

# Wildlife crime in Greece: *out of sight, out of mind!*



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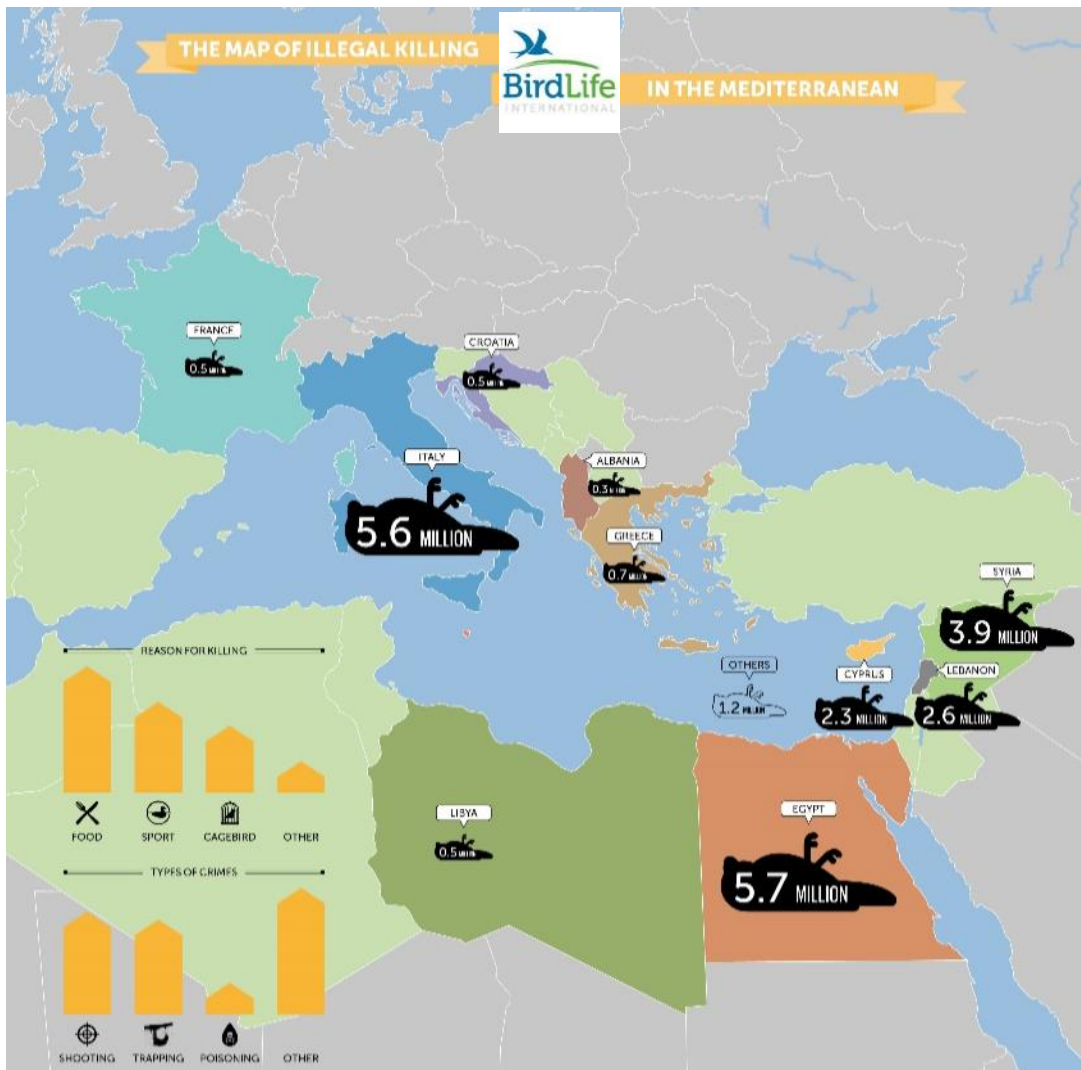
Hellenic Ornithological Society/BirdLife Greece

*"International Perspectives on  
Preventing Wild Life Crime"  
Athens 23-25 November 2018*

# The Map of illegal killing of birds in the MED



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## The killing

Unlawfully shot, trapped or glued. Every year around 25 million birds are slaughtered in the Mediterranean...

