



BirdLife Europe is a Partnership of 45 national conservation organisations and a leader in bird conservation and environmental policy.



BirdWatch Ireland is the largest independent conservation charity in Ireland. Established in 1968, we currently have over 15,000 members and supporters and a local network of 30 branches nationwide.

Main image: Atlantic Puffin by Anthony McGeehan

Further information  
[www.birdwatchireland.ie](http://www.birdwatchireland.ie)  
<http://europe.birdlife.org>



Irish  
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# Nature creates prosperity

## *Cruthaíonn nádúr rathúnas*

### Photographers

- Anthony McGeehan
- Andrew Kelly
- Mike Brown
- Alyn Walsh
- Ronan McLaughlin
- Gerry Kerr
- Julia Baer
- Richard Coombes
- Mark Carmody
- John Fox

“Changes in bird populations signal changes in the environment we live in and indicate whether our use of natural resources on land or at sea is sustainable. In the coming months, Ireland must ensure the sustainability of all our societies and of the European project itself. Any use of public money should ensure the delivery of a wide range of benefits for society such as mitigating for climate change and restoring ecosystems, so as to support resilient communities. Nature provides a basis for our well-being and for long-term jobs; a sound future for people as well as for wildlife!”

*Alan Lauder, Chief Executive BirdWatch Ireland*



### Supporting farmers to support wildlife



A new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) must support farmers to deliver a wide range of public benefits, a healthy natural environment and strong rural communities. Public money for public goods should be the underpinning of a new social contract between farmers and society.

Farming with specific management measures for wildlife needs support

*Curlew by Mike Brown*



Farmers can play a vital role in securing the future of our most threatened wildlife, but they need better support to do so

*Corncrake by Andrew Kelly*

Iconic farmland birds that we associate with the Irish landscape have shown dramatic population and range declines since the 1970's. In Ireland,

Lapwing and Redshank declined by 88% between 1993 and 2008, Curlew by 84% and Snipe by 73%. At this rate, extinctions could occur within 30 years, sooner for Curlew. Without successful CAP reform we can expect to see continuing declines in wildlife including farmland birds and a range of important habitats.



Creating space for our most threatened species needs to be a high priority

*Chough flock and Dursey Island by Alyn Walsh*

### Policy changes

Many traditional farming systems, particularly low intensity grazing of semi-natural grasslands, play an important role in nature conservation. High Nature Value farming systems should be supported to ensure their longer term viability.

The Natura 2000 network of sites provides the largest network of protected areas in the world, covering 17.5% of EU territory. Many of the species and habitats in these designated areas depend on sensitive farm management, these need targeted support.

The Financial Perspectives for 2014 to 2020 need to bring CAP, CFP, and Cohesion policy in line with agreed objectives of making Europe more resource-efficient, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and restoring biodiversity and ecosystems. Increasing the share of LIFE funding to 1% will facilitate this.

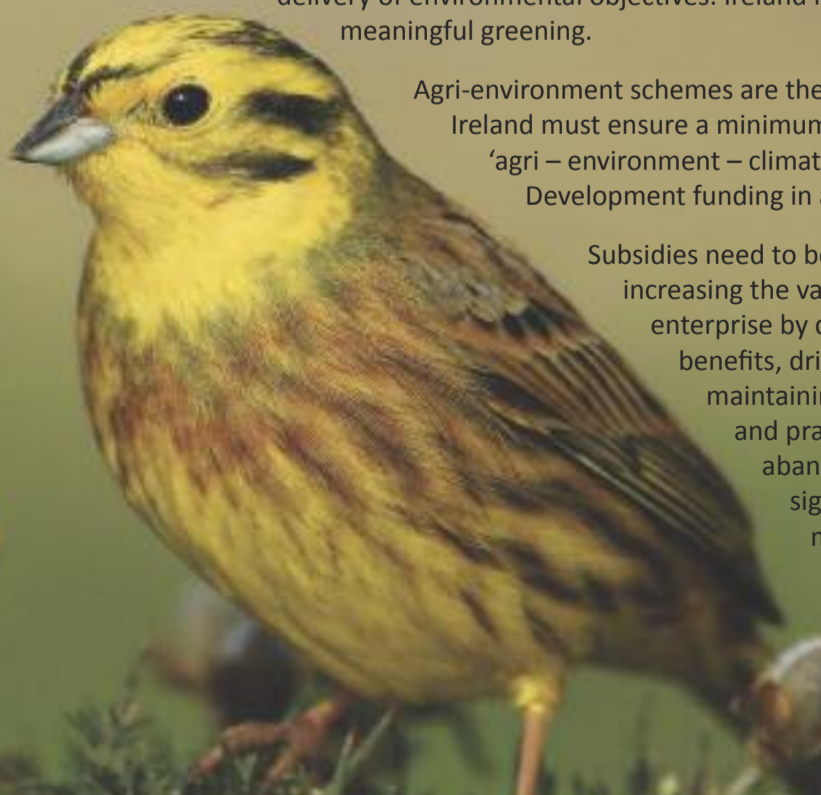
Ireland's agricultural sector depends on a 'green' image. CAP must be able to incentivise sustainable production which has credibility and meaningful delivery of environmental objectives. Ireland needs to secure legal text for meaningful greening.

