

# GREENING EUROPE

## PRIORITIES OF BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL FOR THE FINNISH PRESIDENCY - JULY TO DECEMBER 2006

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### *Introduction from the Director General of BirdLife Finland*

*Birds know no national boundaries and make an excellent example of the importance of international cooperation in biodiversity conservation. Finnish birds are highly dependent on what happens to them and the sites and habitats they use in countries outside our borders during their migration and non-breeding periods. "Our" birds spend most of their lives elsewhere in Europe and on other continents. No government alone can secure the future of our birds. Every nation inside and outside the EU must play a role in taking care of birds and global biodiversity.*

### **Key challenges for the Finnish Presidency**

#### **Biodiversity Communication**

With the recent publication of European Commission's Communication on biodiversity, the Finnish Presidency should make every effort to ensure that the Council adopts strong conclusions backing the Communication. It is essential that Member States recognise that further actions must be taken at both national and European level in order to meet the commonly agreed target of halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010. Citizens across Europe are increasingly aware of the great value of nature and biodiversity to people in terms of recreation and the economy.

#### **Transparency**

The Finnish Presidency can also make a difference by improving the transparency of decision-making in the EU. This is crucial if the EU is to win the trust and confidence of citizens. Finland has a tradition of openness, which should set the agenda for this Presidency and for future Presidencies of the European Union. This will help us all to conserve birds and other wildlife for the enjoyment of future generations.

The BirdLife Partnership is working to improve the quality of the environment for birds, for wider biodiversity and for people by focusing on birds, and the sites and habitats on which they depend. There are many important EU policy issues affecting biodiversity that will be addressed during the Finnish Presidency. BirdLife Finland calls on the Presidency to take decisive action to achieve the targets presented in this document.



*Osprey, by Pekka Suhonen*



*Mika Asikainen  
Director-General of BirdLife Finland*

## LIFE+ and Natura 2000 financing

The EU's financial instrument for the environment, LIFE+, will have a key role to play in helping to meet the target of halting biodiversity loss in the EU by 2010.

As the only dedicated EU environment budget LIFE+ should help finance Natura 2000 management activities – a cornerstone of achieving the 2010 target – that are unlikely to be financed by other EU instruments such as Rural Development or Structural and Cohesion Funds.

A significant funding gap exists for nature conservation measures that are vital for Europe's most endangered habitats and species. LIFE+ is the only EU instrument capable of helping to fill this gap.

The Financial Perspective deal clearly stated that EUR 100 million more should be dedicated to LIFE+ and Natura 2000. Yet, to-date only EUR 50 million has been added to the LIFE+ budget and the remaining EUR 50 million was placed in the Heading 2 margin. Funds in the margin are unlikely to be allocated to Natura 2000 in a systematic and planned way.

The current model of integrating financing for Natura 2000 into the Rural Development, Regional and Fisheries funds offers financing possibilities but no guarantees. It will be up to the Commission to ensure that this model works in an EU-wide coordinated manner. It will be important to assess whether this model is working in time for the 2008/9 review of the Financial Perspective.

### The Finnish Presidency should:

- Ensure that the full EUR 100 million allocated to LIFE+ and Natura 2000 under the April Financial Perspective deal is allocated to LIFE+ and not to other instruments
- Work with the Commission to ensure LIFE+ funds are open to NGOs and civil society as they are often best placed to deliver cost-effective environmental solutions
- 50% of LIFE+ should be allocated to the Nature and Biodiversity component
- Help ensure that the integrated model of Natura 2000 financing is evaluated in time for the 2008/9 review of the Financial Perspective

## EC Biodiversity Communication

With its long awaited Communication on biodiversity ("Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 – and beyond", published in May 2006) the European Commission has proposed what needs to be done to stop biodiversity decline by 2010 – a target agreed by EU leaders already at the Gothenburg summit in 2001. The Communication, including a detailed EU Action Plan will be for discussion at the Council under the Finnish Presidency.