## Greece:

among the three worse countries for the illegal killing of European Turtle-dove (*Streptopelia turtur*).



# A Greek Tragedy



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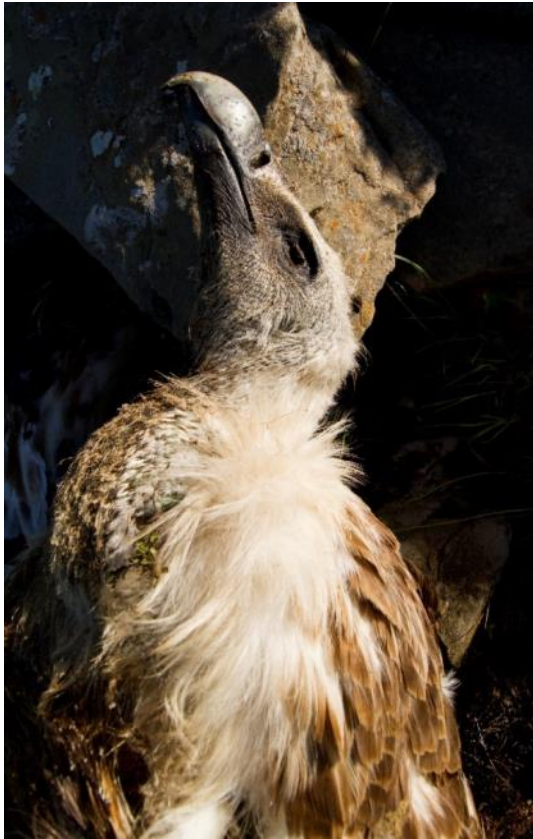




# Many faces of wildlife crime



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POISONING



ILLEGAL KILLING



TRAPPING/TRADE



# Wildlife poisoning in Greece



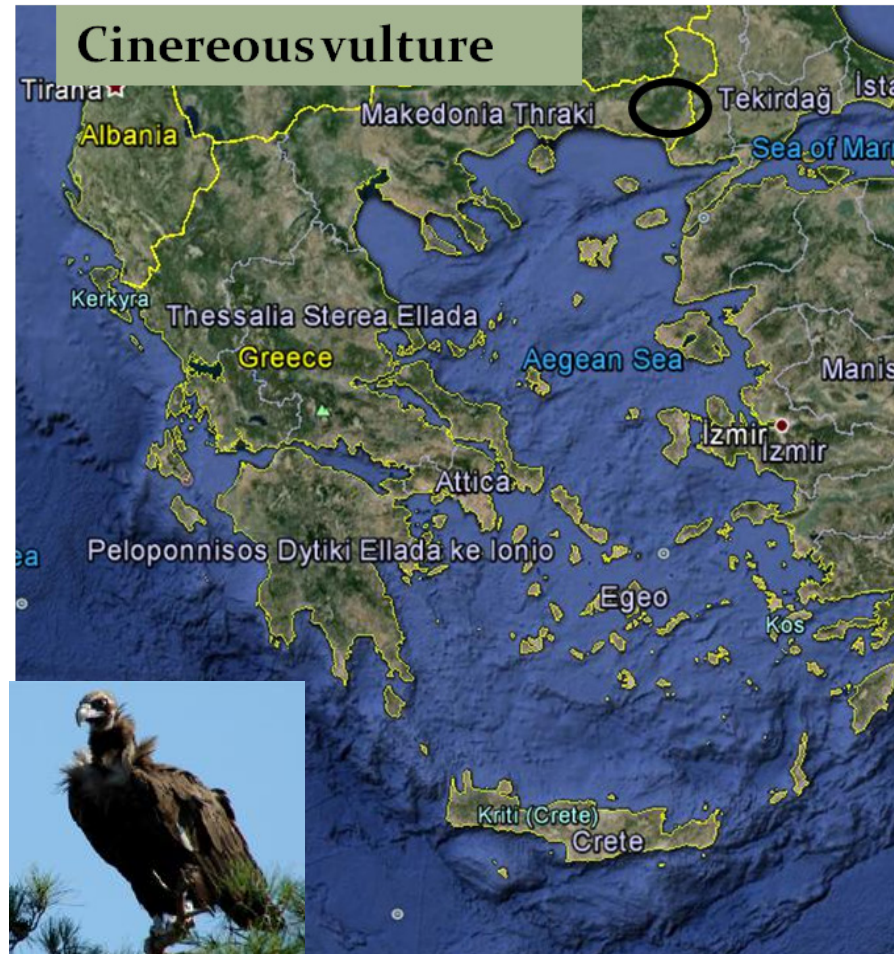
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Identified as one of the most important conservation problems for scavenger species in Greece (birds of prey, bears, wolves etc), in particular for vultures.



