

# 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 Directives<sup>1</sup>.

## Intensive agriculture and 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 wetlands of Tablas de Daimiel**

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 intensive agriculture – one of the main drivers of biodiversity loss in Europe. Bees, birds, aquatic plants and insects are disappearing as intensive farming ploughs over grasslands, drains wetlands and rivers, pumps lakes with toxic chemicals and pollutes the air with greenhouse gas emissions from livestock. And even protected nature sites are not spared this senseless destruction. But agriculture and nature can peacefully coexist – when farmers work in harmony with nature, biodiversity bounces back. The EU must support farmers to practice nature-friendly farming in accordance with our nature laws.



## SAVE THE WETLANDS OF TABLAS DE DAIMIEL, SPAIN



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The Tablas de Daimiel wetland in Spain is an important area for biodiversity, with a high diversity of both bird and aquatic plant species, and is therefore a protected area under the Birds and Habitats Directives. It is a national park and was declared a Ramsar area due to its internationally important bird populations that can be found there in the winter, such as the Mallard and Red-crested Pochard.

However, Tablas de Daimiel represents one of the most dramatic cases of wetland degradation in Europe. Although being a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and a Special Protected Area (SPA) under the Birds and Habitats Directives, the site is threatened by an excessive number of wells (legal and illegal) overexploiting the aquifer and intensification of agriculture. Population trends for most water birds and emblematic aquatic vegetation are negative and the wetland has become dominated by alien fish species. Overexploitation of the aquifer and eutrophication from farming breach the Birds and Habitats Directives and the Water Framework Directive. Between 2006 and 2009, the wetland completely dried up.

In 2009 the European Commission opened an infringement procedure including Tablas de Daimiel, but in 2018 closed this procedure saying that the wetland had improved, although this was an illusion. In fact, the procedure was closed despite there being a lack of efficiently implemented management controls to reduce water extraction and dissuade illegal activities. Illegal extraction from the aquifer and eutrophication is ongoing. In 2009, an underground fire took place due to the ignition of peat. Machinery and artificial flooding were used to control it, but poor quality water supplied after this event has had further dramatic consequences on the wetland and severe negative impacts on habitats and species of interest. The ecological processes have not been restored.+

<sup>1</sup> [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?**

**Please support our call for the European Commission to re-open the infringement case against Spain for the lack of implementation of management and control measures in the Tablas de Daimiel wetland.**

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