



OUR IMPACT

BirdLife Europe & Central Asia
Annual Review 2023

We are BirdLife Europe & Central Asia

**When birds are thriving, nature is thriving, and so are humans.
Like the birds we look after, we are everywhere.**

By monitoring and protecting vulnerable bird species, we are able to protect all life. More than any other living being, birds tell us where and how we can make the greatest difference; they're nature's early warning system. BirdLife is present in 119 countries around the world. Based in Brussels, BirdLife Europe & Central Asia represents 46 national Partners, including all 27 EU Member States.

We work with a wide range of stakeholders, including governments, researchers and local communities to achieve our goals, and we benefit from the expertise and knowledge of over 2700 conservation professionals.



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A MESSAGE FROM OUR REGIONAL DIRECTOR



Ariel Brunner
Regional Director
of BirdLife Europe
and Central Asia

2023 was officially the hottest year on record. Month after month heat records were shattered across our continent as we battled with fires, droughts and flash floods. Meanwhile evidence of the collapse of the natural world continues to pile up. These events were stark reminders that the nature and climate crises are upon us, and we are not prepared.

Across the continent we have also seen democracy, science and environmental policies coming under attack. We must envision the Europe we want. Will it be a populist Europe that views nature as an adversary, or a future-oriented Europe that takes decisive action against these crises?

While the future political landscape is uncertain, our annual report highlights one certainty: restoring nature is possible. Through habitat restoration we have seen how the Little Tern has returned to the sandy beaches of Lithuania. Nature is capable of bouncing back, which is why BirdLife Europe & Central Asia, alongside our NGO allies has been fighting hard to give EU its first ever law to restore nature. This legislation will not only bring back precious bird species, but also bolster the EU's defence against the escalating climate crises.

Hand-in-hand with our mission to restore nature, is safeguarding existing nature sanctuaries. In Spain, SEO/BirdLife did exactly that by achieving a breakthrough in the hard battle to protect the Doñana

National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site and critical habitat for migratory birds and endangered species. BirdLife also made history through its groundbreaking research on North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Sea mount, a crucial marine area that is a seasonal home to more than 5 million individual seabirds each year. Thanks to the tireless campaigning of our Partners, it is now fully protected.

With these wins under our belt, the BirdLife Europe and Central Asia, alongside the BirdLife Partnership is ready to take 2024 by storm. We aim to see the Nature Restoration Law finally coming into force, ensure renewed EU institutions and other governments stay faithful to their biodiversity commitments, and continue our work to protect our beautiful birds, rare and common, by restoring their habitats.

PREVENTING EXTINCTIONS

Our planet is in the midst of its sixth mass extinction, with climate change, habitat destruction, and other human activities devastating biodiversity. Despite the urgency, there is hope. At BirdLife, we work to bring species back from the brink of extinction.

Madeira Laurel Pigeon © Samuel Persson

A fight for the future of the Madeira Laurel Pigeon

The Madeira-Laurel Pigeon (*Columba trocaz*), endemic to Madeira, is crucial for the island's ecosystem as it spreads tree and shrub seeds. Despite the species' recovery from near extinction in the 1980s, Madeira has allowed its annual killings since 2012 to reduce alleged agricultural damage, disregarding European legislation that mandates non-lethal measures first. SPEA, our Portuguese Partner, has filed a complaint with the European Commission to enforce the EU Birds Directive. Without intervention, the Madeira-Laurel pigeon risks extinction once again.

Bringing back Europe's rarest goose

The Lesser white-fronted Goose (*Anser erythropus*) is Europe's most endangered breeding goose, with its population dropping from over 10,000 to fewer than 100 due to poaching, accidental shooting, climate change, and habitat loss. The "LIFE Lesser White-fronted Goose Climate Project," led by our Partner the Lithuanian Ornithological Society aims to restore the species' population. Collaborating with our Partners in Greece, Estonia, and Norway, the project focuses on habitat restoration, community awareness, and reproductive research. This international effort has made significant progress since 2020, offering hope for the future of the Lesser White-fronted Goose.

Yellowhammer © Bob Brewer

Stopping the illegal killing and trafficking of birds

In November 2023, an Italian citizen was detained in a Polish village for running a sophisticated illegal bird trapping scheme disguised as a breeding facility. Nearly 500 birds, including protected species, were found in deplorable conditions. Thanks to the swift work of Polish and Italian BirdLife Partners OTOP and LIPU, along with the Committee Against Birds Slaughter, authorities pressed charges against the 54-year-old Italian. The investigation revealed wild birds falsely labelled as captive bred.