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- Egyptian vulture: **CR 5 bp**  
Bearded vulture: **CR 6-7 bp**  
Cinereous vulture: **EN 30 - 35 bp**  
Griffon vulture:  
○ Mainland Greece **CR 20 bp**  
○ Crete **VU 350 bp**





# The story of Lazaros

Early April 2012



29/4/2012



2/4/2013





# The mass poisoning in Nestos Straits



- ✗ Collapse of the largest remaining colony of Griffon vulture in mainland Greece (15 pairs)
  - ✗ Local extinction of Golden eagle (2 pairs)
- ↓
- ✓ European Commission started an infringement procedure against Greece (Reasoned Opinion)
  - ✓ Creation of the Antipoison Task Force (6NGOs+NHMC)
  - ✓ Intervention of the Greek Ombudsman



**Poison:** Carbofuran  
**Bait:** dead horse



# Animal mortality & illegal poison bait use in Greece



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Environ Monit Assess (2018) 190:488  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10661-018-6838-5>

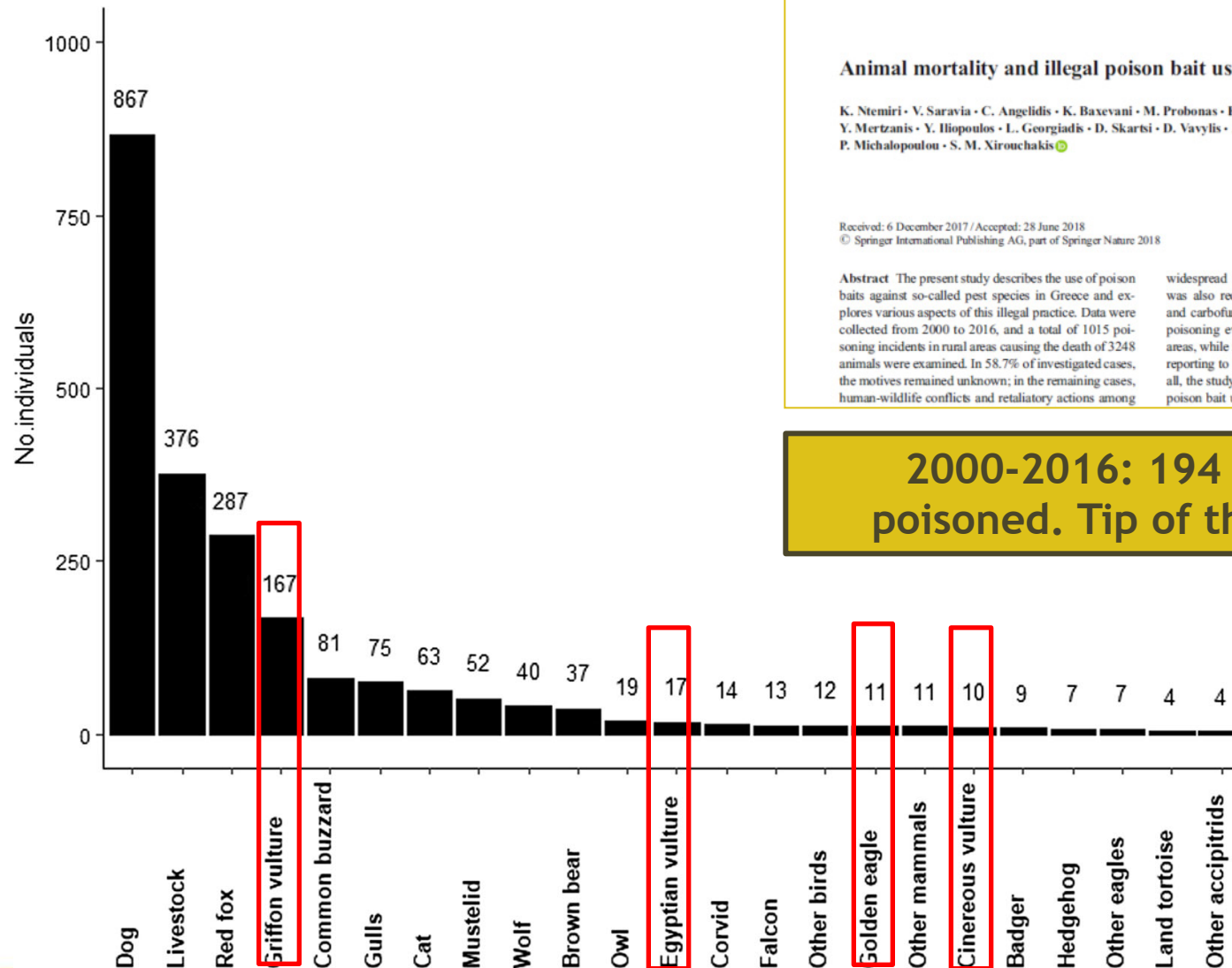
## Animal mortality and illegal poison bait use in Greece

