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Citizen science for bird species monitoring in Cyprus

Martin Hellicar
Director, BirdLife Cyprus



BirdLife Cyprus - Who we are

Our Vision:

An island with healthy ecosystems, rich in biodiversity, where people actively safeguard nature for a sustainable **future.**

Our Mission:

Protecting the wild birds of Cyprus, their habitats, and wider biodiversity, through monitoring, conservation and education actions, and by developing people's appreciation of nature.

Registered non-profit, non-governmental organization

Formed in 2003 through the merger of 2 ornithological societies

13 staff

~500 active members

BirdLife International partner in Cyprus



Why monitoring?



Keeping track of the state of the birds of Cyprus

Barometers of environmental change in the countryside

Indicators of the status of biodiversity and nature in general

Scientific information on population trends

Why birds?

Potential to drive biodiversity policy and conservation effort in Europe

EU Birds Directive: one of the most important parts of the EU biodiversity policy framework & EU biodiversity strategy

Why monitoring?



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BirdLife Cyprus gathers and holds data on

bird distributions
populations
abundance
and habitats

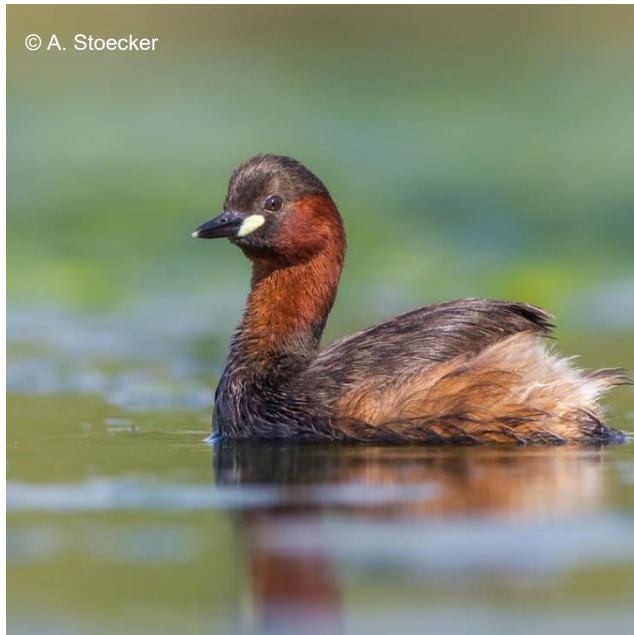
that are of value for

conservation management
safeguarding of sites
species protection
planning
environmental policy
and ecological science

Coverage of bird monitoring programmes



What?



Waterbird Count

Longest running monitoring programme at wetlands across the island



Autumn Migration Counts

Raptor and soaring bird migration at the migration 'bottleneck' Important Bird Areas of Cyprus



Common Bird Monitoring Scheme

Estimating population trends of our relatively common and widespread breeding birds

What?



‘Altasing’ of Breeding Bird Distributions

New European Breeding Bird Atlas, published on 03 December 2020



Nocturnal Bird Survey

Dedicated surveys for species that are not easily surveyed using conventional methods



European Roller Survey

What?



