



## THE VOICE OF EUROPEAN HUNTERS

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## REPORT ON THE 42<sup>ND</sup> BERN CONVENTION STANDING COMMITTEE

From 28<sup>th</sup> November to 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2022, FACE was attending the 42<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention. The Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (or Bern Convention) is the first international agreement dedicated to nature conservation, covering most of Europe and some African countries (now 50 States in total).

Government representatives and organisations meet once a year at the Standing Committee meeting in Strasbourg to talk about environment concerns and to take decisions. This year, the Standing Committee discussed achievements and issues at stake for the Bern Convention and its contracting parties, in particular the issue of the Bern Convention's post-2020 contribution to the current global biodiversity framework, conservation of birds, the fight against invasive alien species, and the relationship between biodiversity and climate change.

### Wolf on the agenda

On the agenda was also the proposal by Switzerland to move the Wolf from Appendix II (strictly protected) to Appendix III (protected). Ahead of the Standing Committee, the secretariat of the Bern Convention assigned the Large Carnivore Initiative of Europe (IUCN specialist group) to produce an updated conservation status assessment of Europe's wolf. This report concludes that the wolf can be classified as "Least Concern" at the European scale while underlining that high diversity of management and monitoring systems are still problematic for a holistic conservation approach.

The recovery of wolves to around 21,500 individuals in geographic Europe (excluding Belarus and Russia) is a clear conservation success. This increasing trend is also evident in Switzerland. At the meeting they stated that wolves can no longer be managed based on exceptional removals as allowed under Art. 9 of the Bern Convention. To improve social acceptance and coexistence, the management system must be adapted to include proactive conservation and management measures. However, this is not possible with the current listing of the wolf in Appendix II. Further, Switzerland called for uniform legal treatment of the wolf under the Bern Convention.

Unfortunately, a block vote against by EU-27, decided in advance by the European Commission and the Council of the European Union, meant that the necessary two-thirds majority could not be reached. A disappointing political decision to do nothing. The EU-27 position should have given more weight to that fact that the wolf is listed Annex V of the EU Habitats Directive in 9 Member States (i.e. not Strictly Protected as required under the Bern Convention). This is yet another example of the barriers that exist to the shift of protected status of species in both directions under international law.



### Update on Ruddy duck management

The Ruddy Duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) is a North American species introduced in Europe which is threatening the native White-headed Duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*) through hybridization. In the Bern Convention framework, an action plan was developed in the 1990s and has been updated every five years, most recently in 2020 to frame and coordinate eradication efforts. Especially, the [Recommendation No. 209 \(2020\)](#) of the Standing Committee on the eradication of the Ruddy Duck in the Western Palaearctic by 2025 recommends that all Contracting Parties implement without delay the actions specified in the “Action Plan for the Eradication of the Ruddy Duck in the Western Palaearctic, 2021-2025”. The goal of the Action Plan is the functional extinction of the Ruddy Duck in Europe by 2025.

### What progress was made in 2022?

An update of the situation was presented at this year’s Bern Convention’s Standing Committee. The latest reports provided by all key countries (BE, FR, DE, NL, UK) highlight that efforts have been made to reduce the Ruddy Duck numbers. Key issues highlighted are the difficulty to control the remaining individuals in France hence the need to develop trapping methods, the unclarity of the total wild population (e.g., a population revision in DE shows there could be as many as 40 individuals in the country) and to overcome barriers to control the species in DE and NL (progress was made in Noord-Holland). The eradication of the Ruddy Duck in the wild by 2025 is achievable but key challenges remain.

### What’s next?

Contracting Parties will continue the implementation of the Action Plan for the Eradication of the Ruddy Duck 2021-2025 to achieve the objective of eradication of the Ruddy Duck in the wild. FACE will continue to monitor the progress made and update the hunting community and other stakeholders and decision-makers.



### Casefile 1995/6: Cyprus: Akamas peninsula

This casefile covers the Akamas Peninsula which lies on the north-western corner of Cyprus, in the Paphos District. The uniqueness of the region of Cyprus lies in its valuable Natura 2000 sites and the wildlife diversity which is crucial for the ecological stability of the island ecosystems. Currently, the government of Cyprus through a proposed local development plan, promotes scattered developments within natural and pristine areas as well as areas of the Natura 2000 network that, if implemented, will cause serious and severe, negative, and irreversible impacts on both the Natura 2000 sites and the whole region of Akamas.

FACE highlighted at the Standing Committee that its member, the Cyprus Federation for Hunting and Wildlife Conservation, is deeply concerned about the future of the Akamas Peninsula. The Cyprus Federation for Hunting and Wildlife Conservation is publicly advocating to save the Akamas Peninsula and halt any development plans that would negatively impact local protection sites and biodiversity.

### Collaboration with the Bern Convention in 2023

At this year's Standing Committee, the contracting parties decided to extend the work around the Strategic Plan to 2030 of the Bern Convention, in order to finalise the Plan and make a recommendation for its adoption at the 43rd Standing Committee. The Plan should also take into account the outcomes of the Global Biodiversity Framework negotiations under CDB. FACE will continue to actively participate in the Working Group to ensure that habitat conservation and sustainable use is high on the agenda.