BirdLife welcomes the Communication as a strong reminder of the 2010 target and of the essential importance of healthy and diverse ecosystems for human well-being and development. With the Birds and Habitats Directives and the Natura 2000 network the EU has developed an excel-

lent, science based framework for protecting our joint natural heritage. The Directives recognise and accommodate sustainable use and have proved to deliver a wide range of benefits for wildlife and people.

However, with four more years to go for 2010, biodiversity is still declining across the EU and globally. Almost every second European bird species has an unfavourable Conservation Status, and two thirds of the ecosystem services worldwide are in decline. The main reasons for this are slow and insufficient implementation of nature legislation, lack of integration of biodiversity in other policy sectors, like agriculture and transport and the EU's huge ecological footprint on other parts of the world.

*Redwing, by Pekka Suhonen*

### The Finnish Presidency should:

- Ensure that the Council adopts strong conclusions backing the Communication on biodiversity and calling for increased and integrated efforts by Member States and European Commission to achieve the 2010 target
- Promote with the Council the urgent and complete implementation of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives as key tool to achieve the 2010 target
- Help communicating the importance and benefits of the Directives to the public, to decision makers and stakeholders
- Call on Member States and the Commission to consequently use the integrated financing approach to provide sufficient funding for protecting and managing the Natura 2000 network
- Ensure with the Council that biodiversity protection is reflected in all policy sectors, including agriculture and transport, as well as in future EU budget debates

## Delivering Sustainable Development: the implementation of the EU SDS and the debate on the Constitutional Treaty

The renewed EU Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS), adopted by the European Council in June, outlines priorities for action on key issues such as natural resources, climate change and public health, as well as reinforcing horizontal measures such as Impact Assessment, green public procurement and eliminating environmentally-harmful subsidies. The challenge for future Presidencies, including the Finnish Presidency, is to make the SDS work in practice.

Importantly for BirdLife, the renewed Strategy reaffirms the EU's commitment to halt biodiversity loss by 2010. It also recognises that biodiversity loss has economic impacts, including on tourism and agriculture. A recent EU-wide study identified that 125,000 jobs in the EU-15 are supported through nature protection-related activities. Moreover, ecosystem services – such as raw materials, flood defence and climate regulation – are estimated to be worth

about 20 trillion dollars per year to the global economy. It is therefore essential that biodiversity conservation is placed at the heart of the EU's sustainable development agenda.

Two key opportunities for taking forward the SDS present themselves during the Finnish Presidency. Firstly, the debate on “a new generation of environmental policies” at the Informal Environment Council in July presents a vital opportunity to give renewed political momentum to progressing the important biodiversity commitments enshrined in the Strategy and the EU's Sixth Environmental Action Programme. Secondly, the debate on the future of Europe and the Constitutional Treaty that will be taken forward during the Finnish Presidency provides an opportunity to focus on the issues that matter to citizens, such as environmental protection.

### The Finnish Presidency should:

- Biodiversity protection – and its many benefits in terms of economic and social development, ecosystem services, health and education – are prioritised at the debate on the “new generation of environmental policies” at the Informal Environment Council in July
- Biodiversity protection is properly integrated into each policy area, particularly agriculture, fisheries and cohesion policy, through appropriate Impact Assessments and financing and economic mechanisms
- The Sustainable Development Strategy informs national spending programmes for EU funds – particularly the Structural and Cohesion Funds – over the period 2007-2013, and sets the agenda for the full review of the EU's budget in 2008/2009
- The EU's environmental and sustainable development objectives are highlighted as priorities for EU policy-making in the debate on the future of Europe and the Constitutional Treaty, given strong public support for action on the environment at the EU level



*River warbler, by Pekka Suhonen*

## Protection of the Marine Environment

In the discussions on the Marine Strategy Directive that will take place during the Finnish Presidency, key decisions will be taken which will establish the basis for action to safeguard European seas.

BirdLife International, together with other NGOs, welcomed the proposed Directive published in October last year. We believe that EU action based on common objectives is urgently needed.