PROTECTING VITAL HABITATS

BirdLife and its local Partners across Europe & Central Asia aim to protect, manage and restore important sites for birds by providing new nesting sites, helping wetlands flourish, protecting wild sea sites, and more.

Islands and sandy shores for Little Terns

With the help of our Partner, the Lithuanian Ornithological Society, 17 sandy beaches and gravel islands were built in the Nemunas River in Lithuania. Little Terns, Common Terns, and the Near Threatened Eurasian Oystercatchers can now enjoy these new nesting sites in four Special Protected Areas (SPAs) along the river. The project contributes to combating the yearlong decline of tern species in the area.



Little Tern © Renatas Jakaitisr

The rebirth of the Doñana Park

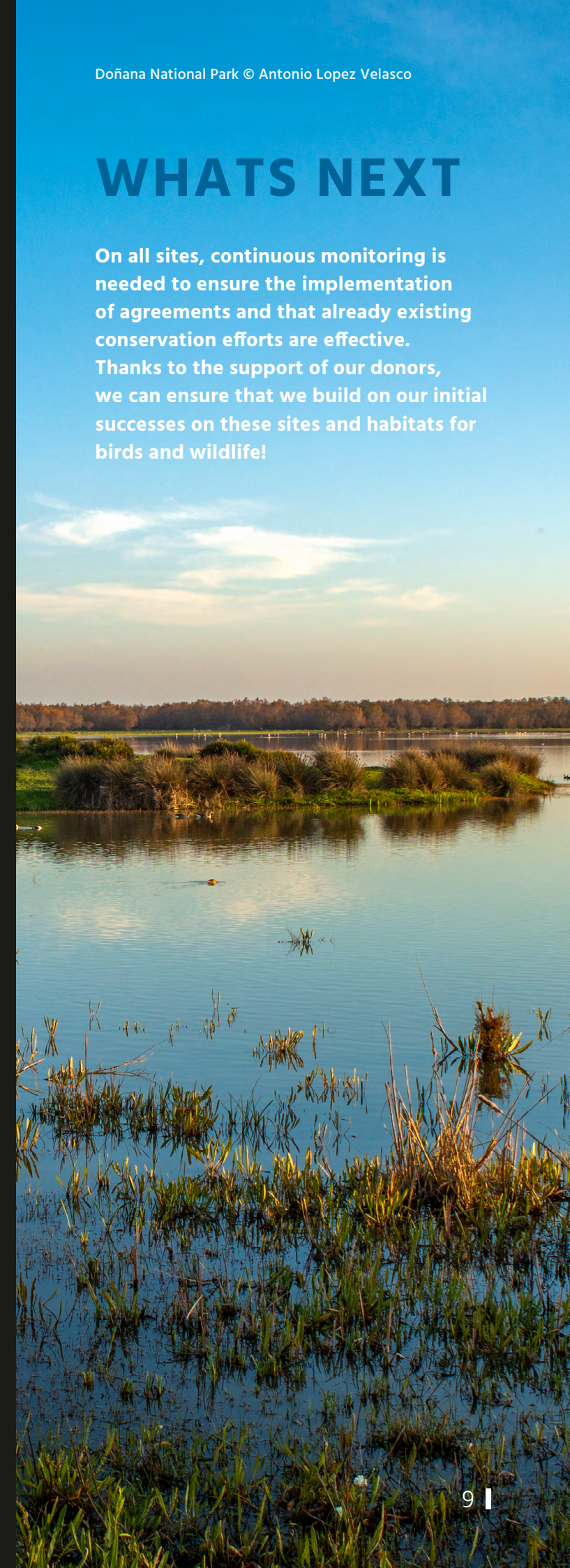
Thanks to the relentless campaigning of our Spanish Partner SEO/BirdLife alongside other allies, the Doñana National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site and critical habitat for migratory birds and endangered species in Southern Europe, is on the path to recovery. The Spanish and Andalusian governments agreed to finally tackle illegal water abstraction drying the marshes, investing **€1.4 billion** in sustainable farming practices, and cancelling plans to expand irrigable land around the park. Doñana has faced pressures from illegal water extraction, climate change, and intensive agriculture for a long time.

