorative for the Soul

In 1989, the psychologists Rachel and Stephen Kaplan, of the University of Michigan, evolved a theory on how to recover from the stressful situations that were afflicting people more and more, especially in an urban context, and on how this might be done through nature. The therapy, dubbed Art, or Attention Restoration Theory, looked to a progression through four levels of freedom from stress, centred on a different way of managing the attention; the third of these levels is dubbed soft fascination. The underlying thesis is that in life we cannot always and exclusively be focused and alert, keeping concentration at its maximum till it reaches breaking point. It is not healthy. Far from it, we must leave our mind free to go off, to wander, have diversions, receive gentle stimulation, and to deepen rather than accumulate things, stumbling endlessly from one day to another, from one place to another. In this, let Nature be your Teacher. Nature knows how to welcome us, make us comfortable, to slow us down, to encourage genuinely considerate relationships with it and others. Nature is a restorative for a mind and soul overloaded by too much information, and struggling with the problems, demands, objectives, noise and chaos of today's world.

A Dose of Nature

Among many other studies in the field of Nature Therapy, another from the University of Michigan is worthy of attention, in the shape of a 2019 study headed by Mary Anne Hunter as to the extent to which a more natural way of life could reduce the daily stress of those living for the city. The research, conducted by monitoring the levels of two stress bioindicators in the saliva (salivary cortisol and alpha-amylase), involved 36 people asked to undergo a Ne, or Nature Experience, by having at least ten minutes a day in natural surroundings, at least three times a week for eight weeks. The results show that even this small amount is enough to reduce stress by 25 per cent. The study has thus become a pointer for health professionals who are faced with some of the most common cases of mental stress, to encourage people to be in nature, to prescribe a dose of nature for them. All that is needed is a few minutes spent among grass, trees, leaves and birdsong. People's lives, enfolded by the soft fascination of nature, will draw from it an unequivocal benefit.

The Two Forests

It is, moreover, not only a matter of therapies. With time, the concept of soft fascination has gone beyond the simple but precious function of a natural cure and has gained a greater significance: that of nature as a place for deep inspiration, almost for ecstasy, similar to that which anthropologists call enchantment, of being carried away by the natural environment, which in this way becomes a powerful driving force for creativity. Rational thought steps aside and the artistic variety comes into play, coming up from strata of the soul that are deeper and more intimate,

perhaps even darker, less rational and controlled. It is as if we contain an inner forest, and when we find ourselves in nature, in a wood say, in a living forest of the world, the two forests begin to speak directly, without need of our conscious intervention. They speak together and the true forest leads our internal one into thinking laterally, expressing deeper emotions. Anyone who has tried to put themselves into this situation will know what is meant here: it is as if a third eye opens up inside us. The normal chains of command and control are loosened and our soul runs more lithely, more freely. We can see further.

Transverse Stones

A major part of the work of the Norwegian Arne Naess, a founding figure in deep ecology, and one of the most important ecological thinkers in history, comes itself from a situation of this kind, that of a creative rapture brought out in him through being in a place in nature, in this case named Tvergastein, or the transverse stones. From the time he was young, Naess had spent his summer holidays in a village a few kilometres from the majestic mountain of Tvergastein, which in no time had him transfixed. It is here, thought Naess, that I want to be. And so, in 1937, at the age of 25, he built, at a height of 1,500 metres on Tvergastein, the hut where he was to live long term, in conditions unsustainable for any normal person. No heating, sub-zero temperatures and hard to get supplies to, yet having at the same time the magic of a nature that enveloped and delighted him, with him, almost, as one. In the soft fascination of this place, Naess laid the foundations of his ecological philosophy, which he would call Deep Ecology or Ecosophy T, after the mountain, to

acknowledge the importance it had for his writings. 'What is exceptional about Tvergastein and like places is their capacity to offer the fundamentals of life that are simple in means but rich in ends. It is as if they are intrinsic to the place.' Here, in the cabin of the transverse stones, writes Naess, '… is where I belong. Tvergastein is a place of extremes in many ways, but it is difficult not to be happy and grateful to have found it.'

