

PRESS RELEASE
20 August 2026

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Tuscany Targets Invasive Sacred Ibis for Eradication – Hunt Without Bag Limits Raises Risks for Reintroduced Northern Bald Ibis

Waldrappteam and WWF Italy warn that a region-wide hunt without bag limits could increase shooting losses of protected species

Mutters, Austria / Florence, Italy – 20 August 2026 – The Tuscany Region has authorised the hunting of the invasive Sacred Ibis (*Threskiornis aethiopicus*) throughout the region's huntable areas from 20 September 2026 to 31 January 2027, with no daily or seasonal bag limits and **explicitly referring to eradication as the management objective**. Waldrappteam Conservation and Research and WWF Italy warn that this approach could create an avoidable additional threat to protected bird species, particularly the reintroduced Northern Bald Ibis.

Native to sub-Saharan Africa and parts of the Middle East, the Sacred Ibis has established invasive populations in Italy and elsewhere in Europe and is listed by the EU as an invasive alien species of Union concern. Reported impacts include predation on eggs and chicks of native waterbirds and disturbance of breeding colonies, while documented agricultural damage in Italy remains limited.

Italy's National Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA) opposed the measure and explicitly warned that protected species could be shot by mistake because they can be difficult to distinguish from Sacred Ibises under real hunting conditions, with the risk increasing further when visibility is poor. The warning applies in particular to the endangered Northern Bald Ibis (*Geronticus eremita*), which is being re-established in Europe through an EU LIFE project.

Lombardy shows how quickly the risk can become reality

Recent experience in Lombardy, northern Italy, shows that the concern is not theoretical.

Following the introduction of intensive Sacred Ibis hunting in Lombardy in 2025, three Northern Bald Ibises were confirmed shot within three months. By comparison, only two confirmed shootings had been recorded in Lombardy during the previous 20 years.

The contrast is particularly striking because Northern Bald Ibises spent relatively little time in Lombardy during the period concerned, accounting for only 1.24% of the population's recorded GPS positions.

Evidence points to licensed hunters in many documented shootings

Illegal shooting already accounts for around 30% of recorded Northern Bald Ibis losses in Italy. In many documented cases, the available evidence points to the involvement of licensed hunters. This makes the Tuscany decision particularly concerning: intensive hunting of a superficially similar ibis could increase the risk of accidental shootings of Northern Bald Ibises and other protected species with a similar flight profile.



Eradication must not create new conservation losses

Waldrappteam and WWF Italy support effective, science-based management of the invasive Sacred Ibis. They question, however, whether a region-wide hunting season without bag limits is an appropriate and proportionate way to pursue eradication when the risk of collateral losses among protected species has been explicitly identified.

“The sharp rise in confirmed shooting losses in Lombardy during intensive Sacred Ibis hunting is a warning we cannot ignore. Tuscany is now authorising a region-wide hunt without bag limits, explicitly aimed at eradication. We have to question whether such a measure is scientifically sound, proportionate and compatible with the protection of other species — including the reintroduced Northern Bald Ibis.” says **Johannes Fritz, Director of Waldrappteam Conservation & Research and General Director of the LIFE Northern Bald Ibis project.**

Waldrappteam, WWF Italy and other conservation organisations are therefore calling on the Tuscany Region to suspend the hunting authorisation and follow ISPRA’s scientific recommendations.

Background

The Northern Bald Ibis (*Geronticus eremita*) is being re-established in Europe under EU LIFE project LIFE20 NAT/AT/000049. After disappearing from large parts of Europe centuries ago, a migratory population is now being restored through coordinated conservation work across several countries.

[Download pictures](#) – for free use in the context of the press release

Copyright Waldrappteam Conservation and Research

Picture 1 – Juvenile Northern Bald Ibis in flight during human-led migration - Copyright B. Steininger

Picture 2 – Silhouettes of Northern Bald Ibises in Orbetello – Copyright H. Wehner

Picture 3 – Northern Bald Ibises in Tuscany – Copyright C. Esterer

Picture 4 – Portrait of an adult Northern Bald Ibis – Copyright Waldrappteam Conservation and Research

Picture 5 – Silhouette of Sacred Ibises in Po River Delta – Copyright Ciro Scardamaglio, naturalist photographer

Picture 6 – Northern Bald Ibises flying in Tuscany – Copyright C. Esterer

Picture 7 – Portrait of a juvenile Sacred Ibis – Copyright Ciro Scardamaglio, naturalist photographer

Contacts:

Johannes Fritz, Director of Waldrappteam Conservation and Research,
General manager of the LIFE Northern Bald Ibis project
jfritz@waldrapp.eu / +43 676 5503244

Angela Di Pumpo, Anti-poaching campaign manager in Italy
adipumpo@waldrapp.eu / +39 377 3662419

Guido Scoccianti, Regional Delegate for Tuscany, WWF Italy
delegatotoscana@wwf.it / +39 347 0714324