A sanctuary for marine life

16,400 citizens joined BirdLife Europe & Central Asia's call for the improved protection of the North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Sea basin (NACES). The site became a Marine Protected Area in 2021 after extensive research led by BirdLife, showed that this area provides a seasonal home to more than **5 million** individual seabirds each year. During the last two years, it became evident that the area is a sanctuary for many more marine species. In 2023, OSPAR extended the protection of NACES. When birds thrive, nature is thriving. NACES exemplifies how bird conservation can lead to comprehensive ecosystem preservation.

WHATS NEXT

On all sites, continuous monitoring is needed to ensure the implementation of agreements and that already existing conservation efforts are effective. Thanks to the support of our donors, we can ensure that we build on our initial successes on these sites and habitats for birds and wildlife!



MAKING HUMAN ACTIVITIES KINDER TO NATURE

At BirdLife, we believe that human needs must be fulfilled in harmony with nature. Harmful practices like intensive farming and logging severely impact our ecosystems and climate. However, by adopting nature-based solutions like nature-friendly farming and habitat restoration we can support biodiversity and increase our planet's resilience to climate change.

Lead ban in wetlands comes into force

Lead is an extremely toxic substance that impacts all physiological systems with no safe level of exposure. In 2023, we celebrated a big win in our campaign against the use of lead ammunition: it is now illegal to use lead shots in European wetlands! This law saves the lives of around **1 million** waterbirds, which die of lead poisoning in EU wetlands each year.

Nature Restoration Law

The Nature Restoration Law, which aims to restore at least **20%** of the EU's land, sea, and rivers by 2030, stands as a groundbreaking cornerstone of EU law that tackles the biodiversity and climate crises. The law has faced one of the most tumultuous journeys in the history of EU legislation. After surviving an unprecedented disinformation campaign and fierce backlash from the intensive farming and forestry lobbies, aiming to destroy the law in the European Parliament, in 2023, we successfully sealed a final deal between the European Parliament, Council and Commission.

The law went through the final vote in 2024 and will become the first European-wide law with legally binding targets to restore nature. This achievement was the result of the hard-fought battle BirdLife Europe & Central Asia and a coalition of NGOs have spearheaded since 2020. Over these years, the #RestoreNature campaign gathered massive support, mobilising more than **1 million** citizens, **6000+** scientists, **200+** NGOs, hundreds of businesses, activists and more.

RALLYING SOCIETY

In an era of environmental challenges, mobilising society is crucial. We engage governments, collaborate internationally, and partner with the private sector to promote sustainability. By mobilizing communities and empowering youth, we drive positive change for a healthier planet and thriving bird populations.



No Airport in Vjosa Narta

In Albania, an illegal project to build an airport threatens one of the country's most important wetlands and a key migratory bird route along the Adriatic flyway, the Vjosa-Narta lagoon. The government continues to violate national laws and international conventions. From fighting in court and organising campaigns that bring nature closer to citizens' hearts to orchestrating bold protests, our Partner PPNEA tirelessly worked to protect this unique Mediterranean jewel. In January and September 2023, they organised protests at the construction site and at the Ministry of Tourism and the Prime Minister's office, amplifying the Bern Convention's call to stop the construction.

One million citizens for #RestoreNature

As part of the #RestoreNature campaign, early 2023 saw us team up with Avaaz, WWF, the European Environmental Bureau, and ClientEarth to gather over **1 million** signatures and messages from citizens across Europe, all delivered to Members of the European Parliament. Citizens urged their representatives in the Parliament to vote in favour of introducing a nature restoration law, sending across photos of their favourite natural spots they hoped to see restored. In June and July, ahead of crucial votes in the European Parliament, we organized photo stunts with MEPs and protest actions in both Brussels and Strasbourg. Youth groups, including Fridays for Future and Generation Climate Europe joined in to highlight the massive public support for the law. Even Greta Thunberg joined the rally calls. The overwhelming citizen engagement made the Nature Restoration Law one of the most closely followed legislative files in the EU, and was followed heavily by the media over the course of the campaign.

Image © The Greens-EFA in the European Parliament /Andrea Suarez



We want a pesticide-free EU

Pesticides pose significant threats to human health, ecosystems, and farmland habitats, contributing to a **50%** decline in European farmland bird populations over the past 40 years. In 2023, we rallied for the EU's Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive to cut pesticide use in half by 2030. Our campaign featured eye-catching stunts, like light projections on the Strasbourg Parliament with messages to politicians to 'Say No to Pesticides'. Despite our mobilization, the directive was unfortunately rejected in November, and we must continue our fight for a pesticide-free EU.