However, BirdLife believes, that the draft Directive as it stands will not deliver the stated aim of “biologically diverse and dynamic oceans and seas, that are clean, safe, healthy and productive” (COM(2005)505) as it puts off key decisions on what constitutes a healthy marine environ-

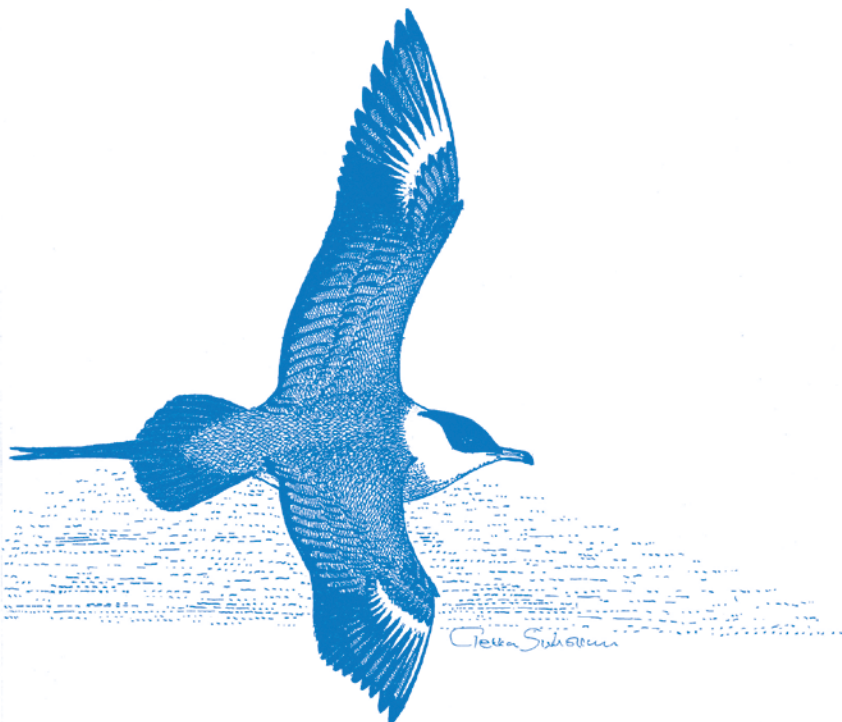
ment and fails to adequately address sectoral pressures on the marine environment and the international dimension of marine protection.

BirdLife International calls on the Finnish Presidency to be ambitious in delivering a more robust legal instrument.

The EU Maritime Policy Green Paper, recently published for consultation, will also be discussed during the Finnish Presidency. BirdLife International and NGO partners are concerned that the Green Paper will give insufficient weight to the protection of the marine environment. We believe that to achieve sustainability, the EU’s future maritime policy must be developed within the parameters set by the European Marine Strategy.

### The Finnish Presidency should:

- Strengthen the Commission proposal on the Marine Strategy Directive particularly in the following areas:
  - Set a strong, clear objective for Member States to achieve Good Environmental Status (GES)
  - Develop a set of conditions which define GES
  - Ensure that the Directive addresses all marine sectors, including fisheries
  - Provide for stronger collective responsibility through the requirement of a single Marine Strategy for each Marine Region or Sub-region
  - Include commitments to European environmental principles such as the ecosystem-based approach and the precautionary principle
  - Include provisions for the use of protected areas as a component of marine strategies
- Emphasise the importance of the Marine Strategy Directive in setting the framework for the EU’s future maritime policy, to secure an ecosystem-based approach to managing human activities in the marine environment



Arctic skua, by Pekka Suhonen

## EU Forest Action Plan and FLEGT

The EU Forest Action Plan (FAP) recently published by the Commission represents the main tool for the implementation of the EU Forestry Strategy adopted in 1998. The adoption of the FAP will be an important priority for the Finnish Presidency. The FAP should be used to promote the integration of environmental concerns in forest management across the EU and in particular the correct implementation of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives in forest areas.

Illegal logging is a key problem threatening biodiversity across the world forests. The EU has launched the FLEGT initiative to combat trade in illegal wood but the process should move much faster in order to stem the flow of illegal and unsustainably logged wood into the EU.



