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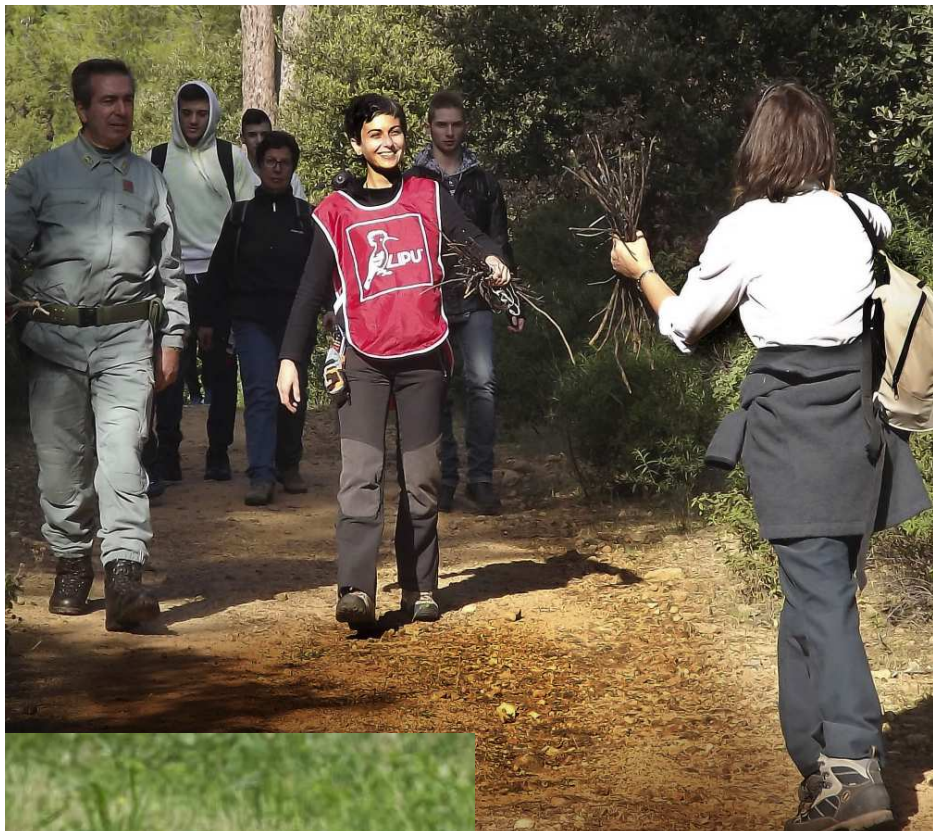
Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli

Conservation News from Italy



- We are Birds
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- Annual Draw

*Autumn 2022*



Above, Gigliola Magliocco, a remarkable lady, leads anti-poaching patrols in Sardinia when she is not managing the LIPU reserve at Torrile, near Parma, see page 12.

Left, a Purple Heron referred to in the item by Alessandro Polinori on page 16.

Cover, Black-winged Stilt  
© Paola Tarozzi

## WE ARE BIRDS

*Danilo Selvaggi, Director General*

With the striking initiative titled ‘The Birdsong Project’, a variety of musicians and artists are celebrating our kinship with birds, and allied with conservation organisations and international bodies are calling for their protection, ‘It is time to raise the standing of environmental politics’, says LIPU, ‘and to put nature once and for all at the heart of everything’.

Autumn 2020. At the height of the second COVID quarantine, the musician and sound engineer Randall Poster, a noted figure in the Hollywood film community, discovered the music of birds. The silence that had fallen on his home city of New York as a result of the lockdown, a completely new situation in contrast to the usual all-pervasive noise, was like a natural amplifier for the singing performances of the birds. Which were singing flat out, never resting. Poster became captivated by them: Where had they been all this time, these little friends of ours? For that matter, where have I? He had heard birdsong before of course, without paying it that much attention, as often happens with us and the important things in life. They are here with us, alongside us, but we do not take it in. Following up on this epiphany, Poster began to take an interest in the conditions faced by wild birds across the world: the multiplying threats, the direct persecution, the loss of habitats, the risk of extinctions. Can it be right,

he asked himself, that such wonderful beings are being treated in this way? How can we allow it? No, came the answer: it is not right, and it cannot be allowed. And he began to take action.

