

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

TWO-YEARLY REPORT
1985-1986

(Article 9/2)

Report presented by the delegation of the
European Economic Community

This two-yearly report relates to the years 1985-1986

CONTRACTING PARTY : European Economic Community

I.1. General comments on the Convention and its implementation

Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds provides the framework within which the provisions of the Bern Convention are applied.

I.2. Article 4 : Habitats

How have the obligations provided for in Article 4 been complied with ?

In order to comply with these obligations, 57 special protection areas were designated in 1985-1986.

II. Derogations

The information regarding derogations from Article 6 (species in Annex II to the Convention) and regarding falconry is set out below, as given in document T-PVS(86)13, revised, of the Standing Committee on the Convention. This document does not mention certain practices which are currently the subject of a dispute between the Commission and certain Member States, including infringements of Directive 79/409/EEC, or those undertaken for scientific purposes (research, ringing, etc...) or which affect only a very small number of individuals (ten or so) of non-threatened species. It is based on information supplied by the Member States, other than Greece, Italy and Spain.

II.1. Derogations from Article 6

Branta leucopsis

Nine licences were granted in 1984-1985 and 25 in 1985-1986 for shooting this species for the purposes of crop protection. A few hundred birds were shot during each of the two years in question.

Accipiter nisus, A. gentilis, Buteo buteo

Authorizations were granted for the killing or capture by fire arms or traps of birds of these three species, chiefly for the purposes of protecting small game and poultry raising, occasionally for the protection of domestic pigeons and in the interests of airport safety. The number of individuals killed or trapped was about 1300 in 1984-1985 and 1000 in 1985-1986.

Tetrax tetrax

In 1986 authorizations were granted for the killing of birds of this species using firearms, for the purpose of preventing damage to crops. The number of birds killed was small.

Plectrophenax nivalis

Some 60 birds were killed in 1984-1985 and a further 20 in 1985-1986, on the grounds of airport safety.

II.2. Authorities empowered to authorize derogations

Authorities empowered to decide whether the conditions referred to in Article 9 of Directive 79/409/EEC have been satisfied and to decide what means, facilities or methods may be used under a derogation, within what limits and by what persons:

B: Ministère de l'Agriculture, Administration de la Recherche Agronomique (Notification of Derogations). The regional authorities empowered are :

- Flanders : Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap.
Administratie voor Ruimtelijke Ordening en Leefmilieu
(Belliardstraat 14-18, 1040 Brussel)
- Wallonia : Ministère de la Région Wallone.
Administration des Ressources naturelles et de l'Environnement
(Avenue Albert 1er, 187 - 5000 Namur)
- Brussels : Ministère de la Région bruxelloise -
Service des Eaux et Forêts (Rue de Trèves 49, 1040 Bruxelles)

DK: Danish Hunting and Wildlife Administration (Landbrugsministeriets Vildtforvaltning), a branch of the Ministry of Agriculture (Jaegerhuset, Strandvejen 4, Ronde).

D : Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz und Reaktorsicherheit, (Postfach, 5300 Bonn) (notification of derogations only). The regional authorities empowered are those of the "Länder".

G : Ministry of Agriculture, Ippokratous 3-5 Street, 10164 ATHENS

E : ICONA, Gran Via de San Francisco 35, Madrid. The regional authorities empowered are as follows :

- Andalucía (Junta de) : Consejería de Agricultura y Pesca, Sevilla
Sevilla Consejería de la Presidencia
- Aragón (Diputación General de) : Departamento de Agricultura, Ganadería y Montes, Zaragoza.
- Asturias (Principado de) : Consejería de Agricultura y Pesca, Oviedo.
- Baleares (Comunidad Autónoma y Gobierno de las Islas): Consejería de Agricultura y Pesca, Palma de Mallorca.
- Canarias (Gobierno de): Consejería de Agricultura, Ganadería y Pesca, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Consejería de Política Territorial, Santa Cruz de Tenerife.
- Cantabria (Diputación Regional y Consejo de Gobierno de): Consejería de Ganadería, Agricultura y Pesca, Santander.