The Summation of All Things

There are many cases of natural enchantment such as Naess's. There was the cabin on Lake Walden that inspired Henry D Thoreau's entire social and environmental philosophy. Walt Whitman's enchantment came out of his vagabondage through the paths and landscapes of America, and was the source of Leaves of Grass, a vast stream of consciousness that he revisited and revised many times over the years. It is a book both hallucinatory and lucid, as if Whitman had forgotten how to be purely human in order to incarnate himself in buzzards, in ducks, in the blue flowers that brighten the thousand pages of the work:

"I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love,
If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles."

And this is to say nothing of the art of the so-called counterculture, born most of all out of the abandonment of so-called civilisation for a more direct engagement with nature, and by now the nature/creativity binomial has become central to a great deal of artistic production. One example among many: the young American singer-songwriter Justin Vernon (recording as Bon Iver), who, in the wake

of a broken relationship and a seemingly stalling career, retreated alone to a cabin among the snows and the forests of Wisconsin, and in a stream of soft fascination wrote an entire album that propelled him to fame. Titled For Emma, Forever Ago, it leads to the almost inevitable thought that Emma has become not only its protagonist, but the summation of all things. The sum of tastes, of silences, of smells, of branches, of trees, of fungi, of running water, the flight of the falcon, the breath of wind, of light in the reeds and the shadows of the woods, and both past and future emotions and the smallest insects in the soil. A totality we call nature, with which, at a certain point in the story, we are madly in love.

The Grey Circle

We must not make the mistake of demonising, always and everywhere, the urban life. Our culture, and even our evolution, change, devices, stratagems, technology, and human society over time, have modified our ways of life, building cities, systematising our existence, increasing the means at our disposal. All of this has brought great benefits, from medicine to learning, from social organisation to communications, but at the same time has impelled the system over the edge. The result is life at a dizzying tempo, productivity without pause, loss of contact with nature, dehumanisation. The data on progressive global urbanisation do not imply any imminent change of gear. According to the UN (Global Environment Outlook) there will be 6.8 billion people, or 66 per cent of the population, living in urban environments by 2050, many in megalopolises of over 10 million inhabitants. Without major corrective action, soil degradation will increase, more of nature will disappear, and it is we who will suffer the consequences.

Removed from nature, our thoughts become grey and anxiogenic, and grey and anxiogenic thoughts lead us away still further, so that everything becomes more grey and anxiogenic once again. How can this vicious circle be broken? It is not a simple matter of retreating to one's own little hut, however attractive that might seem, but of demanding a political sea change: a stop to the destruction of nature, the restoration of habitats, cities that are ecological and life-enhancing, green infrastructures that, little by little, chase away the grey. A world that is richer in biodiversity and moves at a different pace, and favours an increase in our own interior richness, liberated and unchained.

Outsideinside

It is with this in mind too that the EU Commission gave the title Bringing nature back into our lives to the new strategy for biodiversity for 2020-2030, a title that inspired that of LIPU for its own action plan for 2021-2025, Nature in our Lives. The twofold concept set out by the Commission and taken up by the European Parliament with the excellent report in support of the Strategy is that as things are, nature is losing out, whether materially, around us, in natural habitats, in the seas and the decline in species, or spiritually, within us. The work in hand therefore is twofold: ecological and anthropological, scientific and cultural.

In this respect, it is significant that an important discipline such as psychology is becoming even more open to ecological thought, based on the idea that, in a word, our external and internal ecologies are closely related. Marcella Danon, of the University of the Valle d'Aosta, brings this out well in her

Ecopsychology, in which she gives a brief summary of the history of the discipline, and shows what innovations are necessitated by the coming into play of environmentalism, as well as by academics and psychologists such as Robert Greenway and Theodore Roszack.

Psychology, Danon maintains, has always been concentrated on our internal dynamics, neglecting our experience of being as part of nature. For its part, environmentalism has committed the opposite error in looking almost exclusively outwards, hardly ever taking account of that which is deep in others. From now on, says Danon, we must keep up the dialogue between these two worlds – the internal landscapes of the human psyche, and the external ones of the environment and of nature – knowing that to heal the wounds of one we must tend to those of the other.

Once we do this, once we establish a more direct connection to nature, we will feel not only better, but different. More alive, more creative. More disposed to allow the vast possibilities of which our spirit is capable to breathe. In a sense, we will open a new stage, hopefully a better one, in the long tale of human history.