### **The Birdsong Project**

Thanks to a suggestion from his colleague Rebecca Reagan, Randall Poster began to envision a wide-ranging cultural project centred on birds, and asked his many contacts in the art world to write musical tracks inspired by birdsong 'to bring attention to the crisis facing them, and to celebrate their beauty'. The response, Randall says, was overwhelming. The musicians who were asked signed up en masse, composing many new pieces, to which were added poems and short narrations read by prominent actors, as well as arresting works of art to accompany them. Each one felt the impulse to make his or her own tribute, and to celebrate the beauty of birds in his or her own way. And so the Birdsong Project was born, taking form also in *For the Birds*, a box set of 20 vinyl LPs with 172 songs and readings of poems with participants of the calibre of Nick Cave, Laurie Anderson, Adrien Brody, Liam Neeson, Michael Keaton, Elvis Costello, Julia Holter, Bette Midler, Tilda Swinton, Terry Riley and more. The slogan for the project is: 'We are birds'. *Noi siamo uccelli*. It is an expression that seeks to emphasise not only the invaluable artistic content of the work but also its philosophy, which consists in a call for friendship, for fellowship between our species, and for an understanding that at some level, we are birds and that birds in turn are us.

### **The Motivations of Music**

One of the motivations of music and of art in general is the wish to participate at a heightened level in what Coleridge called 'the numberless goings-on of life'. Music comes out of something more than straightforward mimesis, the attempt to imitate the sounds of nature and the strophes of animals. Rather, it is a way of being inside, of being part of a living community travelling towards destinations and languages different from those, however important, of logic, clarity and explanation. One of our greatest cultural errors is the view that the only language that counts is that of words. From this it follows that only that which speaks our language, the language of humans, merits consideration, and that human beings therefore are the only ones that matter. The consequences of this error are grave and not limited to the field of cognition. They lead to the justification of our de facto dominion over other forms of life. If nature does not speak, we say to ourselves, it is of no importance, and we can do with it as we wish.

### **Other Minds, Other Thoughts**

For some time now (from at least the middle of the nineteenth century), science has shown that this is not how things are, and that beyond the human horizon there is a vast world of consciousness, equally legitimate. The advances of the last few years have opened doors on other minds, on minds of animals other than human (see, for example, the excellent works of Carl Safini), but also of those forms of life – plants, fungi, the myriad small creatures – that are usually no more

than an afterthought but that are amazingly rich in projects and strategies, however different from ours. In essence, the culture of ecology has taken apart the old hierarchical model of the tree of life, ordered from the perfected form that is us down to the primitive and insignificant, which leads us to view life not as a ranking system, a classification going from high to low, but as a network in which each form has a role proper to it and contributes to the economy of all. To orient oneself in this network in the right way then, the linear language of logic is still necessary, even indispensable, but not enough. There is also a need for languages of a different kind, that promote better communication with other life forms, and that allow us to feel rather than think our relationship with them. Art is in this sense in a privileged position. It is resonant, emotionally attuned. It unites. 'In order to understand birdsong', writes David Rothenberg, a leading expert on the subject and one of the musicians who has joined the Birdsong Project, 'it is not enough to form a mental representation of that song. You have to feel it. You have to become a bird'.

### **We Are Grass**

The English anthropologist Gregory Bateson, one of the most original thinkers of the twentieth century, has sought to explain the importance of other forms of thought through a particular argument called 'the syllogism of grass', which goes as follows: 1) humans are mortal, 2) grass is mortal, 3) humans are grass. Obviously, a student who advanced such a proposition in a university exam in philosophy, law, or the natural sciences would be fatally marked down. Nevertheless

Bateson, who knows full well that human beings are not grass, means to point out that we should think not only in terms of the subject and of logic, which tends to divide, but also in terms of the predicate, of life as it is lived and of analogy, which tends to unite and find connections. Working in this way, we discover that humans and grass have many shared characteristics. Both are living. Both have need of water, air, light, a place to be, and fertility. Both need a world that is looked after and does not fall into neglect, or be poisoned and laid waste. Each has need of the other. In a time as full of environmental problems as is ours, a philosophy of this kind is highly important (as being in itself highly ecological), because it reinforces an awareness of the destiny we share with nature and demands a firm commitment from each of us, and from science, from artists, society and politics.

