

Dear Minister,

The Polish Wildlife Society "Stork" carries out the project POIS.02.04.00-00-0019/16 entitled "*Implementation of the National Action Plan for the conservation of the Eurasian Curlew - stage I*" (www.ochronakulika.pl) financed by the EU (Cohesion Fund) in the years 2017-2020. The project is the continuation and development of works carried out in the years 2013-2015. The main aim of the project is to implement measures from the National Action Plan for the conservation of the Eurasian Curlew, *Numenius arquata*, in particular active nest protection within the key Eurasian Curlew sanctuaries in Poland, which are refuges for more than 70% of the national population of this species.

Under this project we are ringing all fledglings from protected nests. Special tags are attached to birds, marked with flags and an alphanumeric code that enables the identification of individuals. Unfortunately, hunting in France defeats our efforts to save this endangered species. We have obtained information that a young Eurasian Curlew from Poland was shot recently. Due to the international cooperation of stakeholders concerned with this problem, we know that actively protected Eurasian Curlews from Germany are also being shot in France. The scale of this practice is much larger than report data on recovered ringed birds indicate. Not all shot individuals are reported, and ringed adults constitute a minority of marked birds, so we do not know how many adult birds are actually killed in France. However, it can be assumed that some Eurasian Curlews perish in French wintering areas. Undoubtedly, this has contributed to the dramatic decline of the Polish population of this species within the last few decades, and still negatively affects the condition of the population.

The Eurasian Curlew is listed on the German Red List of Breeding Birds (category 1 - species vulnerable to extinction) and in the Polish Red Data Book of Animals (category VU - high risk species, vulnerable to extinction). The population of Eurasian Curlew is rapidly decreasing in number and range in Poland, and it is vulnerable to extinction. In 2003 it was estimated at 650-700 breeding pairs. Currently, the population of this species is estimated at 200-300 breeding pairs, which means a population decline of about 50% within 10 years. Similar disturbing reports also concern other species of waders, e.g. Northern Lapwing, *Vanellus vanellus* (a decrease in numbers of about 70% within the years 2007-2017), and Common Redshank, *Tringa totanus* (a decrease in numbers of about 30% within the years 2007-2017; data from the Monitoring of Birds of Poland <http://www.monitoringptakow.gios.gov.pl>), also wintering and being shot in France.

The Eurasian Curlew is vulnerable to extinction (category VU) in Europe, and it is listed on the European Red List of Birds (BirdLife International 2015). Importantly, 75% of the world population of this species breed in Europe (BirdLife International 2004). The population of this species is declining in many countries (including Poland and Germany), especially within breeding sites. Trend analysis from the last 15 years indicates the decline at about 26-34% within the whole range of this species (IUCN 2013). Extremely low reproductive success, which prevents the stability of the population, is the main cause of population decline. Allowing for the above-mentioned, we regard the data from L'Office National de la Chasse et de la Faune Sauvage published in 2016 as shocking. According to the reports of L'Office National de la Chasse et de la Faune Sauvage, 7000 Eurasian Curlews were shot in France in the years 2013-2014. Hunting is pursued from 8 September till 20 January. During this period birds from Poland and Germany stay in their wintering grounds in France.

We expect that the Government of France will make a move to stop the shooting of Eurasian Curlews and other rare and protected waders, *Charadriiformes* (*fr. Limicoles*). We also expect the removal of these species from the French list of game birds. We regard the hunting of endangered species as unacceptable, and this cannot be justified by upholding local traditions.

We also consider the shooting of Eurasian Curlews and other bird species protected by community law as inconsistent with the coherent policy of the environmental protection of the European Union, and it infringes Article 7 of Directive 2009/147/EC of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds. According to this article, Member States shall ensure that the hunting of these species does not jeopardise conservation efforts in their distribution area. Unfortunately, the Eurasian Curlew was listed in Annex II of the Wild Birds Directive when it was much more numerous. Currently, the Eurasian Curlew needs to be removed from this document. Permission for the mass shooting of protected species in their wintering grounds, especially in a country that represents one of the main pillars of the European Union, and simultaneous financing by the European Union of the protection of these species in their breeding sites within other member states is absurd. Due to the above, we intend to also address this letter to the European Commission.

Many organizations and institutions support our petition, expecting that actions solving the above-mentioned problem will be taken promptly.

Yours faithfully
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Chairman of the Board
Wildlife Society "Stork"