Kleides Seabird Colony Count, in partnership with KUŞKOR

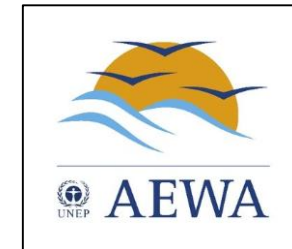
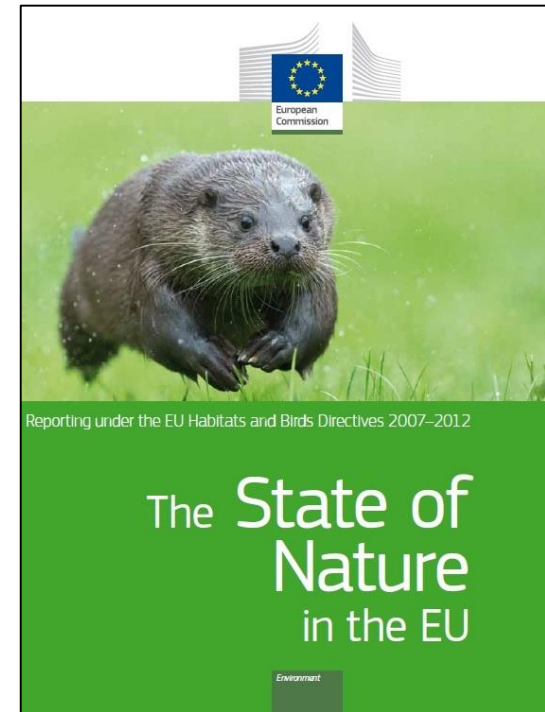
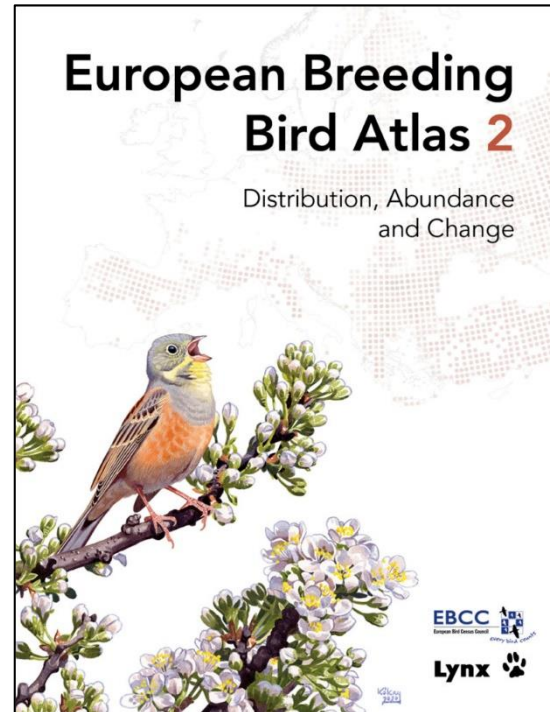
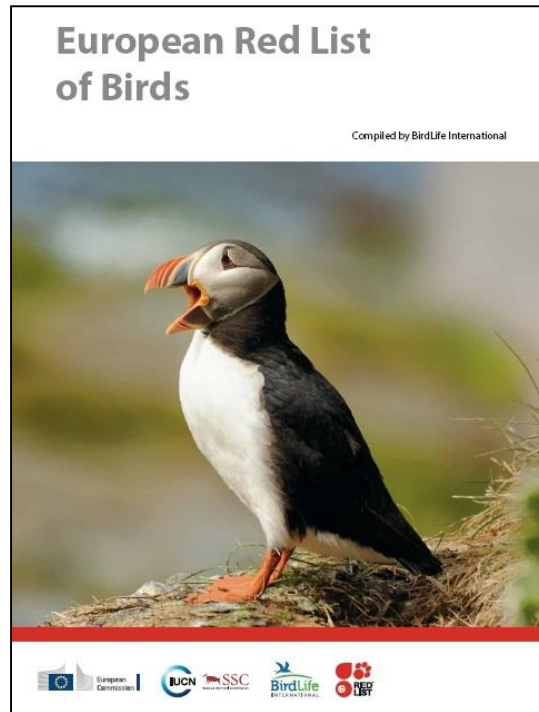
Audouin's Gull, *Larus audouinii*
Yellow-legged Gull, *Larus michahellis*
Mediterranean Shag, *Phalacrocorax aristotelis desmarestii*



