

Philippe Lalliot
Ambassadeur van Frankrijk in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden
Anna Paulownastraat 76
2518 BJ DEN HAAG

Date : 22 July 2019
Our reference : 19 B208
Your reference :
Contact : 030 693 77 53
Subject : Letter addressed to French government regarding unlawful authorisation of unsustainable hunting of protected migratory species

Dear ambassador Lalliot,

I am writing to you and Minister Élisabeth Borne to express the deep concern of Vogelbescherming Nederland (BirdLife partner in the Netherlands) regarding the unsustainable, and in our view unlawful, hunting of threatened and vulnerable bird species in France. This is in response to a public consultation the French Ministry of Ecological and Solidarity Transition has opened on the setting of hunting quotas for Eurasian Curlew (*Numenius arquata*), European Turtle dove (*Streptopelia turtur*) and Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*). Allowing the hunting of these three species in France is contrary to EU law and undermines conservation efforts for these species in the Netherlands and other Member States.

The hunting quotas suggested by your consultation are not in line with your own government body's scientific advice, are clearly not compatible with efforts to recover the species into favourable conservation status and would, in our expert opinion, constitute a violation of the EU Birds Directive. We thus ask you to follow EU law and scientific evidence and ensure full protection of these species by:

1. Declaring an immediate moratorium on hunting of European Turtle dove, in line with the EU Action Plan for the species. While France has expressed its opposition to the Action Plan, its own adaptive harvest committee came to exactly the same conclusion (<http://www.oncfs.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/gestion-adaptative/Avis-CEGA-Tourterelle-des-bois.pdf>). Allowing the shooting of 30 000 birds of this rapidly declining species, thus speeding its probably extinction along the relevant flyway would represent a gross violation of French EU legal obligations.
2. Setting a zero quota for hunting Eurasian Curlew, in line with recommendation of French expert committee in its *Opinion* (<http://www.oncfs.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/gestion-adaptative/Avis-CEGA-Courlis-cendre.pdf>) to the Minister of the Ecological and Solidary Transition to "not authorize any curlew harvest throughout the national territory, including the maritime public domain, until some significant knowledge

gaps and related uncertainties linked to available data on the demography of the species, the spatial distribution of populations and hunting practices were not filled." The suggested quota of 6000 birds is not based on any science at all and would jeopardise conservation efforts in the Netherlands and other countries, including some where the species is on the brink of extinction.

3. We strongly support, on the other hand, the proposal to maintain in place the moratorium on hunting of the Black-tailed godwit, but believe this should be set for 3, rather than 1, years in order to allow space for intensive ongoing conservation efforts, including the implementation of the EU lowland grassland breeding waders action plan that aims to restore breeding habitats and productivity.
4. Immediately cancel all derogations allowing the widespread use of non selective methods banned under the EU Birds Directive including the following that are currently under public consultation:
 - a. Bow traps - "Tenderies" in NE France targeting Eurasian lapwing/Golden plovers & Trushes/Blackbirds: http://www.consultations-publiques.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/projets-d-arrete-relatif-a-la-capture-des-vanneaux-a2013.html?id_rubrique=2
 - b. Lime-sticks Glue - "Gluaux" in SE France for Trushes/Blackbirds: http://www.consultations-publiques.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/projet-d-arrete-relatif-a-l-emploi-des-gluaux-pour-a2012.html?id_rubrique=2
 - c. Net traps and Snap Net Trap - "Pantes Matoles" in SW France for Eurasian Skylark: http://www.consultations-publiques.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/projet-d-arrete-relatif-a-la-capture-de-l-alouette-a2011.html?id_rubrique=2

All of the above are clearly incompatible with EU law. The EC has already taken legal action against a number of Member States authorising such methods in the past and we expect France to face the same consequences.

5. To refrain from authorising the destruction of 50 283 Great Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis*) per year for 2019-2022: http://www.consultations-publiques.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/projet-d-arrete-fixant-les-quotas-departementaux-a2010.html?id_rubrique=2 While article 9 of the Birds Directive does allow for lethal control under certain strict conditions, it is very clear that these conditions are not satisfied by this sweeping authorisation which is hence unlawful.

We would finally invite you to reflect on the grave damage these authorisations will cause to the image of France and to its diplomatic efforts in Europe and beyond. President Macron has made biodiversity conservation one of his international priorities and is presenting France as a pioneer and standard bearer of the ecological transition. It would be impossible for international public opinion to understand how such positive stand is reconciled with the systematic violation of international law to allow the destruction of biodiversity.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fred Wouters', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Fred Wouters
Director Vogelbescherming Nederland

cc: Minister van LNV, mw. C.J. Schouten