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CONSERVATION &  
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## PRESS RELEASE

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### Spanish Court Sends Strong Signal as Italy Records New Poaching Cases of the Northern Bald Ibis

A landmark conviction in Spain has sent a powerful message against wildlife crime—just as Italy once again records new victims of poaching targeting the critically endangered Northern Bald Ibis.

In a decision with international relevance, the Spanish Provincial Court of Badajoz has upheld the conviction of a man who shot and killed four Northern Bald Ibises in 2019. The ruling confirms a one-year prison sentence, a 35-month ban on hunting and fishing, and compensation of €20,000. By dismissing the offender's appeal, the court made clear that the killing of this strictly protected species is not a minor offence but a serious criminal act with real legal consequences.

**"This conviction is a long-overdue and extremely important signal, beyond the borders of Spain,"** stated Johannes Fritz, Director of the LIFE Northern Bald Ibis reintroduction project. **"Every single bird counts. The loss of even a few individuals can undermine decades of conservation work. Spain is showing that environmental criminal law can be applied firmly and effectively."**

The urgency of this ruling is tragically underscored by recent events in Italy: one week before the close of the hunting season, an unringed juvenile Northern Bald Ibis was found seriously wounded by gunfire in the Abruzzo region of Pescara. Days earlier, the Carabinieri CITES unit of Pescara had already been alerted after two rare Northern Bald Ibises were sighted, prompting the activation of a special monitoring task force as the species had reached this area for the first time. Despite these preventive efforts, the young bird was shot in a hunting area near Penne, had to undergo emergency surgery, and it remains uncertain whether it will ever be able to fly again.

**"This juvenile bird is one of the first Northern Bald Ibises to hatch in the wild in Italy,"** explained Roberta Peroni, Head of the LIFE NBI Anti-Poaching Campaign in Italy. **"It thus embodies the successes of more than twenty years of conservation work and the goal of restoring a self-sustaining population."**



At the same time, investigations are ongoing into the killing of another bird in southern Piedmont, shot in November despite targeted monitoring by the project team and the Carabinieri.

These incidents follow two devastating cases in October in northern Italy, when the adult male Zoppo and the juvenile Zaz were shot during their autumn migration in the Province of Sondrio, less than one hour after crossing the Alps.

Data from the project show that illegal shootings account for around 30% of all Northern Bald Ibis losses in Italy, with perpetrators in most cases being licensed hunters. This confirms that poaching is not an isolated phenomenon but a systemic threat along key migration corridors.

**“At this crucial moment, as Italy is in the process of implementing the European Directive on the criminal protection of the environment, we urge the Italian government to take decisive action and strengthen enforcement against wildlife crimes,”** said Angela Di Pumpo, Head of the Anti-Poaching Campaign. **“Wildlife crime must be treated as a serious offence that requires political responsibility and concrete, enforceable measures.”**

**“The contrast could not be clearer,”** Fritz added. **“While Spain is sending a strong legal signal, Italy is still counting new victims. The survival of the Northern Bald Ibis in Europe now depends on whether institutions are willing to translate international conservation commitments into real on-the-ground protection.”**

[Image download](#) – free to use in connection with the press release.

*Photo 1: Adult and juvenile Northern Bald Ibis (juvenile bird described in the article). © Sandro Barile*

*Photo 2: Juvenile Northern Bald Ibis (described in the article). © Sandro Barile*

*Photo 3: Adult Northern Bald Ibis. © Waldrappteam*

*Photo 4: Northern Bald Ibises in flight. © Waldrappteam*

*Photo 5: Juvenile Northern Bald Ibis in flight. © Waldrappteam*

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