Griffon Vulture Census & Breeding Monitoring

Project GYPAS, 2011 – 2014
LIFE with Vultures, 2019 – 2023

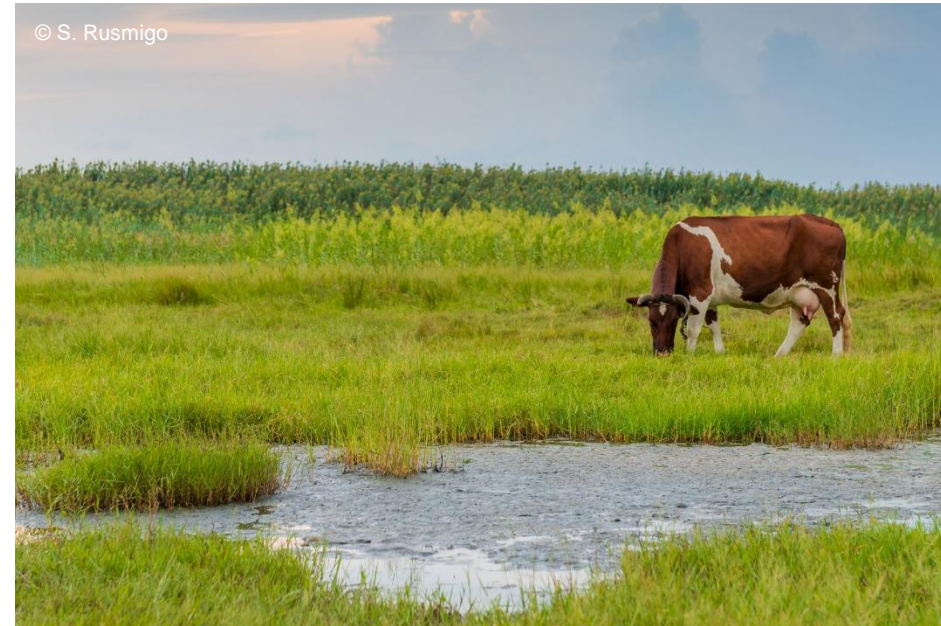
Why?



Contributing towards regional and global biodiversity science and conservation efforts

Meeting Cyprus's obligations under the EU Birds Directive, international agreements and conventions

Why?



Conservation of sites and habitats



Why?



Conservation of species

Why?

ADVOCACY



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How?

Our monitoring work is volunteer-led

There is no way we would be able to achieve the coverage we do without the contribution of our bird monitoring volunteers

Standardised protocols and training

The image displays three BirdLife Cyprus survey forms, which are part of the Cyprus 2017 Assessment Report. The forms are:

- BirdLife Cyprus CBMS Survey form:** This form is used for recording bird sightings. It includes sections for Recorder(s), Date (dd/mm/yyyy), Weather Codes (1-2 or 3), Cloud, Wind, Rain, and Visibility. It also has a section for Transect Start Time (hh:mm) and Transect End Time (hh:mm).
- Nocturnal Survey Field Recording Form:** This form is used for recording nocturnal bird sightings. It includes sections for Recorder(s), Date (dd/mm/yyyy), Night (1, 2 or 3 - see page 3), and Observation. It also has a section for Transect Start Time (hh:mm) and Transect End Time (hh:mm).
- BirdLife Cyprus Autumn 2017 Raport Migration Count - Field Data Sheet:** This form is used for recording migration counts. It includes sections for DATE, LOCATION (and observation point), OBSERVER, SURVEY DURATION, WEATHER, and a table for recording bird sightings. The table has columns for Time, Species, Numbers, and Observations / Comments.

The forms are designed to be used by birdwatchers and researchers to collect data on bird populations and migration patterns in Cyprus. The forms are available in both English and Greek.

Challenges & considerations



The ideal protocol

Theoretical gold standards in bird survey methods need to be adapted and modified to on-the-ground realities & to the specific persons carrying out the work in the field

Data handling, management & analysis

Data produced must be fit for purpose and data management, analysis and archiving must be efficient

Repeatability and standardisation are key

Challenges & considerations



Most of our volunteers are birdwatchers

They already have many of the skills that are necessary to carry out bird monitoring work

Training is very important

Annual volunteer workshops

Volunteers aren't free

Costs incurred: fuel / transport, training / workshops, equipment if necessary

Investment required: management of people, training, communication and engagement, fostering community, demonstrating fruits of volunteer labour, recruitment

Challenges & considerations



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The ideal volunteer

- Expertise & ability
- Committed
- Reliable
- Spokesperson / Reputation
- Cooperates & follows instructions

Recruitment

Major challenge to recruiting new volunteers is prevalence of expertise and skills in bird identification in Cyprus



Bird ID course

Aim to train adults to confidently identify a selection of bird species, with a focus on breeding birds

Field trips, classroom / online lessons, final exam

Select participants – high level of commitment expected, small intake

Pilot / trial ongoing [*though affected by COVID-19 restrictions*]

Ultimate aim to increase the capacity of aspiring birdwatchers and BirdLife Cyprus monitoring volunteers in Cyprus



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Thank you
for your attention

Questions / comments?