### **A Planet United, with Nature at its Heart**

In New York on July 28th, the General Assembly of the UN approved, by a majority of 161 votes to nil, with 8 abstentions, Resolution no. 76/300, calling on every state of the world to guarantee access to a healthy and protected environment, for it to be a basic human right to be close to protected nature: a major victory for BirdLife International and for LIPU, which two years ago, at the beginning of the pandemic, launched the campaign One Planet One Right for a planet with nature at its centre. This year on June 22nd, it fell to the European Commission to propose a law for the renewal of biodiversity across the continent (the so-called Restoration Law). It is an unprecedentedly ambitious programme for nature, supported at

the highest levels in Europe, and obviously by the whole world of environmentalism. In February, meanwhile, it had been the turn of the Italian Constitution, with support for biodiversity being inserted as one of the fundamental principles of our Republic. And that is to say nothing of the recent report from IPBES, the intergovernmental platform for biodiversity and ecosystems. Last July the scientists of the platform asked all to widen the parameters of the value of nature: not only as a resource (we live courtesy of nature), but as a characteristic of our life (we are nature), as a place in our lives (we live in nature) and in short with a multitude of other lives around us, 'with the intrinsic right to live and to flourish independently of the desires of humans'. It is an advanced approach, with a broad and innovative vision and scope. That these events have such a high political significance shows that the idea now of a common natural destiny has gone far beyond environmentalists to involve at the right moment the highest levels of world institutions and the foundations of our social organisation.

### **The Transition**

Certainly, in order for all this to translate into practice will take time and many steps along the way. It will be a case of redesigning politics in general, with a strategy for land use, and technological and economic planning that has nature factored in as a constant, an element not to be left out. It will be a case too of re-examining our still too anti-ecological culture. From top to bottom. It is the so-called ecological transition, that must not be reduced to some minor technological tweaking, nor even to the crucial

battle over climate change, but must consist in turning the world on its head: a paradigm shift from the a-ecological world of yesterday to that of tomorrow: attentive to the needs of the planet, conscious of their nature and what needs to be done to address them. It will be a long and difficult process: of that there is no doubt. More than that, it needs to take place quickly. The crises of habitat loss, global warming, deforestation, the suffering of so many species of birds and other animals, desertification, the unstoppable wildfires raging through forests and cities alike, plastic in the oceans and in our very bodies, the continual degradation of soils – with an estimated 19.2 hectares of fertile ground being lost every day in Italy alone – all of this tells us that to change will take time. But it has to start now, with action that is both immediate and effective, with more focus and less greenwash.

### **A Strange Way to Treat Your Friends**

This is what LIPU and all of BirdLife International are asking. As previously noted, LIPU's policy document for 2021–2025 has the title *La Natura nelle Nostre Vite*, one which connects directly with that of the European strategy for biodiversity for 2030, *Bringing nature back into our lives*, which affirms precisely the principles discussed here. 'Nature', says the document, 'has in many ways gone from our lives. It is a friend we have marginalised and treated badly, draining it to the last drop and beyond, living as if it is an obstacle to be pushed aside or an inexhaustible resource to do with as we please. A strange way to treat your friends... but the time has come now when we must recharge our lives again with nature.'

To protect it and conserve it. To use it cautiously without drawing it down too far. Must know it and make it known. Must love it and let it be loved. Make it central to our politics’.

In view of all this, LIPU has welcomed the official events in support of nature of the last few months with satisfaction and hope, demanding also that environmental politics should be given higher status, and that theory becomes practice. Which is to say that change for the better should truly begin. Everything we do, in the next few years and in those to follow, will be aimed at this, with the help of our members and all who value nature. And with the help of music too.

### **Solace and Joy**

‘With the Birdsong Project’, writes Randall Poster’s colleague Rebecca Reagan, ‘I wanted to create a platform of solace and joy to help bridge the symbiotic relationship between humans, birds, and all sentient beings, in a new meaningful way. Combining the raw unfettered birdsongs that surround us every day with new musical tracks by artists of our time felt like a wonderful way to soothe and celebrate our collective spirits. In further gesture we set out to curate unique birdhouses in gardens worldwide, in honour of our feathered friends who lose home every day due to deforestation and the destruction of their habitats’. A symbolic action of great importance. For her part, Brooke Bateman, the Audubon Society’s Director of Climate Science, hopes that the Birdsong Project ‘inspires people to go outside, even if only to their backyard, and listen’. And thereby to encounter one of the precious things

that are found all around us, and that we, in the error of our ways, know nothing of. Elsewhere, a number of the artists featured in the Birdsong Project will gather in England at Cambridge, to celebrate 100 years of BirdLife International in a concert full of significance.

