



European
Commission

Managing Predators for Meadow Birds and the EU context



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**EU Parliament's Intergroup on "Biodiversity, Hunting, and Countryside"
Brussels 5 March 2019**

Outline

- 1. Legal (Birds Directive) and policy contexts**
- 2. Species Action Plans**
- 3. Impact and management of predation:
A complex issue**
- 4. A role for hunters?**
- 5. Categories of predators**
- 6. Conclusion**

1. Birds Directive:

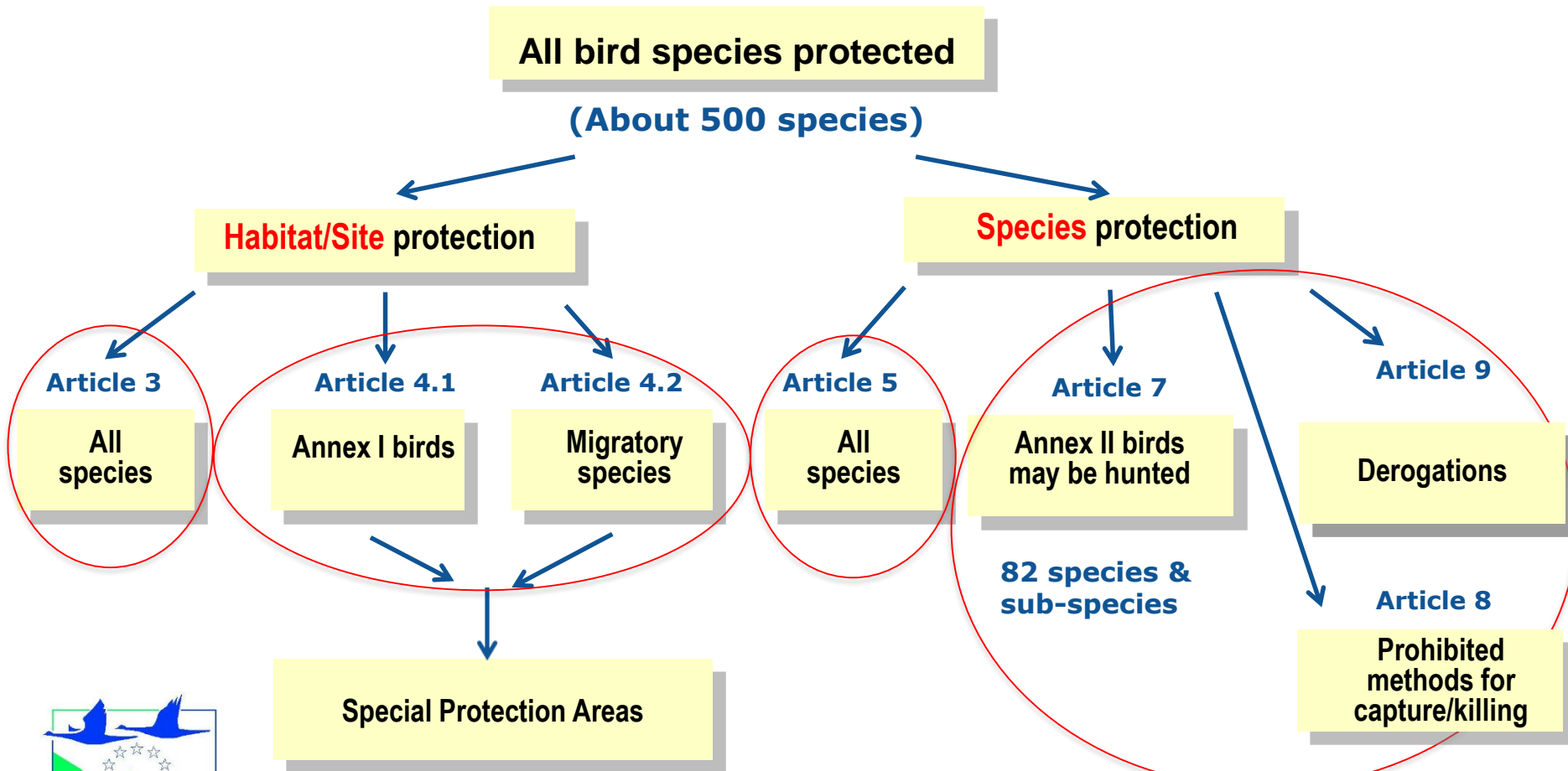
1. Protects **all** bird species,
2. Covers the **protection, management** and **control** of them,
3. Overall objective: **maintain the populations** in the EU at a level which corresponds to their ecological, scientific and cultural requirements





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Architecture of the Birds Directive



