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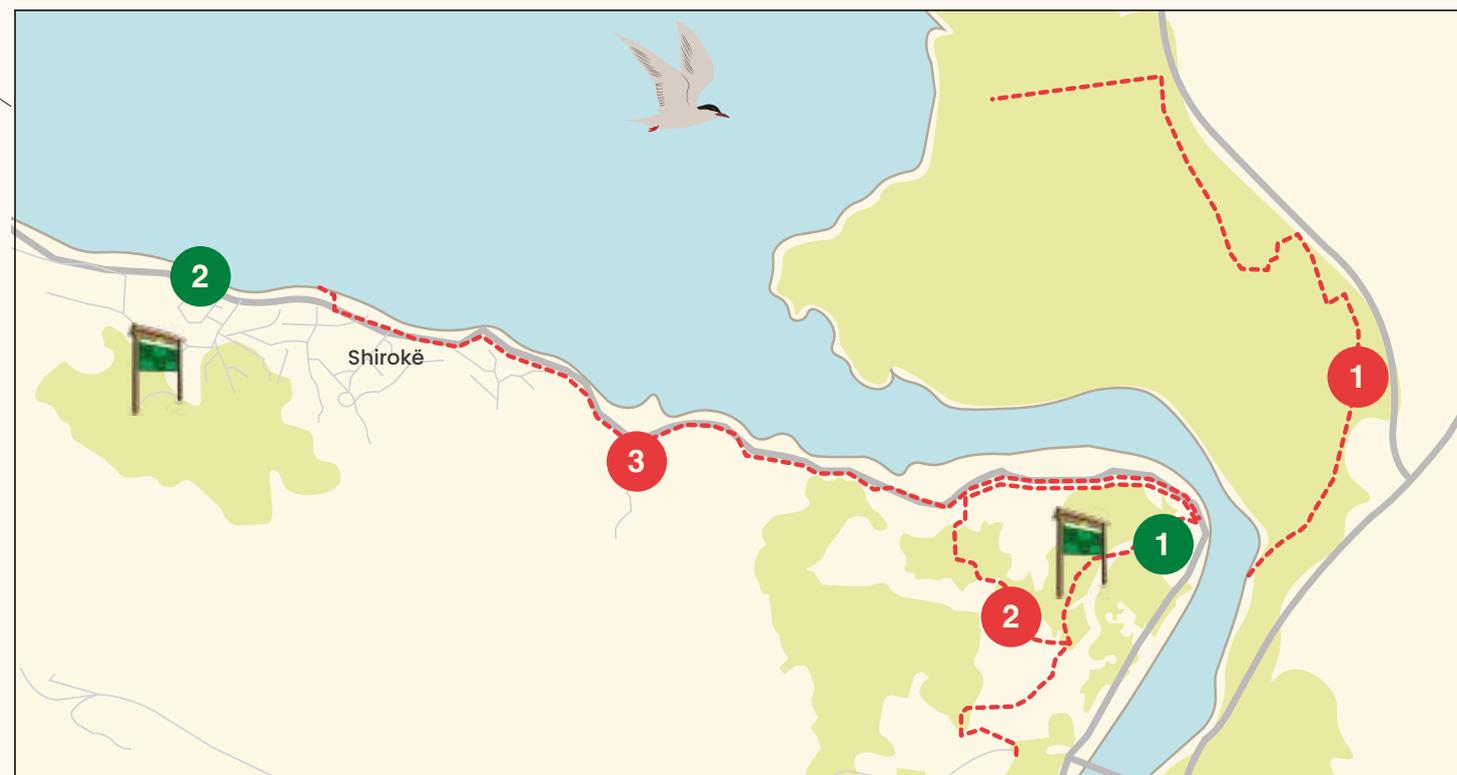
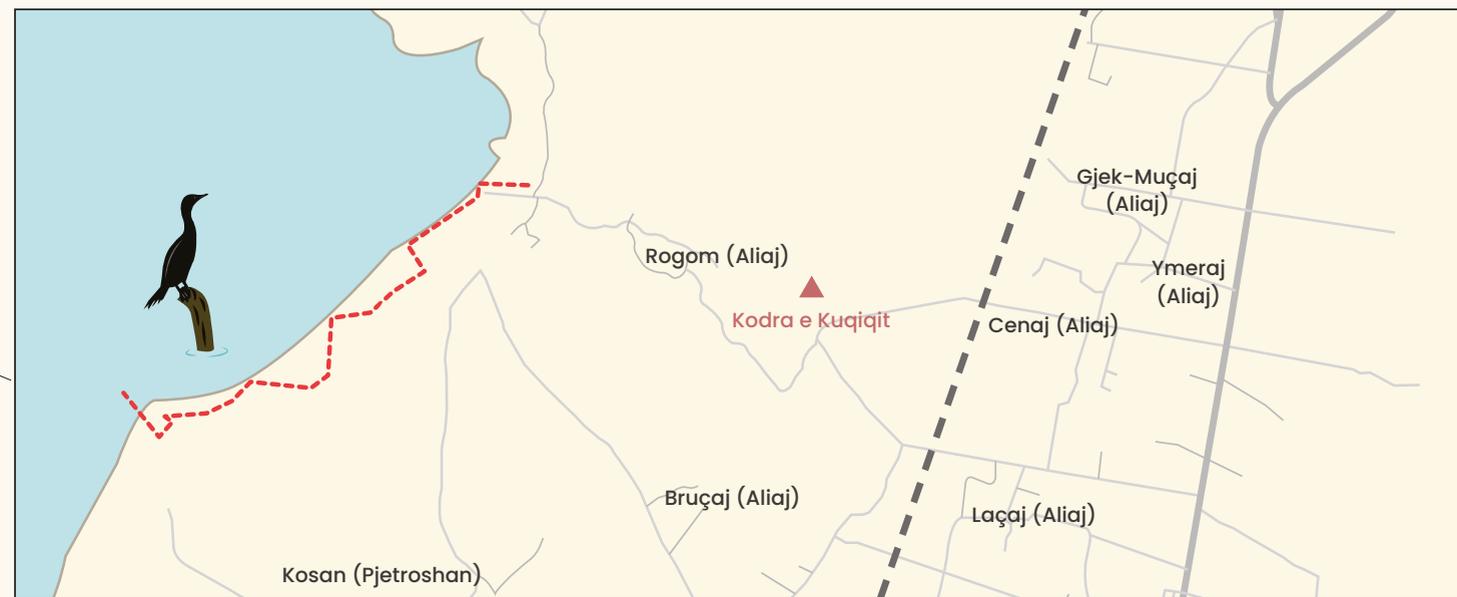
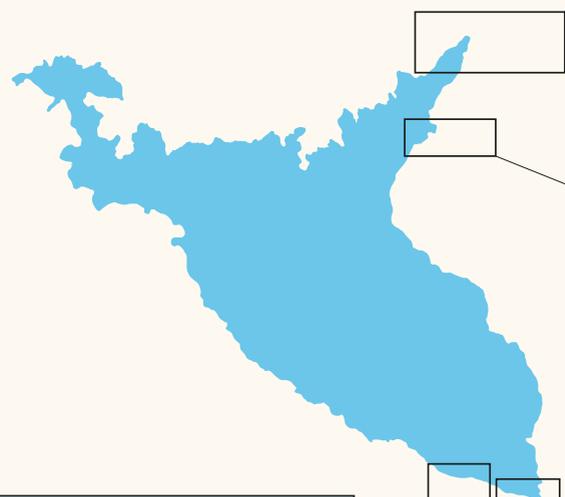
SHKODRA LAKE