Agri-environment schemes are the green backbone of CAP. Ireland must ensure a minimum spend of 50% on 'agri – environment – climate' as part of the Rural Development funding in a new CAP.

Subsidies need to be re-directed towards increasing the value of the farming enterprise by delivering multiple public benefits, driving innovation while maintaining traditional knowledge and practices, and reducing land abandonment which is a significant problem in many parts of Ireland.

Farming and nature rely on each other and deliver thriving wildlife, food and stable rural jobs

*Yellowhammer by Andrew Kelly*



## Managing our marine resources



Protecting nursery beds for fish stocks is essential for breeding seabirds and healthy seas

*Puffin by Andrew Kelly*

A new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) must bring an end to overfishing and damaging fishing methods; healthy seas can secure a future for fish, other wildlife and our fishing communities.

Ireland's seabirds are of global importance as they navigate around the globe. Recent population declines and lack of data remain a great concern with most seabirds now red

or amber-listed, alerting us to changes in the marine environment and the risk of extinction. Damaging fishing methods threaten the future of fish stocks and healthy seas. In 2006/7 estimated seabird mortality was 53,000 birds per year including Manx Shearwaters, Fulmars and Gannets, and involved fisheries in Irish waters.



Fishing methods used in our waters must stop damaging ecosystems and ensnaring seabirds

*Great Shearwater with fishing line in wing by Ronan McLaughlin*

## Policy changes



Many seabirds range far out to sea to reach their feeding grounds which need urgent protection

*Gannets by Gerry Kerr*

A new CFP needs to bring about an end to overfishing. The ongoing damage being caused in the marine environment is so severe that radical action cannot be further delayed.

Bringing an end to damaging fishing methods, seabird by-catch and marine litter need to be high priorities for Europe with a clear commitment shown by Member States.

Ireland needs to ensure its fishing capacity is matched with fish resources available and secure funding mechanisms for protected areas and more selective fishing methods.

Introduced species need to be proactively removed from vulnerable areas; preventing spread of alien species in the first place makes more economic and ecological sense and requires a new European legal framework.

Invasive species such as the American Mink devastate ground-nesting birds and need to be removed from vulnerable areas

*Common Eider by Richard Coombes*



Addressing the lack of information, science and monitoring so as to ensure healthy seas into the future

*European Shag by Julia Baer*



## Empowering people



A healthy food chain need a persecution-free countryside, including an end to illegal poisonings

*Sparrowhawk by Andrew Kelly*

Our society needs a healthy environment to thrive and build an economy that supports jobs, our health and our future. The true cost to society of environmental damage needs to become transparent across all sectors.

## Policy changes

The value of nature protection to society needs to be fully recognised, and a support system to assist implementation, including new legislation is needed. Our landscapes need to be safe places, poison-free for both people and wildlife, while providing opportunities for tourism, agriculture, communities and business.



Supporting business to be sustainable means better resource efficiency and smaller carbon and ecological footprints

*Black Guillemots by John Fox*



Achieving good water quality is a basic need for society and wildlife

*Kingfisher by Andrew Kelly*

By investing in Natura 2000, and ensuring access to resources only to those who behave in a socially and environmentally responsible manner, we can help protect nature for future prosperity. An end to environmentally harmful subsidies and a shift of taxation from labour to pollution and resource consumption are urgently needed and should form the basis of job creation and greening national and European economies.

Environmental performance needs to be reflected in country reporting under the EU2020 Strategy. The 7th Environment Action Programme and the Semester process need to reflect social and environmental progress in a transition to sustainable economies. Research in nature needs to be supported so as to ensure informed decision-making and the development of sustainability indicators. The EU budget and Horizon2020 need stronger elements for nature and ecosystem services support.

The needs of wild birds and the impacts of changing landscapes are still unknown; more research is needed to help make better decisions

*Black-tailed Godwit by Mark Carmody*



## Dealing with climate change

Nature is our natural ally in dealing with climate change. Healthy ecosystems are more resilient to a changing climate and can help communities adapt to the changes we are already seeing.

Our changing climate is having an impact on people and on wildlife. By building resilience in nature through protected areas, wetland restoration and creation and 'soft engineering', we can help protect communities and businesses too.



Rising sea levels and more frequent storms threaten vulnerable species nesting along coasts

*Common Tern by Mark Carmody*



Healthy uplands store carbon and slow floodwaters, benefiting communities downstream

*Red Grouse by Andrew Kelly*

## Policy changes

Through large scale restoration of habitats, such as peatlands and wetlands, we can rebuild our ability to capture and store carbon through natural processes.

Creating new spaces for water and 'soft' coastal defences can address 'coastal squeeze' for wildlife and flooding for communities.

The development of renewable energy must be in harmony with nature and take sensitive locations for wildlife into consideration.

In order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build competitiveness, bold and binding emission reduction and energy efficiency targets must be secured. This would provide direction and clarity to businesses and the energy sector.

Ireland needs to lead on establishing a new legal framework for renewables that ensures sustainability standards for all energy components.

Changes in nature create mixed fortunes for wild birds, bringing them into new areas but also pushing them to ecological limits

*Great Spotted Woodpecker by Andrew Kelly*



Creating new spaces for wildlife helps to manage flooding

*Dublin Bay flocks By Mark Carmody*