*Red breasted flycatcher, by Pekka Suhonen*

### The Finnish Presidency should:

- Ensure that the FAP contains a strong commitment to biodiversity conservation, in particular by:
  - Promoting the spread of science-based advisory services and information on biodiversity-enhancing forestry measures among all forest owners and managers throughout the EU
  - Introducing EU guidelines on ecological forest management covering key issues such as favouring the use of native species and mixed stands
  - Explicitly addressing the issue of evaluating the area and quality of protected forests across the EU, as well as the ecological quality of EU forests overall
- Actively promote the full implementation of the FLEGT action plan including speeding up the signing of voluntary bilateral agreements with producing countries and establishing clear and robust methodologies for assessing licensing schemes
- Ensure that any further discussion on the FAP as well as FLEGT implementation, are carried with the full involvement of all interested parties, including civil society

## Cohesion Policy

It is essential that the new regulations deliver on the Gothenburg agenda for EU sustainable development and offer realistic opportunities for co-financing the Natura 2000 network. The 'earmarking' of funds in the General Regulation to support the Lisbon agenda for growth and jobs must not exclude such investments.

Community Strategic Guidelines (CSG) will be agreed by Member States that will establish political agreement on the priorities for EU Cohesion Policy for the period 2007-2013. Responses to the Commission's public consultation strongly supported the strengthening of the environmental dimension.

BirdLife International's direct experience of Natura 2000 has taught us that Member States' uptake of measures for Natura 2000 is not sufficient to ensure the ambitious support envisaged by the Commission. Therefore, the Community Strategic

Guidelines must emphasise that biodiversity and the proper management of Natura 2000 are EU priorities – and ensure that this is acknowledged in the preparation and allocation of Funds in the National Strategic Reference Frameworks and Operational Programmes.

The Regulations must also contain safeguards to prevent damage to Natura 2000 sites and species, and extend similar protection to the habitats of endemic and globally threatened species in the outermost regions of the EU.

BirdLife is addressing the wider sustainable development issues as part of a coalition of European environmental NGOs. For further details please visit [www.coalition-on-eufunds.org](http://www.coalition-on-eufunds.org)

### The Finnish Presidency should:

- Add Natura 2000, the Water Framework Directive and the EU's 6th Environmental Action Programme to the list of 'Lisbon' priority environmental investments in the General Regulation
- Ensure that Member States show how they intend to finance the needs of Natura 2000 network, and that the Commission does not approve Member States' National Strategic Reference Frameworks or Operational Programmes or release funds, until it is confident that adequate provision for Natura 2000 has been put in place
- Support the suspension of payments to projects which damage fauna and flora protected under EC nature legislation

## Agriculture

The long term and still ongoing decline of farmland birds is widely recognised as a clear indication of the profound crisis facing biodiversity in the European countryside. Though recent reforms to the CAP have introduced positive elements such as the decoupling of subsidies from production and the introduction of cross compliance, the CAP is still not delivering value for taxpayers' money. The majority of EU subsidies are poorly targeted, often at sectors causing environmental damage, while very little is being spent to reward farmers that actually provide essential public goods such as wildlife habitats and clean water.

## Bioenergy

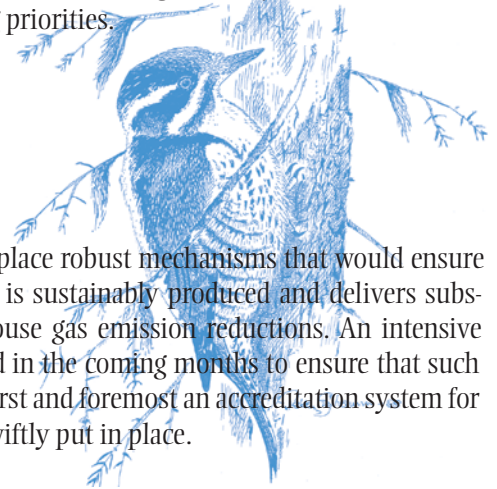
The rapid development of the bioenergy sector offers important opportunities in the effort to tackle climate change. But at the same time it raises issues of land use change and its possible environmental impacts.

