

Between Claim and Reality: Italian Hunting Associations Responsible for the Protection of the Northern Bald Ibis and other Endangered Species

The Italian Hunting Association, Federazione Italiana della Caccia (FIdC), presents itself in a [recent press release](#) as a committed partner in the protection of endangered species such as the Northern Bald Ibis. However, current data from the European LIFE project show a different picture and raises serious questions about the actual role of hunting associations.

While the FIdC speaks of successful cooperation with conservation organizations and positions itself as a pioneer in the fight against poaching, data from the European LIFE project for the reintroduction of the Northern Bald Ibis shows that illegal killing continue to pose a massive threat to the birds. Around 30% of losses in Italy are demonstrably caused by poaching. During the autumn migration of 2024 alone, eight birds were confirmed to have been poached in Italy. Since the cause of death remains unknown in about 50% of the cases, experts assume that the actual number of losses due to poaching is even significantly higher.

"Poaching during the autumn migration pose a massive threat to the Northern Bald Ibis," explains Johannes Fritz, manager of the LIFE project. **" We must assume that also for many other migratory bird species, about a third of the losses in Italy are due to poaching."**

In its press release, the FIdC positions hunters as victims of poaching. According to their statement, illegality and poaching have nothing to do with hunting and hunters, who are actually the most affected parties.

However, evidence from the LIFE project contradicts this narrative. Poaching occur almost exclusively during the legal hunting season and in designated hunting areas. Several suspects have been identified. They were all hunters with valid hunting licenses and membership in Italian hunting associations.

A recent instance is the shooting of a Northern Bald Ibis in the Apennines in November 2024. Thanks to modern GPS technology, the perpetrator could be quickly identified and confessed to the crime. He, like another perpetrator who was convicted in 2016, is a hunter with a licence and member of an Italian hunting association.

"Hunters are by no means just innocent victims of poaching. They have the perpetrators in their own ranks," emphasizes Fritz. **"It is the responsibility of the hunting associations to consistently take action against such criminal members."**



The high number of poaching by hunters points to a deep-rooted problem within the hunting community. In order to protect the Northern Bald Ibis and other endangered species, consistent measures to combat poaching within the hunting community and a strengthening of cooperation between conservation organizations and hunting associations are necessary.

The discrepancy between the FldC's public statements and the actual situation on the ground is obvious. While the hunting associations talk about their commitment to conservation, they contribute significantly to the decline of endangered species through the behaviour of those members who violate the law. Their behaviour not only undermines trust in the hunting associations but also damages the credibility of the entire hunting community.

Fritz concludes: **“It is time for hunting associations to take responsibility, uncompromisingly combat poaching within their own ranks, and actively work to protect biodiversity.”**

Background Information

According to a [report by BirdLife International](#), 5.6 million birds are illegally killed in Italy every year, corresponding to a rate of 19 birds per square kilometre.

In a recent study, [Serratosa et al. \(2024\)](#) examined the causes of death in 45 migratory bird species in the Eurasian and African regions. 22% of deaths are caused by illegal hunting.

The European Northern Bald Ibis LIFE-project (LIFE20 NAT/AT/000049; LIFE NBI) is implemented with ten partners under the direction of Zoo Vienna. This initiative unites international researchers and conservation organizations with the primary objective of re-establishing a self-sustaining Northern Bald Ibis population in Europe. Parco Natura Viva is among the key partners involved. For more project information visit the [website](#).