### **Rain**

It is no mirage. It really is raining. Just as I was finishing this article, it began to rain. For weeks and for months we have had none, and I am probably experiencing much the same sensation of surprise, emotion and physical joy as when Randall Poster discovered birdsong in the heart of silence. The morning here in Rome has become unexpectedly grey, and in this way incredibly beautiful. One drop, then another, then another, then many all at once. They bounced on the tiling of the terrace like the mallets of a player of the vibraphone. Chiming. It is more than mere noise, it is music. A fearful season of violent heat and drought has Italy and half of Europe in its grip. Rivers have shrunk to a trickle; the Po has almost dried up. The material damage is beyond count, and then there is the psychological cost, less visible and less quantifiable still: the creeping anxiety rising in people with the vanishing of the clouds. Gently or rudely, we are awakened, and we realise the importance of the things around us. We take them for granted, only to discover that it is precisely what we should not do, and discover what truly matters instead. What we truly are. Rain. We are rain. We are raindrops. We are leaves bathed in the rain. We are water. We are nature. We are human beings. We are music. We are birds.

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## **PROJECTS**

### **Waiting for the bus, looking at the sky**

*Giovanni Albarella, director of Anti-poaching and Hunting Activities*

*Maristella Filippucci, director of Promotions and Social Media*

**A**fter three intense years, the #stopbraconaggio campaign has come to an end: with 180 thousand signatures calling for tougher penalties on illegal poaching, with a range of educational

activities in Sardinia, and most recently with billboards at Cagliari airport. This is the story of our achievements, made possible by LIFE ABC “Against Bird Crime” and the Oak Foundation.

The long Sardinian summer has just come to an end. We leave the airport behind us and walk the streets of Cagliari, joined in our steps by the bright colours of a robin. This robin is the star of a mural created by street artist Manu Invisibile with students from Foiso Fois, the local high school for the arts, and with financial support from the Oak Foundation. A mural to say #stopbraconaggio (#stoppoaching). A mural to embrace the beautiful biodiversity of this wonderful island.

Following the launch of this mural last December, we decided to let our robin travel and carry its message in a series of videos. These were widely shared amongst young people on social media; you can see the key video on our website lipu.it.

Our project was also featured on the website focus.it, with whom we developed a close collaboration especially for this event. The feature contained additional short-form videos, aimed both at younger fans on TikTok and those active on Facebook.

### **The bus stops of Cagliari**

We also wanted to consolidate our message beyond the young, literally making our robin fly through the town, entering schools and other strategic sites across Cagliari such as bus stops (see photo). A message dedicated both to Sardinians, and to the many tourists who crowd the town in

summer: look up and enjoy the sky while waiting for your bus. And on we fly. Our robin has now landed at Cagliari airport, on a large billboard welcoming passengers for the whole month of July.

Autumn has now arrived and our campaign has ended. The three years of *#stopbracconaggio* have seen a large number of projects coming together, starting with our petition which engaged with so many members and fans. Together we collected more than 180 thousand signatures which were handed to Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte and Minister of the Environment Sergio Costa on 17 September 2020, calling for tougher penalties on acts of poaching and enforcement of the national plan.

The anti-poaching camps in Sardinia have continued to operate successfully even during the pandemic years, thanks to activist Gigliola Magliocco who has worked with both Forestry Police and volunteers. At times of greatest risk for the birds, they ventured into the tangled vegetation of the maquis scrubland in the Basso Sulcis, searching for paths used by poachers, making traps and snares safe and setting the birds free. Members were also able to follow Gigliola's operations through her diary on Facebook where she would highlight her most important activities in the various camps. Her ongoing educational programmes with local schools were equally significant. Over the years these have helped young Sardinians to understand the importance of the environment, promoting personal involvement, and ultimately sparking a desire for radical change.

## Communication saves birds

This was the objective we set ourselves, drawing on our previous experience with the LIFE project "Safe Haven for Wild Birds", which in Italy became the "LeavingIsLiving" campaign. Our decision to place communication at the heart of the new campaign, supported by a recent study on the subject, was a good one. We were able to increase awareness and stimulate public demand for halting the illegal killing of birds. We were able to support increased lobbying, at both the national and international level, to ensure the political commitment and the technical capacity for putting an effective stop to the illegal killing of birds. Finally, we were able to maintain and strengthen the network of civil organisations and groups of stakeholders who work together against poaching.

For this reason we joined the LIFE project ABC three years ago. In Italy this led to the campaign *#stopbracconaggio* and the numerous activities described above, pursued with the approval of BirdLife Europe, and carried out in cooperation with HIS (BirdLife Greece), BirdLife Cyprus, and BIOM (BirdLife Croatia).

We have come a long way. Now accompanied by the eye-catching colours of a robin, we can walk with more confidence along the road to freedom.