The EU Biomass Action Plan and Biofuels strategy, currently being adopted by the Council, acknowledge the

### The Finnish Presidency should:

- Promote a wide public debate on the objectives and priorities of the CAP, ahead of the 2008 budget review. Particular attention should be given to the need to secure funding to reward farmers for specific positive externalities that are not rewarded by the market and to pursue EU commitments such as the management of the Natura 2000 network
- Actively engage in the bioenergy debate seeking to integrate effective safeguards to ensure real sustainability of biomass production within the broader context of an energy policy based on reduced energy consumption, higher efficiency and use of renewables. The creation of an EU wide, mandatory accreditation system to ensure the sustainability of biofuels, both domestically produced and imported, will be a key element

The budget agreement for 2007-2013 has slashed the funds for Rural Development policy, precisely the forward-looking part of the CAP that provides targeted funding for the delivery of environmental objectives. A full review of EU spending is envisaged however in 2008. This opportunity cannot be missed and requires an immediate and serious debate about the long-term objectives of the CAP and its funding priorities.



*Three toed woodbecker, by Pekka Suhonen*

need to put in place robust mechanisms that would ensure that bioenergy is sustainably produced and delivers substantial greenhouse gas emission reductions. An intensive effort is needed in the coming months to ensure that such mechanisms, first and foremost an accreditation system for biofuels, are swiftly put in place.

## The wild bird trade

The EU is the last large-scale importer of wild birds in the world, importing an estimated 1-2 million birds each year, 90% of the global market.

Since October 2005 the Commission has put in place a ban on this trade due to health risks associated with Avian Influenza. The conservation benefits of this ban have been substantial. At least one million birds have been saved from capture in the wild. BirdLife congratulates the Commission, particularly Commissioner Kyprianou, for this conservation result.

### The Finnish Presidency should:

- Raise the wild bird trade as an official agenda item in the Environment Council during its Presidency
- Hold Commissioner Dimas to his promise at the December 2005 Environment Council that the Commission would produce a review of the costs and benefits of the wild bird trade in the EU

BirdLife believes the EU must continue to freeze the trade until it can be proved to be sustainable and until there is proof of conservation benefits for the species concerned. The trade must show that the harvest is sustainable based on sound science rather than the EU waiting for proof of species declines as happens under the current regime.

There are sound conservation, health and animal welfare reasons for banning the trade in wild birds. The Commission needs to assess the cost and benefits of this trade, though it refuses to do so. The Presidency is now best placed to ignite discussion.

## Stop illegal killing of migratory birds

The EU Birds Directive, since its adoption in 1979, has had a hugely positive effect in regulating hunting activities, including illegal poaching in Europe. Member States have – in some cases only after European Court rulings – brought their hunting legislation into line with EU law. Thus hunting has largely stopped during the sensitive spring migration and breeding seasons, and indiscriminate means of capturing and killing birds have been banned.

However, there are still a small number of Member States which do not fully comply with the Directive, in particular as regards the correct application of possible derogations for spring hunting, as is currently the case in Malta.

Furthermore, especially in some of the countries of the Mediterranean, but not only, the enforcement of existing hunting regulations is still weak.