2. EU Biodiversity Strategy: halting the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services

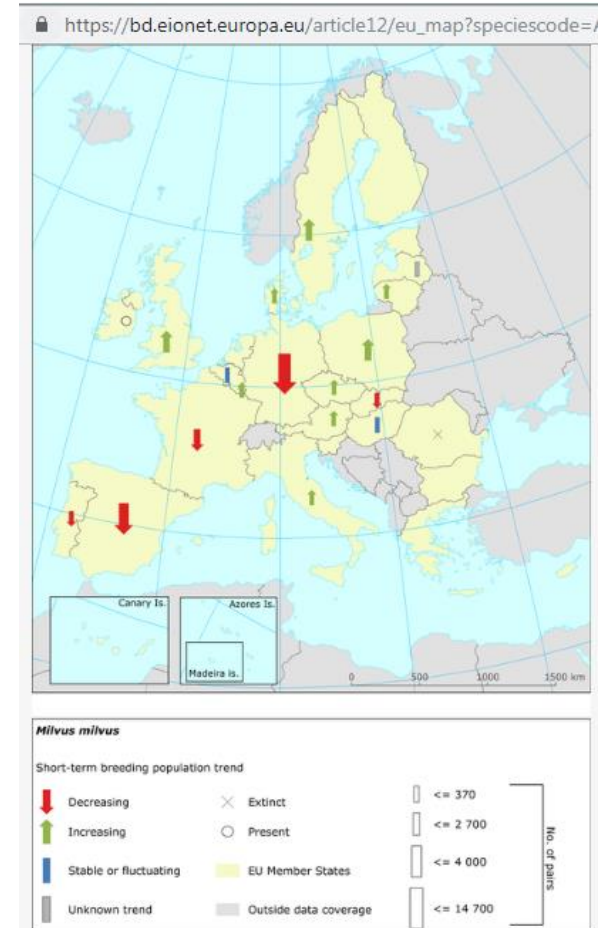
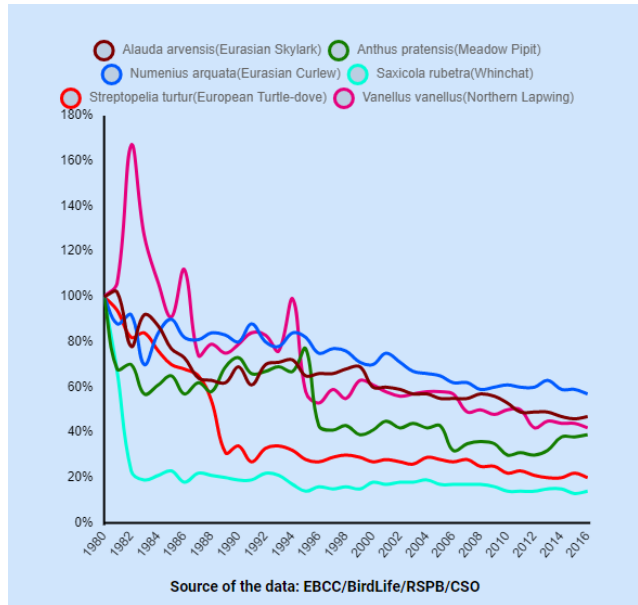
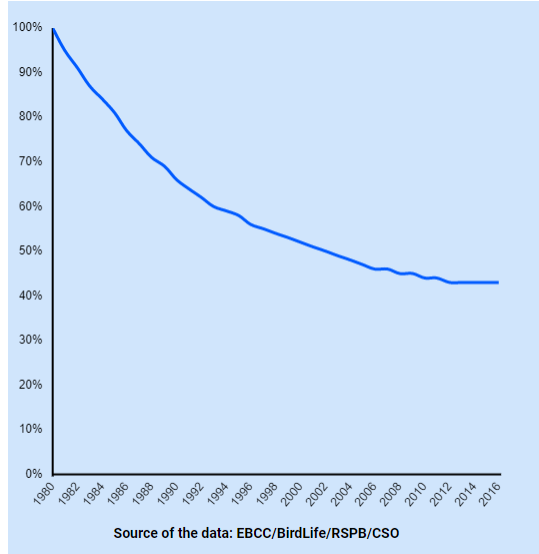
1. Target 1: Protect species and habitats => **Natura 2000 network**
2. Target 3: Achieve more sustainable agriculture and forestry => **wider countryside**



3. Status and trends of birds in the EU (2008-2012)

=> major **decline** for farmland birds

Common farmland birds indicator, Europe, single European species habitat classification, 1980-2016



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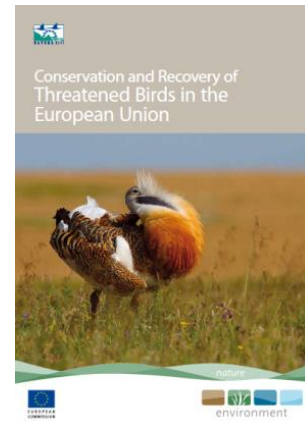
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1. EU or International **Single Species Action/Management Plans**:

1. COM/EU support since 1993,
2. Not legally binding, **management/planning tool**,
3. Focus on Annex I birds but not only – priority for LIFE funding,
4. Many meadow bird species covered: E. Curlew, Lapwing, Golden Plover, Redshank, Black-tailed Godwit, Great Snipe, Corncrake, Red Kite,
5. Address **all threats and pressures**: habitats' degradation, climate change, predation, disturbance, (hunting), etc.

