

PRESS RELEASE
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Wildlife Conservation Undermined by Biased Political Process while Rampant Poaching in Italy

Waldrappteam highlights critical data on poaching and denounces the imbalance in parliamentary hearings

Vienna / Rome, July 22, 2025 — As the Italian Parliament considers amendments to Law 157/1992 on wildlife management, conservation experts raise the alarm about threats to biodiversity and call for a debate that respects democratic principles.

The Senate's current review of the proposed hunting law (Bill 1552) reveals a disturbing lack of environmental and scientific representation. This week, eight hunting associations were granted hearings before the relevant parliamentary committee, compared to just four environmental organizations last week. This imbalance highlights an increasing tendency to allow hunting interests to shape wildlife policy, at the expense of conservation science and biodiversity protection. However, the sustainable management of animal populations requires precisely those specialist scientific skills that only associations dedicated to wildlife science and conservation can provide.

Scientific Evidence from the Field: Poaching is the Leading Threat

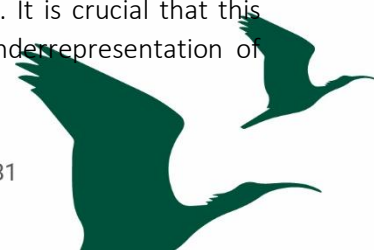
Waldrappteam, a leading European conservation initiative focused on the reintroduction of the endangered Northern Bald Ibis (*Geronticus eremita*) and repeatedly granted with European LIFE funds, provides extensive, peer-reviewed data from over a decade of field research. In Italy, the primary cause of mortality for this critically endangered species is poaching — which accounts for one-third of all confirmed deaths. Worryingly, the data clearly indicate that most of these crimes are committed by licensed hunters, despite current regulations.

“These findings are based on continuous GPS tracking and systematic forensic analysis of recovered carcasses,” explains Dr. Johannes Fritz, General Project Manager of the LIFE Northern Bald Ibis project. “This makes the Northern Bald Ibis one of the best-studied bird species in Europe in terms of human-related mortality.”

Given the precision and reliability of these data, the Northern Bald Ibis serves as a representative case for assessing broader threats to migratory birds. If poaching is the leading cause of death in this intensively monitored and strictly protected population of fewer than 250 individuals in Italy, it must be assumed that other protected migratory species — which are far less monitored — face a similar, if not greater, risk from illegal hunting.

Science, Not Lobbying, Should Guide Wildlife Policy

“Our data on poaching show that the phenomenon in Italy is largely underestimated,” says Laura Stefani, head of the Italian campaign against poaching. “This is just one example of the contribution that associations like ours can make by providing essential data to legislators. It is crucial that this expertise is taken into account in legislative decisions!” The exclusion or underrepresentation of



associations from the political debate deprives legislators of essential data, compromising the effectiveness of wildlife management regulations.

In wildlife management hunting is only one of the tools available, not necessary the main one, nor the the best one. Sustainable management measures include habitat management, reintroduction and translocation measures, such as ours, measures to mitigate conflicts with human activities and non-lethal population control strategies.

The numerical predominance of representatives of the hunting associations in parliamentary hearings therefore risks orienting management choices towards unidirectional solutions, neglecting the multidisciplinary and scientific approach that modern conservation requires. This compromises the very quality of the political debate.

Waldrappteam is one of 50 environmental and scientific organizations calling for equal representation in parliamentary hearings. We urge lawmakers to resist pressure from hunting lobbies and to respect the principle of fair democratic participation. Only through transparent, science-driven decision-making can Italy hope to halt biodiversity loss and build truly sustainable wildlife policies.

Download pictures

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