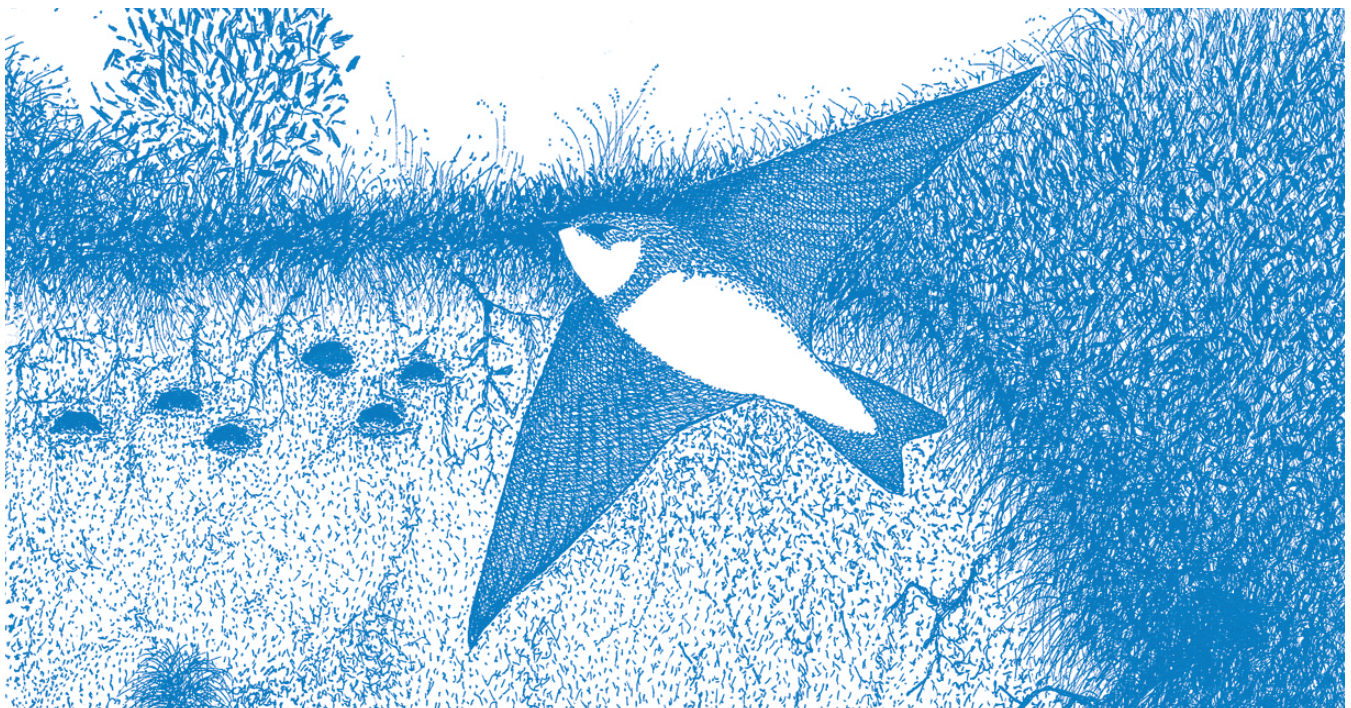
For example in Cyprus, thanks to joint action by BirdLife and the authorities of Cyprus there has been considerable progress in reducing the illegal trapping of migrating songbirds from 10 to 1 million birds per year. More efforts are needed to bring this figure down to zero.

Apart from infringing the derogation article of the Birds Directive for spring hunting, Malta still has a very long way to go to tackle illegal bird killing. Every year a huge number of protected threatened birds from many European countries are killed during their difficult migration to or from Africa, when they use the islands as a stopover site.

Opinion polls (even in countries such as Cyprus and Malta) show that the vast majority of Europeans is against illegal bird killing: so this has to stop and Member States and the Commission have to use all means in their power to make it happen.

### The Finnish Presidency should:

- Strongly support the swift implementation and enforcement of the hunting provisions of the Birds Directive, and promote the value of this unique piece of legislation to safeguard the common natural heritage of the EU
- Ensure that the Commission and Member States take measures to forbid any derogations for hunting which do not comply with the conditions of the Birds Directive
- Seek action at EU and Member State level to support enhanced enforcement of hunting legislation in the Member States, especially of the Mediterranean
- Support the development, adoption and implementation of EU management plans for huntable species with Unfavourable Conservation Status



*Sand martin, by Pekka Suhonen*

# BirdLife International Partnership

The BirdLife International Partnership strives to conserve birds, their habitats, and global biodiversity working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources. This memorandum to the Finnish Presidency was produced by the EU Policy team of BirdLife International European Division and BirdLife Finland, the Partner of BirdLife International in Finland.

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