K. Ntemiri · V. Saravia · C. Angelidis · K. Baxevas · M. Probonas · E. Kret ·  
 Y. Mertzani · Y. Iliopoulos · L. Georgiadis · D. Skarbi · D. Vaylis · A. Manolopoulos ·  
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**Abstract** The present study describes the use of poison baits against so-called pest species in Greece and explores various aspects of this illegal practice. Data were collected from 2000 to 2016, and a total of 1015 poisoning incidents in rural areas causing the death of 3248 animals were examined. In 58.7% of investigated cases, the motives remained unknown; in the remaining cases, human-wildlife conflicts and retaliatory actions among

widespread trafficking of black marketed insecticides was also recorded, with methomyl (in powder form) and carbofuran being most common. The majority of poisoning events (72%) took place outside protected areas, while in approximately 73.4% of them, no official reporting to the competent authorities was made. Overall, the study highlights the significant impact of illegal poison bait use on wildlife in Greece and addresses its



**2000-2016: 194 vultures  
poisoned. Tip of the iceberg**



# Illegal shooting



## National Park of Amvrakikos wetlands (Ramsar site)

Poaching of protected species within the  
protected area → a daily routine



Feeling proud on social media:  
Poaching of Ferruginous duck



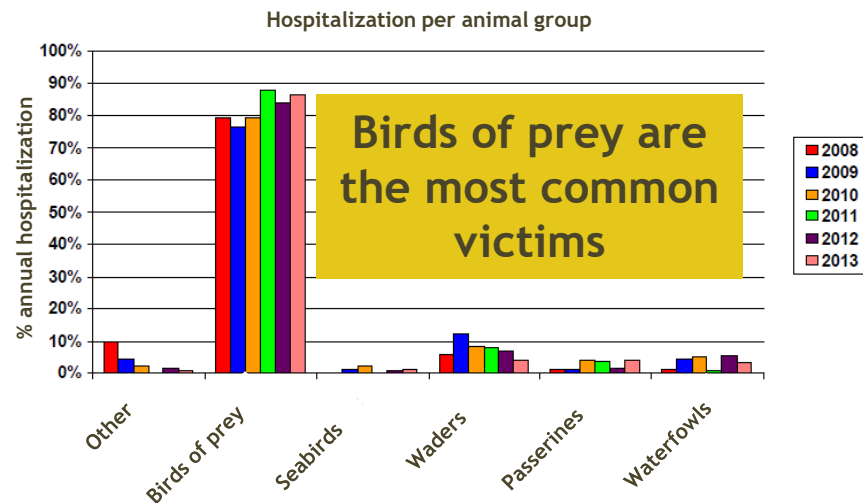
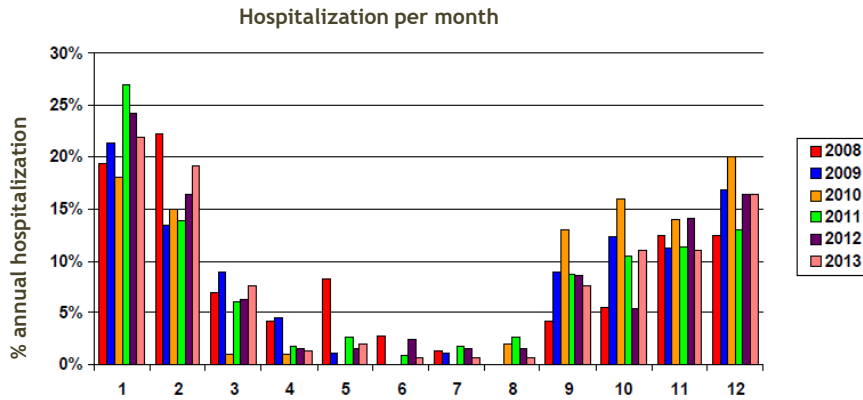
Unlawful practices: Decoys,  
motor boats, lead shot, trade etc.



# Wildlife rehabilitation data

ANIMA archive

The majority of illegal killing incidents take place during the hunting season (20 August - 28 February)





# A spring hunting massacre 'tradition'



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The Ionian islands are along the most significant migratory corridors of Greece.

They are stop-over sites for migratory birds that come from African sub-Saharan countries.

...but on the Ionian islands spring hunting is still a common practice.

# A journey cut short





# Illegal Trapping/Trade



are killed annually

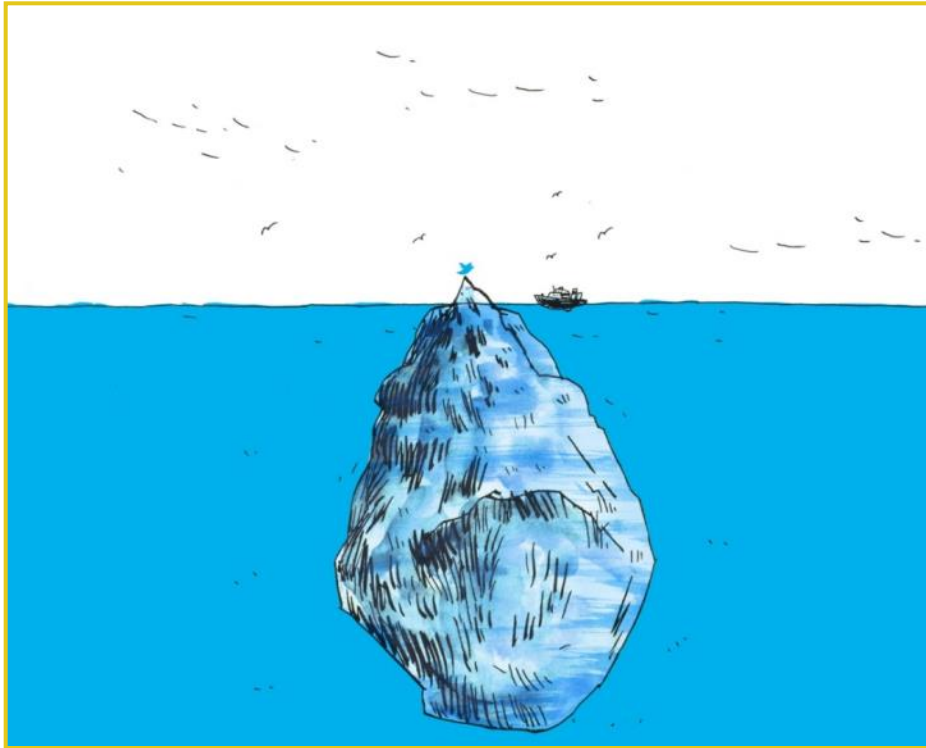


glue

d in

ols

# Out of sight...



Known incidents are just the **tip of the iceberg** with most illegal killing incidents going **undetected or unreported**.