### The Numbers of Life ABC

**180,000:** the number of signatures gathered by the campaign *#stopbracconaggio*, calling for tougher

penalties on illegal poaching, as stated in the National Anti-poaching Plan.

**51:** the number of school classes taught, with a total of 912 students, to promote and raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity in Sardinia and the need for protection, including protection against poaching

**4:** “Recall” campaigns carried out by a unit of the Rome guard. 71 people were reported to the police, 69 shotguns confiscated, 37 illegal lures seized, and 132 administrative sanctions served.

**9,000:** people followed the anti-poaching conference, broadcast on-line on the LIPU website and Facebook page.

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## OASIS RESERVES

### The House of the Purple Heron

*Alessandro Polinori, LIPU Vice President with responsibility for the CHM LIPU in Ostia*

Making people aware of nature and conserving it. An appraisal of successes; that of LIPU's group in Ostia, founded in 1981. An experience from which was born the Centre of Mediterranean Habitat, which today still is launching new projects in support of the environment and of wild birds.

**I**n the month of June last, day after day and for several weeks, classes followed one another,

visit following visit; everyone worn out but appreciative, even more so following the long interruption to school activities caused by the COVID emergency. We are at LIPU Ostia's CHM-Oasis, a natural paradise a few metres from the blocks of flats of the city's tourist harbour. One day in particular, a little boy came up to me and said: 'At the end of year school event I'm playing the part of the of the Purple Heron, and I shall say "I am the Purple Heron. Sadly, in Italy my habitat is becoming ever scarcer. Fortunately, in Ostia we have LIPU. That's where I come from and where I live, protected in the Oasis'. A few moving words that show the importance of LIPU's presence in the area.

### The Beginnings

The founding of LIPU's Ostia branch in 1981 marked the beginning of a journey that, over the years, has allowed the association to achieve important results, from involving people to conserving biodiversity. Starting from a small team of environmentalists – including its founders, Silverio Giambra and Carlo Meo, followed by myself, and with the involvement of my father, Giancarlo, and shortly after by the arrival of Luca Demartini – it has become an increasingly active association. While from an administrative standpoint its catchment area belongs to Rome, environmentally and culturally it is a quite separate city, surrounded by the sea, by the river Tevere, by the national nature reserve of the Roman Coastline and by the presidential estate of Castelporziano. And it is in these special circumstances, in a social fabric in which human relationships still manage to develop

through direct social contact, that the association encourages ever more inclusive ventures capable of planting our Hoopoe in people's hearts.

### **The CHM of Ostia is Born**

What's more, thanks to the general growth in local commitment, the group has managed to win its most important battle – the creation of LIPU's Mediterranean Habitat Centre (CHM), in Ostia. In barely two months in the mid-1990s, more than 7,000 signed a petition in support of the proposal to create a LIPU oasis, and against the oceanarium/dolphinarium then being proposed by an Australian multinational – a surprising victory given the disparity of the forces arrayed on either side of the debate.

In June 2001, twenty years after the association was born, the CHM thus saw the light of day. And thanks to a considerable effort of environmental reconstruction brought biodiversity back to a strip of what were once the immense marshes of Ostia, cleared at the end of the eighteenth century because they were malarial. Situated on the Tevere estuary, the CHM has rapidly become a point of reference for migrating, resident, and breeding birds. So much so that in twenty years more than 200 species have been recorded, breeders including the Purple Heron, the Little Bittern, the Ferruginous Duck, the Black-winged Stilt and the Red-crested Pochard.

### **Sustainable Culture and Tourism**

Enhanced by the activities of the Ornithological Station of the CHM, considerable attention has

always been paid to environmental education and awareness, including outdoor education projects, including for the mentally disadvantaged. Cultural activities too have been promoted, including via the Pier Paolo Pasolini Literary Space, to which we have attract guests of the calibre of Patti Smith.

Completely staffed by volunteers, the Oasis is considered by the local community as a common good, capable too of contributing to the development of sustainable tourism. And all the data confirms this: annual visitor numbers up to 20,000, large numbers of volunteers, 600 new members of LIPU each year, the classes involved and those who follow us online, as well as up to 1,000 wild animals in difficulty brought in each year by members of the public, before being transferred to LIPU Rome's Animal Rescue Centre. All this alongside the scale and quality of the activities the centre promotes, and an ever more widespread awareness of the environment.

### **A Widespread Presence**

Further, LIPU Ostia has not remained confined within its Oasis, but has pursued its activities all along the coastline, working tirelessly on the major themes of LIPU's mission, and cooperating with other institutions in the region.