OUR MAJOR SUPPORTERS AND DONORS

Together we fight for nature.

The generosity of our supporters and donors empowers BirdLife Europe and Central Asia to continue protecting birds and their habitats throughout the region. All contributions are deeply appreciated and drive our ongoing success.

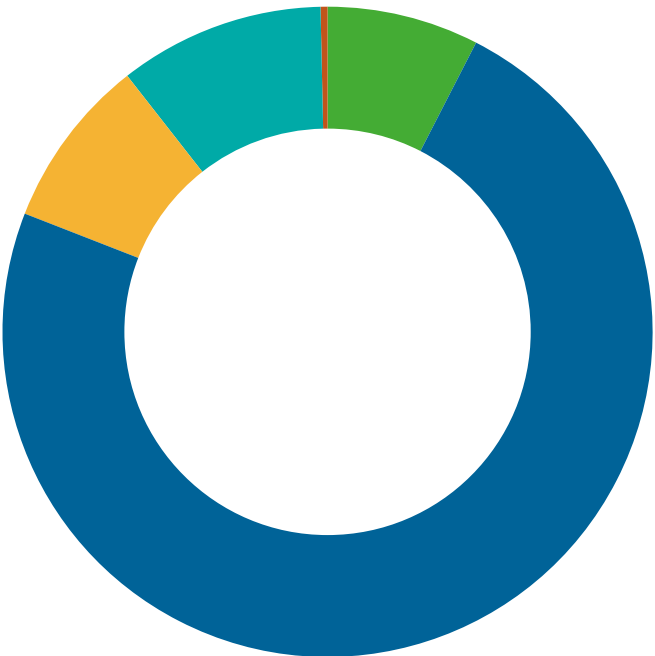
We deeply appreciate the annual support from our 46 Partners, alongside the additional contributions Partners make for specific initiatives. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone, including those who supported our campaigns and those who chose to remain anonymous. Together, we are truly making a difference.

- Climate Catalyst
- Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund
- David and Lucile Packard Foundation
- Ecological Restoration Fund
- Endangered Landscapes & Seascapes Programme, part of the Cambridge Conservation Initiative
- European Climate Foundation
- European Commission, Directorate-General for Environment
- European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation
- Flotilla Foundation
- HeidelbergMaterials
- Iberdrola
- Minor Foundation for Major Challenges
- Oak Foundation
- Persephone Charitable Environmental Trust
- Renewable Grid Initiative
- Sibelco
- Sigrid Rausing Trust
- Velux Fonden

BUDGET

Income 2023 (€)

Partners	355.117,56
Grants and Donations	3.448.026,54
EU Commission Funding	400.000,00
Grants from Corporates	480.532,75
Other Incomes	16.237,08
Total Incoming Resources	4.699.913,93



Expenditure 2023 (€)

Staff Costs	1.917.563,66
Activities	2.266.980,84
Operational Costs	203.206,79
Total Resources Expended	4.387.751,29



BOARD AND COMMITTEE

The Committee of BirdLife Europe and Central Asia is elected by our Partners in this region. This committee provides guidance and advice to the division and reports to the Global Council of BirdLife International.

In 2023, the members of the committee consisted of:

- Lieven De Schamphelaere, Natuurpunt, Flanders, Belgium
- Katie-Jo Luxton, RSPB, United Kingdom
- Kjetil Solbakken, BirdLife Norge, Norway
- Mika Asikainen, BirdLife Suomi, Finland
- Konstantin Kreiser, NABU, Germany
- Milan Ruzic, BPSSS, Serbia
- Vera Voronova, ACBK, Kazakhstan

The Stichting BirdLife Europe board consists of the following members:

- Martin Harper, Chairman
- Richard Grimmet, Secretary
- Helen Bull, Treasurer

OUR TEAM*

Leadership



Ariel Brunner
Regional Director of BirdLife Europe & Central Asia

Communications



Honey Kohan
Communications Manager



Caroline Herman
Communications Officer



Saskia Pelzer
Communications Officer



Erica Gentili
Junior Communications Officer

Fundraising



Irene Marchi
Fundraising Manager



Daniela Arturo Zarama
Fundraising Officer



Brecht Verhelst
Network Development Manager



Dorothee Guénéheux
Partnership Development Officer



Levent Erkol
RENATE Project Consultant



Vedran Lucić
RENATE Project Consultant

Capacity Development

Policy



Anouk Puymartin
Policy Manager



Attila Králl
Nature and Climate Task Force Consultant



Barbara Herrero
Senior EU Nature Policy Officer



Cyrielle Goldberg
Marine Policy Officer



David Howell
Senior Energy Policy Officer



Marilda Dhaskali
EU Agriculture and Bioenergy Policy Officer



Marion Bessol
EU Nature Policy Assistant



Philip Lovegrove
Policy Intern



Riccardo Gambini
EU Bioenergy and Forest Policy Officer



Sofie Ruysschaert
Nature Restoration Policy Officer



Sonia Rouabhi
EU Parliament Elections Consultant



Tatiana Nemcova
EU Agriculture Policy Consultant

Science & Conservation



Anna Staneva
Head of Science, Species and Site Conservation



Antonio Vulcano
Marine Officer



Daniel Mitchell
Marine Manager



Joana Bores
IBA Conservation Officer



Lilla Barabas
Flyways Officer



Nigel Symes
Conservation Partnerships Manager



Sofia Capellan
Senior Site Conservation Officer



Tom Cabuy
Conservation Partnerships Officer



Thomas Sebrechts
Conservation Partnerships Officer



Willem van Den Bossche
Senior Flyway Conservation Officer

Operations



Peter Swaelen
Finance & Administration Manager



Evans Siaw
Finance Business Partner



Jerine Migrino
Finance Assistant



Katrine Mackay
HR Business Partner



Loveth Ugwoegbu
Administration Officer



Marcia Pereira
Senior Finance Officer

BIRDLIFE ACROSS EUROPE & CENTRAL ASIA



We represent **46** national BirdLife Partners in European and central Asian countries and territories, including all **27** EU Member States.