The Principle of Wonder

Nature, said Gary Snyder, is our home. Truly. Yet nature feels also like a place we have never seen. It is flight and revelation, an epic poem. We must never forget that it is science that underpins the environmental movement, and gives us the power to understand and to analyse, but there is also the romantic philosophy that comes to us from an entirely different standpoint. To look at the world through the eyes of a child, neither knowing nor judging, but marvelling at what they see and loving the fact that they marvel. To have a look of amazement and let all our defences down. To want to try out the slight drunkenness of being that comes from the outside. To be happy to know that other beings exist and that the others are not as we are. To be happy to know that nature is not only our home but that of myriads of others. To want to be lost in the enchantment and the dizziness of nature. In the flux of soft fascination. Not merely sausage strings of data but a narrative. Not only knowledge but wonder. In a world dominated by utilitarianism, by control freakery, by endless consumption and "what's in it for me", this is a fundamental ecological principle, perhaps even the most important.

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SPECIES

Missing

Marco Gustin, Head of Species and Research

The new European Red List confirms yet again the decline in wild birds on our continent. A crisis even for sparrows and swifts. The numbers

can be found in the new study, compiled by Birdlife and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

The new European Red List, produced only 6 years after the previous one in 2015, highlights and confirms how, both Europe-wide and in the rest of the world, human activity is unsustainable for biodiversity in both terrestrial and marine environments. Once again, as is often the case when results at a global, European or national level are analysed, the numbers are not positive. And this latest European Red List tells us, once again, that nearly 1 in 5 species of bird that inhabit our continent are threatened.

The study, prepared by Birdlife International in collaboration with IUCN and Birdlife Europe and Central Asia looked at 544 species of bird regularly present in Europe, the data having been gathered by thousands of experts and volunteers from 54 European countries. The species most at risk are those associated with water, both marine and inland. Marine birds are affected by our over-exploitation of fish stocks, accidental capture (or, by-catch), an increase in non-native invasive species, and by disturbance and pollution; waterbirds and waders are subject to the effects of the disappearance and degradation of wetlands. But analysis shows a growing decline too, and above all in populations of migratory birds, in particular those that migrate long distances. A third of these, 121 species, are decreasing in number, while partially migratory species are suffering less than their long-range cousins. Among those in sharp decline we find the Demoiselle Crane, present mainly in Russia and Ukraine (down 50 per cent), which has slipped from 'of least concern' to

'endangered', the Common Swift, which inhabits our cities in spring, and the Rook.

Extinction for Five

In essence, 71 species of birds in Europe (equal to 13 per cent of the total) are threatened, 8 belonging to the category 'critically endangered', among which are the Sociable Lapwing, the Balearic Shearwater, the Steppe Eagle, the Yellow-breasted Bunting and the Red-knobbed Coot. Fifteen are 'endangered', 48 'vulnerable', 34 'near threatened', and 5 considered 'regionally extinct'. A total of 30% of European birds have populations in decline, 23% are stable or fluctuating, and 21% are increasing, while for 26% the trend is unknown. And unfortunately there is no shortage of those that did not make it: Pallas's Sandgrouse, the Northern Bald Ibis, the African Darter, the Common Buttonquail and the Pine Bunting are all extinct in Europe.

Comparing the data to previous versions of the Red List, the proportion of species in decline is, at the level of the 27 countries of the European Union, the same (30%), while the proportion of those with a stable or fluctuating level has grown to 30%. The number of species (23%) that have increased their populations is similar, while the figure for those for which the trend is unknown has fallen significantly, to stand at 17%.

Balearic Shearwater, Critically Endangered

One-fifth of European birds (103 species) are endemic or near-endemic; almost a quarter of these (24 species) are threatened or near threatened and more than a quarter (28%) are in decline, increasing,

or have an unknown status, while the remainder are stable or fluctuating. The most severely threatened is the Balearic Shearwater (critically endangered) followed by the 'endangered' endemic species: the Puffin, the Canary Island Blue Chaffinch and Zino's Petrel.

Considering the 84 species that have changed category since the previous Red List, 47 are now at a lower risk of extinction, the remaining 37 moving to a higher risk category. The majority of these changes have been due to a genuine deterioration or improvement in the populations of these species. For others, meanwhile, changes in the data-gathering methodology or in the calculation of trend values or previous under – or overestimations of population size go some way to explaining these changes.

