

## **Six verified kills since beginning of the hunting season: Illegal hunting now threatens the endangered Northern Bald Ibises also at the wintering site in Tuscany**

The European LIFE Northern Bald Ibis reintroduction project has already faced six losses in Italy with concrete evidence of illegal shooting since the beginning of the hunting season 2022/2023. In January alone three losses were registered, and investigations with the precious help of Arma dei Carabinieri, SOARDA as well as the voluntary guards from LIPU and WWF are ongoing.

The case of the male bird named 'Kingsley' worries the conservationists the most. The bird was shot right in the middle of the Northern Bald Ibis's winter territory. Since almost 20 years, a steadily increasing number of Northern Bald Ibises use the WWF Oasis Laguna di Orbetello, as one of the great bird conservation areas in Italy, and the surrounding meadows in a radius of around 10 kilometers as their wintering site. Until now, the birds in this area seemed to be safe.

Johannes Fritz: *"The killing of Kingsley in the middle of winter territory shows with particular clarity how urgent concrete measures are to combat illegal bird hunting. About one third of Northern Bald Ibis losses in Italy are caused by illegal hunting and it must be assumed that other protected migratory bird species face this threat to a similar extent, even around such important conservation areas like the WWF Oasis Laguna di Orbetello."*

*"In the WWF Oasis Laguna di Orbetello - says Cesare Avesani Zaborra, CEO of Parco Natura Viva (VR), the Italian partner of the LIFE project co-financed by the European Union - are now wintering about 200 Northern Bald Ibis. Over the past 10 years, the number of these birds has been increasing. For this reason, a new breeding site will be established in northern Italy. However, illegal hunting could also jeopardize this important action of the LIFE-project."*

A significant proportion of Northern Bald Ibis kills happen in a definable area along the Tyrrhenian coast of Tuscany, which is known as a heavily frequented migration route for many bird species. Thus, it is considered urgently necessary to identify a further so-called black spot in this area within the framework of the Italian National Action Plan to enable targeted and efficient measures against this wildlife crime.



Northern Bald Ibis kills occur almost exclusively during the hunting season and in Italian regions known for intensive bird hunting. Additionally, the only perpetrator who could be identified so far was a bird hunter with a hunting license, sentenced all the way to the Court of Appeal. Thus, these are strong indications that illegal shootings are caused primarily by official hunters.

Johannes Fritz: *“We are concerned about the reforms of the Italian law (Legge di Bilancio) that include an extension of the hunting season for some species. Based on our data, there is a significant risk that the extended season increases the number of illegal kills even further”.*