- Castilla-La-Mancha (Junta de Comunidades de) : Consejería de Agricultura, Toledo.
 - Castilla y Leon (Junta de) : Consejería de Agricultura, Ganadería y Montes, Valladolid.
 - Catalunya (Generalidad de) : Departamento de Agricultura, Ganadería y Pesca, Barcelona.
 - Extremadura (Junta de) : Consejería de Obras Públicas, Urbanismo y Medio Ambiente, Mérida.
 - Galicia (Junta de) : Consejería de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación, Santiago de Compostela.
 - Madrid (Comunidad de) : Consejería de Agricultura y Ganadería, Madrid.
 - Murcia (Región de) : Consejería de Agricultura, Ganadería y Pesca, Murcia.
 - Navarra (Gobierno o Diputación Foral de) : Departamento de Agricultura, Ganadería y Montes, Pamplona.
 - País Vasco (Gobierno Vasco) : Departamento de Agricultura y Pesca, Vitoria.
 - La Rioja (Comunidad Valenciana) : Consejería de Ordenación del Territorio y Medio Ambiente, Logroño.
 - Valencia (Generalidad Valenciana) : Consejería de Agricultura y Pesca, Valencia.
- F: Ministère de l'Environnement, Direction de la Protection de la Nature, Neuilly-sur-Seine.
- Irl: Minister for Energy, whose responsibilities currently include the Forest and Wildlife Service (Leeson Lane, Dublin 2).
- I: Ministero dell'Agricoltura e delle Foreste, Roma (Via Carducci 5, 00100 Roma).
- L: Ministère de l'Environnement, Luxembourg (5a, rue de Prague, L - 2348 Luxembourg Ville).
- NL: Ministerie van Landbouw en Visserij, Directie Natuur, Milieu en Fauna Beheer, Den Haag, in the case of species mentioned in the Hunting Law (Jachtwet) and covered by Article 2 of the Bird Law (Vogelwet). The royal commissioners for the twelve provinces are responsible for other species, in the case of damage subject to the approval of Ministerie van Landbouw en Visserij. For scientific purposes, the Ministry of Agriculture is responsible for giving authorization.
- P: Serviço Nacional de Parques, Reservas e Conservação da Natureza da Secretaria de Estado do ambiente e Recursos Naturais - Rua da Lapa 73, 1200 Lisboa.
- UK: England, Wales and Scotland:
Department of the Environment, Birds Branch, Wildlife Direction, Bristol after consultation with the Nature Conservancy Council. Derogations for scientific purposes are granted by the NCC while others are granted by the government concerned;
- Northern Ireland: Department of Environment, Northern Ireland, after receiving the opinion of the Statutory Advisory Committee for Nature Conservation.

II.3. Falconry

In addition to the derogations notified under section 1, derogations from the ban on capture are granted in respect of the following species for the purposes of falconry:

Accipiter gentilis (10 to 20 birds)
Accipiter nisus (less than 45 birds)
Buteo buteo (10 to 20 birds)
Falco tinnunculus (less than 50 birds)
Falco peregrinus (10 birds)

The authorized method of capture in all cases is the taking of young from the nest. This was monitored by the national authorities of the Member States.

For imports and exports, see "Convention on international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora, EEC annual report 1985 to CITES".

II.4. Derogations from Article 8

This document does not mention certain practices which are currently the subject of a dispute between the Commission and certain Member States, including infringements of Directive 79/409/EEC, or those undertaken for scientific purposes (research, ringing, etc...).

In a small part of the Community, the use of snares, nets and limes is authorized for capture of certain birds in small quantities, under strictly controlled conditions and in a selective manner.

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III. Recommendation No 6 (1986) on the protection of the Mediterranean Monk Seal (*Monachus monachus*).

At the instigation of the Commission of the European Communities, a programme on the Mediterranean Monk Seal, *Monachus monachus*, is being conducted by the Belgian Royal Institute for Natural Sciences (Institut Royal des Sciences Naturelles de Belgique) in close cooperation with Commission staff. Involved in this programme are the Greek, Italian and French Ministers for the Environment, the Universities of Athens, Thessaloniki and Munich, the Sea Mammal Research Unit at Cambridge, the Royal Institute for Nature Management (Rijksinstituut voor Natuurbeheer) at Texel and the Madeira Nature Park.