Turning to habitats, from a comparison of the major types present in Europe it emerges that agricultural and pastureland environments, just like marine habitats, have the highest number of threatened or near-threatened species associated with them, amounting to 30 per cent of the total. These include the Skylark, shrikes, and buntings, which are suffering from the intensification of agriculture and the growing use of synthetic chemicals, the consumption of land, and the disappearance of 'mosaic' landscapes.

Rocky habitats, both coastal and inland, have the highest proportion (more than 50 per cent) of species with an unknown trend. One-third of all species associated with marine habitats and shrubby zones also have an unknown tendency.

Who is Doing Badly? Lanners and Italian Sparrows

In several cases – including that of the Lanner, a falcon ever more rare and threatened in Europe – the classification determined in this European Red List is unconvincing. The species is considered by IUCN to be of least concern at a global level. As the African population from the Sahel region (south of the Sahara) to southern Africa makes up the majority of the world population, the global situation therefore appears stable. But things are different in Europe, where recent studies show a dramatic decline, particularly in the three most important countries for this bird: Italy, Greece and Turkey, (92 per cent of the European population).

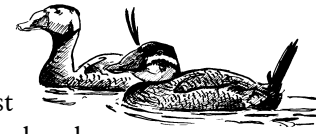
In a recent and updated work on the species, the European population is estimated to be 119-151 pairs, well below the 420-850 reported in the last Red List. In view of the fact that today the European population is almost certainly fewer than 150 pairs, the Lanner should be in category 'A', where both numbers and years (and therefore the trend) come into play. In the last 25 years, which correspond to three generations, there has been a loss of more than 80 per cent of the overall population. Its situation is therefore not improving as reported by the new European Red List, which declassified it from 'endangered' to 'near threatened'. It has, in fact, worsened, and can be considered 'critically endangered'.

One case that has caused uproar is that of the Italian Sparrow, an endemic species, which the Red List now classifies as 'vulnerable'. Once widespread and known by all, the species has been in marked decline

for years. For the decade 2000-10, for example, an earlier Italian Red List noted a decrease of 47 per cent.

Who Is Moving Up the Ranking?

There is positive news regarding the White-headed Duck, which was previously endangered in Europe. This is thanks to ongoing, long-term conservation measures and the development and implementation of an international action plan that limits the reduction and degradation of its habitat, the pressure from hunting, and the risk of hybridisation with the Ruddy Duck. The rate of decline has reduced to the point that it no longer qualifies as threatened and is now classified 'vulnerable'. Meanwhile, although the Egyptian Vulture has also moved from 'threatened' to 'vulnerable', (thanks to only a minor rate of decline principally in the Iberian population) there is still a long way to go: legal protection and conservation must be further implemented at national and international levels in the breeding and overwintering areas and along migration routes.



Threats Where You Live

The Study confirms the general conclusions of other recent studies on European biodiversity: large-scale changes in soil use, the intensification of agricultural practices, infrastructure development, over exploitation of marine resources, pollution of inland waters and unsustainable forestry and agricultural practices are principally responsible for the decline in bird populations observed in European habitats. Even though the populations of several species of raptor have increased thanks to legal protection and targeted conservation activities, many others that depend on open habitat (for example meadows and shrubs) for feeding are still in decline. Many species of bird are hunted legally all over Europe, while millions are illegally killed every year.

To these threats are added the unpredictable effects of climate change on populations. Current knowledge suggests that for several species climate change is, or will be, an important factor in displacement from their range, while for others it may significantly increase the risk of extinction. One more reason to protect, with determination, Earth's climate and all living species. Before it is too late.

Categories of threat	
CR	critically endangered
EN	endangered
VU	vulnerable
NT	near threatened
LC	of least concern

In Italy, certain still huntable species have seen their positions deteriorate since 2015, passing from 'of least concern' to 'near threatened': the Tufted Duck, Red-legged Partridge and Common Quail. For these, urgent conservation policies are required.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Go Wherever Your Heart Takes You

The recent 'Natural Leaders' event hosted an extensive debate by young LIPU volunteers on what motivates them to protect the environment and biodiversity. There is an awareness of the complexity of the challenges that await them in the coming years.

