

WILL YOU LEAVE A LASTING LEGACY FOR NATURE?

BirdLife Europe & Central Asia, EEB (European Environmental Bureau), Friends of the Earth Europe and WWF European Policy Office call on Commissioner Karmenu Vella to take decisive action in his remaining time as EU Environment Commissioner to improve the implementation and enforcement of the EU's world-leading nature laws – the Birds & Habitats Directives¹.

Tourism development: threats to the implementation and enforcement of the EU Birds & Habitats Directives

The #NatureAlert Countdown is on! But there is still time to take action to save threatened wildlife and habitats across Europe, such as the irreplaceable salt pans of Ulcinj Salina!

European biodiversity is in freefall. Major gaps in the implementation and enforcement of our nature laws are leaving nature dangerously exposed to serious threats from unsustainable tourism development – a major driver of biodiversity loss in Europe. Every year, millions of tourists flock to visit Europe's most stunning natural sites, excited to enjoy our sun-kissed beaches and beautiful countryside. But, all too often, tourism developments are trampling over protected nature and crowding out wildlife. Economic pressures are put ahead of saving Europe's precious natural heritage. We all enjoy visiting beautiful places, but to preserve them, tourism developments must be controlled. Sustainable tourism that works in harmony with nature conservation is possible and necessary.



SAVE THE SALTPANS OF ULCINJ SALINA, MONTENEGRO



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For nearly a century, Ulcinj Salina in Montenegro was the embodiment of how people and nature can thrive alongside each other in harmony. Its unique, biodiversity-rich ecosystem is man-made – a happy accident resulting from the huge salt production complex that operated here from the 1920s until 2013. Throughout that time, 40,000 tons of annual salt production ensured that life was good for birds and people alike. Spotted redshanks made their nests here, Collared pratincole came to breed and Stone curlews stopped off to rest and refuel. At the same time, the salt works, or salina, with its precious “white gold” brought employment, prosperity and a huge amount of pride to the local community.

Sadly, for over a decade now, this migratory bird paradise has been the backdrop to a seemingly endless saga of shady economic interests and backroom politics. Ever since the salina was privatized in 2005 and sold to the investment group Eurofond, its fate has been on the line. From the off, Eurofond showed little inclination to invest in the salina or properly maintain it. Then, in 2008, the company won governmental approval for its controversial plans to convert the site into a luxury tourist resort of hotels and golf courses. Amid public outcry, local NGO, CZIP (BirdLife Montenegro), fought tirelessly to block this controversial development, but when the company declared bankruptcy in 2013, salt production was terminated and the future of Ulcinj Salina once more fell into question.

There is evidence that dirty dealings are afoot here; the salt pan pumps – essential for maintaining optimal water levels for nesting and foraging birds – have been vandalized and flamingo breeding areas have been raided and their eggs callously stolen. An international campaign – #SaveSalina – is gathering support to pressure the Montenegrin government to take action before it is too late.

¹ January 2019, 'Joint Policy Brief on the Implementation and Enforcement of the Birds & Habitats Directives'

The #NatureAlert countdown is on!
Will you, Commissioner Vella, leave a lasting legacy for nature?

The fate of Ulcinj Salina is tied to the issue of Montenegro's accession to the EU. Please support our call to push the Montenegrin Government to fully comply with their accession requirements to protect this migratory bird paradise under national and international law, and ensure its proper management.

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