Albania

PPNEA
ppnea.org

Armenia

Foundation for the Preservation of
Wildlife and Cultural Assets
fpwc.org

Austria

BirdLife Österreich
birdlife.at

Belgium

Natagora
natagora.be

Natuurpunt
natuurpunt.be

Bulgaria

Bulgarian Society for the Protection
of Birds
bspb.org

Croatia

Association BIOM
biom.hr

Cyprus

BirdLife Cyprus
birdlifecyprus.org

Czech Republic

Czech Society for Ornithology
birdlife.cz

Denmark

Dansk Ornitologisk Forening/BirdLife
Danmark
dof.dk

Estonia

Eesti Ornitoogiaühingu
eoy.ee

Finland

BirdLife Suomi
birdlife.fi

France

Ligue pour la Protection des Oiseaux
lpo.fr

Georgia

SABUKO
sabuko.org

Germany

NABU
nabu.de

Gibraltar

Gibraltar Ornithological and
Natural History Society
gonhs.org

Greece

Hellenic Ornithological Society
ornithologiki.gr

Hungary

Magyar Madártani és
Természetvédelmi Egyesület
mme.hu

Iceland

Fuglavernd/BirdLife Iceland
fuglavernd.is

Ireland

Birdwatch Ireland
birdwatchireland.ie

Israel

Society for the Protection of
Nature in Israel
natureisrael.org

Italy

Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli
lipu.it

Kazakhstan

Association for the Conservation of
Biodiversity of Kazakhstan
acbk.kz

Latvia

Latvijas Ornitoģijas biedrība
lob.lv

Liechtenstein

Botanisch-Zoologische Gesellschaft
bzg.li

Lithuania

Lietuvos Ornitologų Draugijos
birdlife.lt

Luxembourg

natur&ëmwelt
naturemwelt.lu

Malta

BirdLife Malta
birdlifemalta.org

Montenegro

Centar za zaštitu i proučavanje
ptica Crne Gore
czip.me

Netherlands

Vogelbescherming Nederland
vogelbescherming.nl

North Macedonia

Macedonian Ecological Society
mes.org.mk

Norway

BirdLife Norge
birdlife.no

Poland

Ogólnopolskie Towarzystwo
Ochrony Ptaków/BirdLife Polska
otop.org.pl

Portugal

Sociedade Portuguesa para
o Estudo das Aves
spea.pt

Romania

Societatea Ornitologica Romana
sor.ro

Slovakia

SOS/BirdLife Slovensko
vtaky.sk

Slovenia

DOPPS - BirdLife Slovenia
ptice.si

Serbia

Društvo za zaštitu i proučavanje
ptica Srbije
pticesrbije.rs

Spain

SEO/BirdLife
seo.org

Sweden

BirdLife Sverige
birdlife.se

Switzerland

BirdLife Schweiz
birdlife.ch

Türkiye

Doğa Derneği
dogadernegi.org

United Kingdom

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
rspb.org.uk

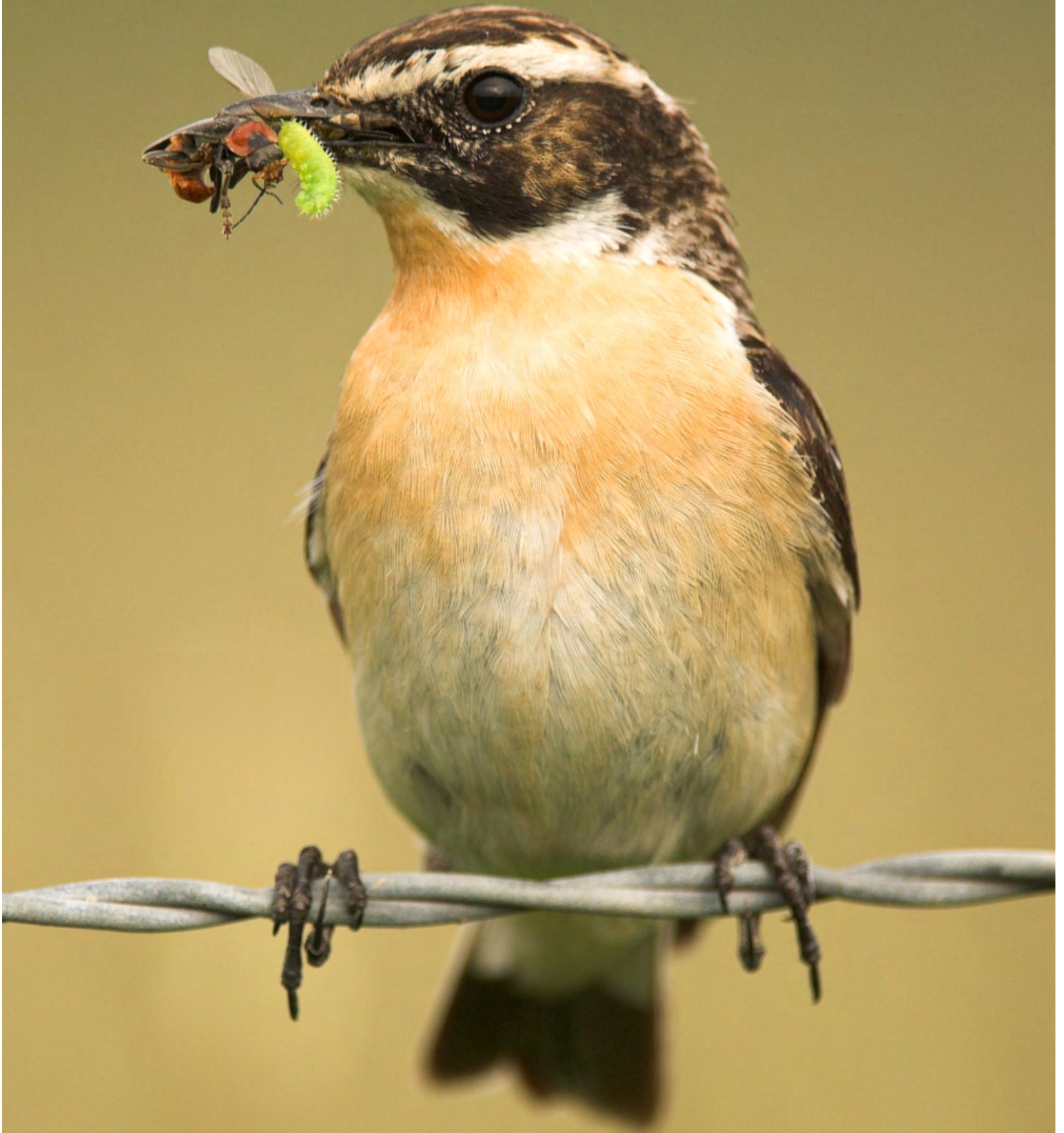
Ukraine

Ukrainian Society for the Protection
of Birds
birdlife.org.ua

Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan Society for the Protection
of Birds
uzspb.uz

Ideas that fly.



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