Federica, Andrea, Pier Francesco, Tiziano
On behalf of the organiser of 'Natural Leaders'

'Natural Leaders' has been held annually since 2013, for LIPU volunteers under the age of 30. The intention is to stimulate debate and reflection on issues that are important to young activists, and also to provide an opportunity for socialising and getting to know different local groups. This year's theme was giving a hearing to voices that for so long have not been heard, though they are asking for responsibility and changes both at an environmental and a socio-economic level. The event took place on-line, using a virtual platform, as the pandemic still called for caution.

Young People and the Environment

We were, as we said, looking to give a voice to those who feel they have no voice. Nowadays the issue of conserving nature, biodiversity, and our planet is all about what we owe to future generations. Ecology becomes complicated by social and economic factors; so 'Natural Leaders' is an ideal forum to air these arguments and to hear those who can enrich our thoughts.

The three-day event took the usual format, starting with an introductory speech by the Director General, Danilo Selvaggi, an afternoon listening to (and discussing with) guest speakers, and finally exchanging stories from our experience of volunteering with LIPU. The first guest speaker, Paolo Ciucci (a biologist at La Sapienza University), addressed biodiversity and giving a voice to nature. The second, Massimo Frezzotti (a glaciologist at the Roma Tre University and at the government agency ENEA), spoke on climate change and future generations. The final guest speaker was Zeudi Liew, who drew on her experience as a humanitarian aid worker (and expert on human rights, children's rights and climate migrants).

These guests guided us in our discussion of biodiversity, 'giving a voice' to nature and youth, and the long-standing problem of climate change. And, finally, time was devoted to a consideration of the consequent social upheavals, and in particular their effect on the vulnerable, including children.

Climate and Biodiversity, an Inseparable Pair

LIPU needs an all-encompassing vision, in that the climate change effort cannot be allowed to overshadow our push for the protection of biodiversity and the ecosystem. At the same time, our environmental actions must be informed by a new awareness of the climate problem and its social and other consequences.

In all the uncertainties and difficulties of the pandemic year, we have maybe been better able to reflect on our own interaction with 'Mother Earth' and what a 'new normal' might be for the future. In

sum, the following reflection emerged from 'Natural Leaders' 2021: everything we are experiencing at the moment prompts us to reflect on what we are as volunteers, activists, and citizens of this world, and on why it is so important to persist in our efforts.

Take Action, Even for Those Who Cannot

But why is protecting biodiversity the right thing to do? Why do we continue to oppose threats to nature, the tragedy of climate change, and the idea of leaving the mess for future generations to clear up? Because the urge to take action is irresistible. Because in our voice and in our actions lie the hopes of those who are unable to take such actions themselves. Because we feel in our hearts that it is the right thing to do.

As environmentalists we inevitably reflect on the importance of our efforts. However, to maximise the effectiveness of our work we need to understand the profound changes in the backdrop to our endeavours, and look with a new perspective on the part we play in a scenario much larger than ourselves. Huge challenges await us in the near future, and we are confident that LIPU and its volunteers will be ready to face them.

Thank You !

The choice of themes and guests and the coordination and organization of this year's Natural Leaders event were managed by a group of young volunteers, underlining an encouraging and growing enthusiasm among those who are the future of the organisation. But Natural Leaders could not have happened without the trust and valuable support of LIPU staff, who were constantly available for advice.

Our heartfelt thanks go to them, and to all the participants who make Natural Leaders the success that it is. (Federica, Andrea, Pier Francesco, Tiziano)

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WILDLIFE RESCUE

Laura Silva Head of the Wildlife Rescue Unit

2021, A Record-Breaking Year

The year 2021 broke all previous records. By 30 September, 4,057 more admissions had been registered in the 10 LIPU recovery centres than in the equivalent period in 2020. Records were also broken for the number of volunteer hours dedicated to the treatment of injured animals, for surgical interventions, and for the number of members of the general public involved in the rescue and transport of animals. Sadly this also reflects record numbers of animals injured or in distress.

Initial analysis of the data reveals that the proportions of creatures in distress by age group (from infancy to adulthood) remain similar to last year, as do the causes of hospitalisation.

But in a way this year is not so special, as an annual increase of around 10 per cent has been the pattern in recent years. The underlying causes may be changing, and are still to be fully determined. But considering our rescue centres are already at maximum capacity, this raises the question of what the future holds for our centres, and for the volunteers who work there.