The most recent battle has been that revolving around a proposal to install a Natural Monument on Isola Sacra, in the District of Fiumicino on the other side of the estuary from the CHM. This is an area of great value from an environmental standpoint, boasting a Special Conservation Area

because of the presence of a species of glasswort, for the protection of which a major march has been organised with hundreds of participants and the support of the councils and dozens of associations.

I frequently mention how the Oasis – and LIPU in general – through its Purple Herons, Swans, and more recently Black-winged Stilts and Flamingos, might become an iconic element of this area, and much loved and respected by all.

That child then, on that school stage, and his Purple Heron ‘fortunate because in Ostia LIPU is there’ sum up best of over 40 years of activity and hard work from hundreds of volunteers, both men and women. Which, moreover, and in spite of the current difficult and dramatic international situation, brings us the hope of a better future.

### **CHM: The numbers**

**200:** Species listed

**20,000:** new visitors every year

**(Up to) 1,000:** wild animals sent to LIPU’s Animal Rescue Centre in Rome

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### **OUR FIRST 100 YEARS**

*Claudio Celada, LIPU Conservation Director*

**A** century has gone by since a few visionary conservationists created the international movement that a few years later took on the name BirdLife International. This was just the beginning

of a growing network that today boasts 100 member associations throughout the world

At midday on 20 June 1922, a group of people met together in the London home of the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Robert Horne, MP for Glasgow. United by their passion for birds, the group decided that co-ordinated action at the international level was required to deal with the various threats facing birds. And so, the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP) was founded, today known as BirdLife International. The 1922 Declaration of Principles states: ‘By united action, we should be able to accomplish more than organisations working individually in combating dangers to bird-life’.

Those present that day included T. Gilbert Pearson, co-founder and President of the National Association of Audubon Societies (now National Audubon (USA)), Frank E. Lemon, Honorary Secretary of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB, now BirdLife UK), Jean Delacour, President of the Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux (LPO, now BirdLife France) and P.G. Van Tienhoven and A. Burdet of the Netherlands.

### **Important Bird Areas (IBA) and Red Lists**

The main focus of the organisation, and one that remains central for BirdLife today, included the protection of migratory birds, the identification and protection of areas in which birds congregate in large numbers (colonies, overwintering sites and bottlenecks), and the more important sites for threatened birds, which were to become the Important Bird Areas, or IBAs.

The ICBP was responsible within the IUCN (which it helped co-found) for compiling data on the world's threatened birds in the Red Data Book for birds (1966). Today, its successor, the IUCN Red List for Birds, has a profound effect on the global conservation agenda. The ICBP was also instrumental in promoting the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species and the European Directives on wild birds and habitats.

### **The Birth of BirdLife International**

The ICBP's structure as a 'federation of federations' proved too cumbersome for united conservation campaigns, and a new vision was needed, leading to the transition from the ICBP to the BirdLife Partnership, in March 1993. The new model was to have one, single BirdLife partner for each of as many countries and territories as possible around the world. In Italy, the responsibility and the honour fell naturally to LIPU, a founding partner.

We have come a long way since then. Today, 117 BirdLife Partners are working together to protect birds and habitats on every continent. Active conservationists, once numbered in dozens, are now counted in millions, with ten million supporters of the BirdLife Partnership.

### **Women in BirdLife**

Women have long been at the forefront of the movement to protect birds and nature. In the nineteenth century, elaborate hats adorned with bird feathers – the more exotic the better – were



the biggest thing in fashion, leading to devastating population declines in bird species, including those of Little Egrets, Great Crested Grebes and Birds-of-Paradise.

In 1891, Emily Williamson and Eliza Philips co-founded the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB, and BirdLife UK) as part of a campaign to halt the plumage trade. Audubon (the BirdLife Partner in the US) has similar origins. In 1896, Harriet Hemenway and Minna B. Hall organised a series of afternoon teas to convince Boston society ladies to eschew hats with bird feathers. These meetings culminated in the founding of the Massachusetts Audubon Society.

### **Rapid Development**

At the ICBP's sixth meeting, in 1935, Phyllis Barclay-Smith of the RSPB was appointed as the London-based Sub-secretary to the Secretariat. In 1946 she replaced Count Leon Lippens as Secretary of the ICBP. She led the organisation through the 1960s – a pivotal decade in which it started making substantial progress with practical conservation measures – and served as its Secretary-General from 1974 to 1978, assisted in later years by Robin Chancellor.