2. Complementary approach: **Multi species Action Plan** for the Conservation of **breeding** waders in wet grassland Habitats in Europe:

1. Address the requirement of the species during the breeding season to improve the **reproductive success**,
2. Protection and management of suitable habitats, reduction of losses by agriculture, predation management, awareness-raising, and governance of the Plan,
3. Addresses a key side of the coin BUT need to address threats during the **non-breeding season**,
4. For the huntable species: Hunting needs to be sustainable => Adaptive harvest management.



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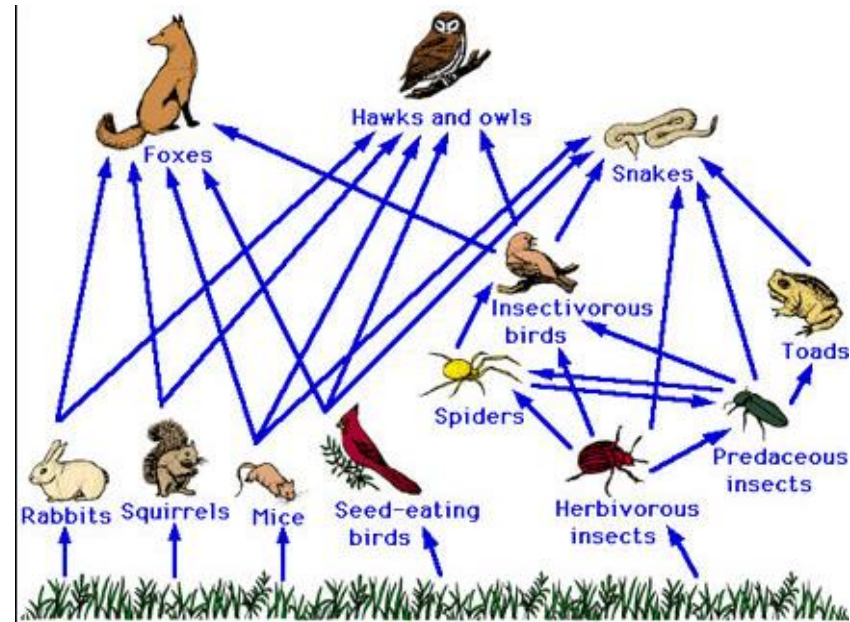
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1. Breeding meadow birds: **main pressure = agriculture** but predation can be a problem,

2. **Interactions** between threats:

1. Loss of habitats => more time spent on collection of food => higher impact of predation,
2. Degradation of habitats (e.g. early mowing) => less cover => higher impact of predation,



3. **Prey-predator relationship**, impacted by human activities,

4. Prey and predator: **complex interactions** between species,

5. Predation: **understanding and monitoring**.

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1. Restoration and management of habitats of meadow birds:

1. **Hunting respectful of the ecosystem**: beneficial for many non-hunttable species. Possible win-win situation,
2. High **responsibility** for hunters hunting migratory meadow birds: relation between breeding areas and staging/wintering area => **Cross-border** co-operation?



2. Predation management:

1. To be carried out in a **careful and balanced manner**. Level of scrutiny in relation with the sensitivity of the predator at stake,
2. Awareness-raising and **training** needed,
3. Ideally in **co-operation** with authorities and NGO's: act strategically and join efforts,
3. Eradication: not an option, except for invasive species,
4. Act **legally!**
5. **Multiple role**: surveillance, monitoring, control (and early notification/rapid eradication for invasive species),
6. Also management of animal and plant species degrading the habitats (eradication for invasive species) : Muskrat, Coypu, Water Primrose, etc.



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1. **Mammals out of the scope of EU legislation:** Fox, Stoat, etc... and Wild Boar!
2. **Huntable birds:** during the hunting season, outside the hunting season => careful application of Art. 9 of the Birds Directive,
3. **Non-hunttable birds:** => careful application of Art. 9 of the Birds Directive,
4. **Invasive species:** EU Regulation 1143/2014 on Invasive Alien Species and national legislation.



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1. **Urgent to act for meadow birds** in a strategic way,
2. **Sensitive** issue,
3. Possible to act in the **context of the Birds Directive**,
4. **Integrated management** that deals with pressures and threats in a joined up way,
5. **Careful intervention** and co-operation,
6. Useful but difficult **role for hunters**.



Thank you for your attention

For more information or contact:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/index_en.htm

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Birds' pictures: Frank Vassen and Michael O'Briain