A Happy Ending for a Golden Eagle

A Golden Eagle sees a lamb; she swoops down to take it but the result is unexpected. This was the fate of a six-year-old Golden Eagle out on a hunting trip: she had become entangled in the electric fence surrounding the sheep. The shepherd who found her late in the late evening and seriously injured after hours of struggling alerted the Canal San Bovo Forest Service, and the unfortunate raptor was taken to the LIPU Recovery Centre in Trento.

Both wings were damaged. The injuries to the right wing were such that fly larvae were found in the wounds. After more than a month of treatment including antibiotics, she was well enough to begin rehabilitation in the centre's aviary tunnel. Nine days later she had gained enough weight, strength and mobility to be released.

This type of accident is rare: the first on record, at least in the Trento region. But despite the happy ending we still need to be vigilant about the more common hazards that Golden Eagles face, such as collision with cable-car wires or glass cladding, or poisoning through ingestion of lead shot.

SOS for a Falcon

The sheer diversity of cases arriving at our Rescue Centres presents its own challenges. Each case is different, there is no standard solution, but of course the ever-growing experience that we have helps in diagnosis and in preparing a course of treatment. The causes of injuries are equally varied, and the different ways in which a rescue can be achieved are sometimes surprising.

An especially interesting case concerns an adult Hobby with a fracture to a major wing bone caused by gunshot. This bird was found near the San Terenziano Aero Club (near Perugia), and thus arrived at the LIPU Rescue Centre at Castiglione del Lago, delivered by microlight aircraft. Thanks to the intervention of the centre's medical director, and subsequent care and rehabilitation, the bird regained its strength and was once again able – this time using his own wings – to take to the Umbrian sky.

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ENERGY

Wind and Nature

Giorgia Gaibani, Land Protection and Natura 2000

In the ecological transition and the fight against climate change, renewable energy, particularly wind and solar power, will play a fundamental role. We must thus choose the sites of energy farms with care, to prevent damage to species and to habitat.

We know it really: man-made climate change is the cause of extreme weather events, with heavy consequences for the economy, for human health and safety, and for the health and safety of ecosystems. It is extremely important that we tackle the climate crisis with policies to reduce energy consumption, increase energy efficiency, and reduce the use of fossil fuels. This is the only way to meet the ambitious target set by the European Union, which aims to cut emissions of carbon dioxide (CO_2) by 55 per cent, returning us to 1990 levels, by 2030, and to ensure that climate neutrality is reached by 2050.

But a biodiversity crisis is also in play. The 2019 report of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), based on scientific analysis from independent sources, paints an alarming picture and one that we have covered in these pages. Unsustainable human activity has impacted biodiversity and ecosystem services at a rate never seen before, and a million species have been added to the high-risk list. To halt this biodiversity crisis the European Union has also set ambitious objectives in its new Strategy for Biodiversity: the crisis in nature, as well as the climate crisis, needs to be sorted out.

The Two Crises Are Actually One

Human impact on the environment is the cause of both climate change and the decline in biodiversity. Worse, the "man-made" destruction of ecosystems that capture and store CO_2, including forest and marine ecosystems, is adding to the concentration of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Worse, climate change aggravates the decline of biodiversity in multiple ways, including the displacement and the reduction in the range of many plants and animals. In short, the climate crisis and the biodiversity crisis are tightly woven together.

It is therefore indispensable to address these crises in a synergistic way, since it would be short-sighted to attempt to solve one and forget about the other, leading to a disastrous short circuit. Unfortunately, this is exactly what is happening now, and it is set to continue in many Italian regions, especially in the centre and south, as part of the mad-dash construction of a large wind and solar power infrastructure.

Invasion

Hundreds of installations have been built by the industry, including wind turbines (with towers ever taller, now up to 260 metres) and solar farms (spreading from some tens to 200 hectares), often with permits based on extremely low-quality environmental assessments and ruining whole areas of great importance for biodiversity, in the process causing serious damage both directly and indirectly to habitats and species. The consumption of land, the fragmentation and subtraction of habitat, animal collisions with wind turbines, noise disturbance, erosion caused by these works' massive foundations – just a few examples of what is wrong, without even mentioning the impossible-to-overlook degradation of the precious element that is the rural landscape. In short, a 'metallic' invasion of the land. An impossible choice? Not at all.

