

PRESS RELEASE
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European Commission Warns Italy Over Hunting Reform: Waldrappteam Calls for Stronger Protection of Migratory Birds

Waldrappteam Conservation and Research, engaged in the LIFE project for the reintroduction of the Northern Bald Ibis (LIFE20 NAT/AT/000049|LIFE NBI), expresses deep concern following the publication of an official letter from the European Commission warning that key provisions of Draft Law No. 1552 — the hunting reform currently under discussion in the Italian Senate — may violate European environmental law.

The Commission specifically criticises the proposed liberalisation of live decoys and the weakening of oversight mechanisms, warning that these measures could increase poaching and illegal wildlife trafficking.

The Northern Bald Ibis is one of Europe's rarest migratory bird species and was brought back from extinction in Central Europe through decades of coordinated international conservation work. Every individual bird is equipped with GPS monitoring devices, allowing researchers to document migration routes and mortality causes with exceptional precision. The data provide a **unique and scientifically robust insight into the real scale of illegal hunting affecting migratory birds in Italy.**

For Waldrappteam, the Commission's critics are highly concrete. Through extensive remote monitoring, the Northern Bald Ibis has become an important indicator species for illegal hunting pressure along migratory routes. Monitoring data show that **around 30% of all losses of Northern Bald Ibises in Italy are caused by poaching, mainly by licensed hunters.** Nowhere else within the species' range does hunting have such a severe impact.

"Our monitoring clearly demonstrates the dramatic impact illegal hunting still has in Italy," said Johannes Fritz, Director of Waldrappteam. **"Waldrappteam is investing major efforts to reduce these losses and secure a sustainable future for the species. We are therefore deeply concerned that the proposed legislation could further increase poaching pressure and seriously threaten the survival of the Northern Bald Ibis. It must be assumed that this situation is representative of many migratory bird species in Italy."**

The European Commission's unusual intervention before the law has even been adopted underlines the seriousness of the issue. Waldrappteam therefore calls on the Italian Government and Parliament to revise the proposed legislation in line with the Commission's observations and to strengthen — not weaken — the protection of migratory birds.

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