In 1958 Barclay-Smith became the first woman to receive an MBE for work in conservation, and in 1970 she was made a CBE. Hers was an impressive period of service, both for its duration and for the fact that, unlike the great majority of organisational leaders at the time, she was a woman – echoing the role of Emily Williamson in the genesis of the RSPB, and one more element

in a long-running theme, which continues in the current BirdLife Chief Executive, Patricia Zurita.

### **BirdLife Centenary**

In September this year, BirdLife celebrates its 100th anniversary – an opportunity to look back on the successes of the past, but also to plan and implement future conservation activity. The World Congress ‘BirdLife100’ was a historic opportunity for conservationists and famous environmental campaigners to meet and bring nature back from the abyss. The new ten-year global strategy was launched at the Congress, underlining how essential it is that we confront the crises of biodiversity and climate that threaten our existence.

A series of discussion panels were held at London’s prestigious Central Hall Westminster, where global thought leaders explored, at a critical juncture for the future of our planet, topics ranging from biodiversity and climate change to conservation finance and the links between the health of our planet and human health. The event culminated on the evening of 15 September with a fundraising gala dinner at the iconic Victoria and Albert Museum.

May these events be good omens for BirdLife, and may this be just the start of a new century in the battle to defend our beautiful, fragile planet.

### **BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL: STATISTICS**

**6 regional offices** (Europe and Central Asia, Africa, Asia, Middle East, Americas, Pacific)

**117 partners** including LIPU, RSPB in the UK (over a million members) USBP in Ukraine (in spite of the war), the Audubon Society in North America, SAVE Brasil, Aves Argentina, BirdLife South Africa, BirdLife Australia and SPNL in Lebanon.

**4 strategic pillars** – the four Ss: Species, Sites, Systems, Society. Conservation of all bird species; identification of the most important sites for birds (13,000 Important Bird Areas identified); influencing the human systems that have the greatest impact on biodiversity (agriculture, fishing, exploitation of forests, finance); working with society, including with private citizens and with indigenous populations, to influence institutions and promote greater sustainability.

### **Birdlife AND LIPU**

LIPU belonged to the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP) from the outset. Some years later, LIPU contributed to the birth of BirdLife International, becoming its Italian partner. In the years that followed, it collaborated to define the conservation status of bird species in Italy and in Europe (Birds in Europe I (1994), Birds in Europe II (2004), European Birds of Conservation Concern (2017), Red Lists). LIPU also participated at the dawn of the new millennium in the IBA programmes for Italy, which are currently being revised. Alongside BirdLife, it spearheaded big campaigns such as Nature Alarm (2015), Flight for Survival, and, in 2020, *#OnePlanetOneRight*.

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## RECOVERY

### New found freedom

*Laura Silva, Head of Wildlife Recovery*

**F**rom illegal detention to full recovery and freedom. Two fascinating stories about predatory birds that have been rescued thanks to the efforts of the volunteers and the staff of the centres managed by LIPU.

In this scorching Summer that is about to end, I would like to share with you two stories of rebirth that have many points in common and the same happy ending. In the first case we are in Sicily, where in April Giovanni Giardina, Head of LIPU's Wildlife Recovery Centre of Ficuzza, was entrusted with the care of two Bonelli's Eagle chicks that had been confiscated thanks to the investigations led by the Carabinieri Forestali (Forestry Corps) of the CITES Unit of Palermo, and the Carabinieri of Porto Empedocle. The two little eagles had been illegally taken from their nest to be sold on the black market, but thanks to the timely alert sent by the volunteers of the Predatory Birds Conservation Group and the technical staff of the Life Conrasi European Project, the Carabinieri managed to find the poacher soon after and save the two little birds. Once at the centre, they were taken care of and after being strictly monitored by the vets, they completed their growth and tried their first flights in the big aviary present in the building.



During their entire stay at the centre, the two predatory birds never came in contact with humans and remained in isolation to avoid any type of imprinting. At last, on 19 June, the two birds, that were now in optimal physical condition, were transferred to the acclimatisation aviary in Bosa, Sardinia, and were finally released and monitored by the staff of ISPRA. As this species became extinct on the island around the Nineties, this transfer was aimed at its reintroduction there, a process that started with the European Project called "Aquila a Life" in 2018 and is still ongoing today. Indeed, in Italy this species is only present in Sicily, with a population of around 60 pairs.