Planning

The means for solving this supposed conflict between 'climate' and biodiversity is provided by the self-same European Directive on the use of energy from renewable sources (2018/2001/UE). This asks Member States to make advance plans for the siting of energy infrastructure, including generation, transmission, and storage, and to identify suitable areas for their installation. The plans should also cover installations at sea or 'offshore', avoiding important migration routes and proximity to particularly vulnerable marine ecosystems. For these reasons, LIPU has asked politicians, and especially the Ministry of Ecological Transition, to make rapid plans that designate as unsuitable all Protected Natural Areas including Natura 2000 sites and

agricultural areas of high importance (HNVFs), and as suitable disused industrial areas, industrial areas (both active and disused), and urbanised areas.

It has become obvious that planning on a national scale, with the active involvement of environmental groups, is the only way to ensure a real synergy between the strategy for combatting the climate crisis and the strategy for protecting biodiversity. In the absence of large-scale advance planning, every siting decision will be dictated by convenience for business and by case-by-case environmental impact analyses, often significantly incomplete from a fact-finding point of view. Besides, in the absence of planning, the environmental assessment of individual proposals of necessity precludes an assessment of the cumulative impact on biodiversity and land consumption.

Changing Course

The fight against climate change must involve a change of course – that is, a change in both ways and means. We need ambitious and concrete policies for reducing our energy consumption, combined with research into increasing energy efficiency and into reducing the impact of renewable energy, as well as advance planning for the integrated, wide-scale localisation of infrastructure. In appropriate areas any construction must follow environmental assessments based on complete, thorough, and up-to-date data, always preferring existing urban sites, as recommended by ISPRA for solar farms.

This is the only way to guarantee the principle of non-significant damage, given by the European Union as a pivotal condition for the correct use of European funds. And only then can we talk of a real ecological transition.

All this, however, is tempered by the knowledge that without help from energy research and serious policies for reducing consumption, renewables will be unable to supply all of our needs. The 'new renewables' (wind and solar) are already extensively deployed, with about 33,000 megawatts installed, mainly in the south, generating 3.5 per cent of total national consumption, ignoring problems of intermittent supply and metal procurement.

The challenge is difficult, but the prize is enormous. We cannot afford to make mistakes.

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NEWS FROM LIPU-UK

Annual report

The latest Trustees' Annual Report and accounts have been approved by our accountants and filed with the Charity Commission and are also available on our blog (https://www.lipu-uk.org/blog/). For the second year it has been decided not to send paper copies with the *Ali* but I will happily post a printed copy to anyone who requests it. This is not a lack of openness, but the efforts of a dyed-in-the-wool Yorkshireman to reduce costs as much as possible to devote as much as we can to the welfare of birds.

This year we have made further cost savings by not posting membership cards and I have received no complaint or comment, so we will continue in this way. If a card is needed I can supply one, just contact me.

★★★

A Tale of Two Buzzards

I think most bird watchers know that the Common Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*) is very variable in colour, and that has recently caught me out, not once but twice.

The old saying, "Never assume, check." should have been my guidance in September when, in the French Pyrénées, we rounded a bend in a valley noted for its Short-toed Eagles. "There's a Steagle" we said together, and I collected some reasonable images with the trusty camera. No further thought before I posted a picture on Birdforum to be politely informed that it was a very pale Buzzard!

I put the embarrassment behind me and returned from the holiday to start editing the autumn edition of *Ali.* An interesting article about the return of Ospreys to breed again in Sardinia had me looking for a cover picture. Sure enough, I remembered a young bird that followed us around for a couple of days last year and, without any thought of checking, I chose that almost white bird as the cover image and captioned it as an Osprey.

My thanks to those who politely suggested that I reconsider and apologies to all for the confusion it might have caused. My face is still red ...

★★★

Thanks to my production team who, for this issue were: Dave Brooks, Giusy Fazzina, Betty and Andy Merrick, Caterina Paone, Peter Rafferty and Lesley Tompkins.

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The Golden Eagle caught in a fence, which was treated and released successfully and, below, an injured Hobby about to fly for treatment, but in an unusual way, see page 24.

... “These include the Skylark, shrikes, and buntings, which are suffering from the intensification of agriculture and the growing use of synthetic chemicals, the consumption of land, and the disappearance of ‘mosaic’ landscapes.”

Corn Bunting © David Lingard