The programme provides for conservation measures intended to reduce the level of direct mortality caused by man and to provide more detailed knowledge of the biology and ecology of the Monk Seal.

The most important schemes under the Community programme are:

1. The establishment of a network of protected areas.

The purpose of this scheme is to protect the main population nuclei of the species. The first protected area to be established for monk seals, in September 1986, was the Northern Sporades Marine Park, in the Aegean Sea. It is intended to establish this Park in three stages. The first of these was the issuing of a Prefectoral Decree in September 1986. The publication of a Ministerial Decree ensures the protection of the Park until the end of 1989. Subsequently, a Presidential Decree will guarantee its protection in the long term. Fishing and shipping in these waters are subject to regulations and controls. A Park management charter, indicating the legal status of its various zones, will provide the basis for future changes in certain current restrictions, relating them to the requirements of fishing and tourism. The area is kept under marine and airborne surveillance by wardens who work in collaboration with the harbour police. A biological research station is under construction: it will include a visitors' reception centre and serve as the focal point for all conservation activities relating to the monk seal in Greece.

A second protection area, currently being established, will consist of the Ionian islands of Kefallonia and Ithaka.

In July 1987, part of the coastal area of the Gulf of Orosei in Sardinia was declared, by Ministerial Decree, a special protection area for the monk seal. All fishing and shipping in this area is banned. A marine park will be established in the Gulf on the basis of a management plan and a report setting out the results of studies on the seals' habitat and its socio-economic situation.

The possibility of establishing a protection area in the Desertas Islands (Madeira Archipelago) is currently being studied.

2. Information and recovery system: public awareness campaign

Not only has a network of protection areas been set up but also a system for gathering and circulating information on the seals and their populations. This system also provides a framework for rescue operations. It is based on the activity of local teams who maintain a watch on the coastlines and send all their information to the regional centres. In Greece, teams have now been set up in Alonissos (Northern Sporades), Kefallonia (Ionian Islands), Crete (Iraklio) and Samothrace. Initial contacts have been made on Lesbos, Syros and Zakynthos with a view to setting up local groups. Elsewhere, teams are active in Madeira and Sardinia.

Teams operating in the field are a very important factor in making the public aware of the need to protect the Monk Seal. Some teams have already made a valuable contribution to such public awareness.

As far as the "rescue and recovery" aspect of the programme is concerned, a Greek veterinarian has been specially trained in the care and handling of seals, at the Zeehondencreche (Seal nursery) at Pieterburen and at the R.I.N. centre on Texel (Holland). A rescue tank is being constructed at Alonissos (Northern Sporades). Meanwhile, the Pieterburen Zeehondencreche is being used as a reception centre: since mid-October 1987 two young seals rescued in Greece (at Rhodes and Corfu) have been cared for at the seal nursery with a view to returning them to their natural habitat.

3. Studies

Biological and population studies are being carried out in the Ionian Islands (particularly Kefallonia and Ithaka) and in the Northern Sporades. There has been success in developing suitable techniques for monitoring populations. These techniques will provide an indispensable basis for identifying what action needs to be taken to manage and conserve seal populations. Research is still under way on the interaction between fishermen and monk seals, and is primarily concerned with assessing the real scale of the damage seals cause to fishing nets. This study is being carried out in conjunction with constant surveillance of the populations at Kefallonia and Ithaka. Preparations are being made for a pilot project on the use of stronger nets.

4. Breeding in captivity

If the protection of the species in its natural habitat should one day prove insufficient to arrest the present decline in numbers, breeding in captivity might become necessary. Expertise in this field would then be essential. The French Ministry of the Environment is currently carrying out a programme aimed at acquiring such expertise.

5. Circulation and exchange of information

In order to make all the necessary information available to the people involved in or connected with the programme, the I.R.S.N.B. (Belgian Royal Institute for Natural Sciences) regularly publishes a news-sheet - the "Monk Seal Bulletin" - explaining the aims and methods of the programme, supplying news of its progress and encouraging the exchange of ideas.

The action undertaken so far has yielded very encouraging results and gives cause for greater optimism regarding the future of the species. However, there must be no slackening in the efforts made.