### A nest for two

Another poaching activity is behind the story that took place in Tuscany. On 8 June, the Carabinieri Forestali of the CITES Unit of Pisa granted Nicola Maggi, Head of CRUMA of Livorno, legal custody of three wildlife specimens: two adults, a Hoopoe and a Barn Owl, as well as a pullus of Eagle Owl that was around one month and a half. The animals, which had no rings or microchips, were confiscated from a private individual who kept them but was unable to certify their origin. Among the tens of phone calls received on 14 June, one of them requested CRUMA to take a pullus of owl from the Province of Pisa under their care. From the pictures that were sent via WhatsApp, it became clear that the pullus in question was another Eagle Owl that was around one month a half, too. The Carabinieri of the CITES Unit of Pisa were then alerted and conducted their routine

investigations which confirmed that the individual in question was already known to them for other illegal activities.

The two “young” owls almost certainly came from the same nest, both victims of the same fate. The work involved not only taking care of and weaning the little birds, but also investigating to try and discover the nesting site. Finally, after caring for them for a few weeks, paying particular attention to the second pullus that was a bit debilitated, and after ringing them to be able to monitor them in the future, the little predatory birds were then able to find again that freedom that humans had tried to take away.

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## **STOP PRESS FROM SICILY**

**Palermo, 21.9.2022**

**A** new defeat for those who want to overturn the hunting rules: after the previous judicial victories at the TAR and the CGA - which, as a precautionary measure, had immediately upheld the appeals lodged by the environmental associations Enpa, Lac, Legambiente Sicilia, Lndc Animal Protection, Lipu and Wwf Italia against the 2022-2023 hunting calendar - yesterday the President of the TAR Palermo issued a new urgent decree suspending the hunting of the Turtle Dove in October.

In recent weeks, the Regional Councillor for Agriculture, Toni Scilla, had signed a decree modifying the calendar to extend, until 31 October, the hunting of this migratory species, which is

in sharp decline throughout the EU. Under the pretext of correcting a ‘material error’ relating to the date indicated in the previous hunting calendar, the Councillor had taken advantage of this to extend the hunting period by a month.

From next Friday, therefore, a stop to shotguns – Turtle Doves will be able to continue their migration towards Africa without being the target of guns; those who shoot these birds will risk the imprisonment for up to one year or a fine of up to 2,582 euro.

Also, this year the Region had approved illegitimate regulations, bringing forward the opening date of hunting and authorising forms of hunting in contravening the regulations on the protection of fauna and in blatant contrast to the scientific opinion of the Istituto Superiore Protezione e Ricerca Ambientale (ISPRA).

For Enpa, Lac, Legambiente Sicilia, Lndc Animal Protection, Lipu and WWF Italia, thanks to the appeals and legal battles serious damage to wildlife caused by a bad regional hunting calendar has been prevented again this year, especially for migratory species for which Sicily is an important wintering or passage area between Europe and Africa. After the drought, the heat and the fires, hunting ends up seriously damaging animals already struggling to find food, especially where fires have partially or entirely destroyed forests and Mediterranean scrub.

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## NEWS FROM LIPU-UK

### Annual Draw

At this time of the year we are holding our annual draw and you will find tickets with this edition of the Ali unless you have opted out.

Cash prizes are easy to use – the first is £500 followed by £200 and then £100. With fewer than 300 supporters taking part, the chances of winning are much better than Premium Bonds!

Please buy a book (I'll send more if you wish) and spread the word – the draw is open to anyone, not just members. If the cost of postage puts you off and you can access the Internet, you could buy tickets by sending a BACS transfer or by using Paypal then sending me an email – I have spare tickets and will be happy to add yours to the draw.

This is a very effective way for us to raise another £3,000 or so, for the welfare of Italian birds. Thank you.

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### A few facts about LIPU-UK:

Founded in 1989, we have raised almost £2,000,000 and now have 684 members, of whom over half have been with us for 25 years.

\* \* \*

Thanks to Barbara Avery, Dave Brooks, Giusy Fazzina, Caterina Paone, Peter Rafferty and John Walder for their work to prepare this edition.



One of the young Eagle Owls cared for and released by LIPU in Tuscany and, below, a typical natural nest for Bonelli's Eagle. see p 26.



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# La biodiversità della Sardegna è un tesoro che merita di essere protetto.

La Lipu insieme ai ragazzi del liceo artistico di Cagliari e allo street artist @ManuInvisible ha lanciato un messaggio fortissimo: **#StopBraconaggio**  
Il bracconaggio è una tradizione che dobbiamo assolutamente cancellare.



Campagna di informazione scaturita dal progetto  
LIFE AgriBio Bird Crime LIFE/04/000000