**Lack of national monitoring →**  
Data and information on the total number of birds illegally killed or taken through IKB are **not available**.

**No data, no problem?**



# ...out of mind

## *Law enforcement authorities*



- ☹ Wildlife crime remains outside 'mainstream' crime and, so, it is not recorded in the way that other types of crime are, such as drug trafficking, murder etc. (source CITES)
- ☹ Combating wildlife crime is NOT identified as a high priority among law enforcement authorities.
- ☹ General lack of knowledge regarding legislation regulating wildlife crime.
- ☹ Lack of awareness that wildlife crime is a distinct category of crime itself comparing to environmental degradation.
- ☹ Lack of serious effort to tackle Illegal killing: significantly under-staffed authorities.
- ☹ Lack of general infrastructure & expertise: protocols, specialized law enforcement officers, toxicological laboratories etc.

# ...out of mind

## *Judicial authorities*



- ☹️ IKB cases are handled by prosecutors and judges not specialized in wildlife crime. NO training in IKB-related aspects.
- ☹️ Usually treat IKB as an offence of minor importance.
- ☹️ Few cases reach the courts (e.g. 119 complaints submitted by NGOs regarding wildlife poisoning → 0 cases to court).
- ☹️ Many years to conclude in the case of criminal proceedings (~5 years/LIFE Themis). Many result in acquittals.
- ☹️ Low criminal sanctions and administrative penalties (e.g. 200 euros and 4 months suspended prison sentence for shepherd using poison baits in Rhodes island).
- ☹️ Statute of limitations of the criminal offence at criminal proceedings → Loss of motivation for law enforcement officers.



# ...out of mind

## Public



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- ☹ Lack of awareness.
- ☹ Local communities and individuals don't consider IKB as a crime!
- ☹ No willingness to report IKB incidents.
- ☹ Tolerance to wildlife crime. Sometimes they even support it - So-called "Tradition"!



*Hunters and other locals protesting against the disembarkation of law enforcement officers specially assigned to control spring hunting in Zante. They were forced to return back.*

# In sight & in mind!



What can the Greek State DO to address IKB ASAP?



Invest on:

1. Monitoring and data collection
2. Information exchange, training and awareness-raising
3. Enforcement and legal aspects
4. Prevention

**CMS IKB Scoreboard** (28 indicators) - A valuable tool on keeping track on progress

It is intended to provide the governments with a tool to provide an *objective, fact-based national self-assessment of the current status of IKB* and enable States to *measure their progress in implementing their commitments* related to this area.

By using the Scoreboard, Greece will be able to assess progress on the eradication of IKB at national level.



# BirdLife to the rescue!



Deeply involved in the fight against IKB mainly through:

## LIFE Projects:

- ❖ Safe Heaven for Wild Birds
- ❖ The Return of the Neophron
- ❖ New LIFE for the Egyptian Vulture
- ❖ Lesser White-fronted Goose LIFE
- ❖ LIFE Against Bird Crime



## MAVA funded projects:

- Safe Flyways - stop illegal bird killing in the Mediterranean
- Balkan Anti-Poisoning Project



**STOP WILDLIFE  
POISONING!**

## Champions of the FLYWAY



## Illegal Killing Campaign (“Magnificent 7”)



# Success in tackling IKB will require...



- ☺ Much greater political commitment
- ☺ Great investment in enforcement
- ☺ Stronger sanctions and penalties
- ☺ Better monitoring of the issue from the Greek State
- ☺ Zero tolerance of illegal killing among hunting and the communities at large
- ☺ Great awareness and a stronger voice from civil society

*“A cultural sea change is required if we want these protected birds to be seen as an incredible view to be marveled at and not a ‘**view to a kill**’ down the barrel of a gun” (Patricia Zurita BirdLife CEO)*



Thank you  
for your  
attention!



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