Shkodra Lake Natural Reserve

The Shkodra Lake Natural Reserve is located in the north-western region of Albania and extends over an area of **26,535 hectares**; the lake within it is the largest in the Balkans and one of the largest in southern Europe. The area encompasses a wide variety of habitats: freshwater reservoirs, brackish waters, forests, marshes, grasslands, sandy shorelines and rocky habitats, the Buna River and its delta, thus hosting a very rich biodiversity.

This includes 900-1000 plant species, 20 mammal species, **282 bird species**, 51 herpetofauna species, and 45 fish species, which can migrate from the Adriatic Sea via Lake Shkodra to the Ohrid and Prespa Lakes thanks to the connection with the Drin River. The lake has been designated as a Ramsar site.



Legend

- 1 Birdwatching trail "Livadhe" (4.8 km)
- 2 Birdwatching trail " " (4.3 km)
- 3 Birdwatching trail "Shirokë" (6.5 km)
- 4 Birdwatching trail "Kosan-Syri i Sheganit" (3.4 km)

- 1 Information panel
📍 42.0521, 19.4902
- 2 Information panel
📍 42.0613, 19.4536
- 3 Information panel
📍 42.0724, 19.4006
- A Birdwatching tower
📍 42.0720, 19.4180
- 👁️ Observation point
📍 42.3402, 19.4262

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Golden Eagle

Aquila chrysaetos

Family: *Accipitridae*

DESCRIPTION The Golden Eagle is a raptor that can reach 87 cm in length, with a wingspan that can reach approximately 220 cm. Its plumage is fairly uniform, in various shades of brown and chestnut, while its head features golden streaks. Its head is golden brown, its beak is yellow with a black tip, while its legs are yellow with black claws.

FIELD MARKS It is well recognisable in flight: it is very large, its tail is almost as long as the width of its wing base, and it has the typical raptor silhouette with distinguishable “fingers.” Its lower plumage is brown at the wing junction and dark grey on the tips and tail; juveniles can be recognised in flight by their blackish-brown colouration with obvious white half-moon spots and white tails edged in black.

HABITAT The Golden Eagle lives in mountainous environments with large open areas such as pastures and grasslands and, at the same time, rock walls where it builds its nest, or on large, cold plains dotted with forests. It avoids overly dense forests or marshy areas.

DIET It hunts in flight, it feeds on mammals (hares, rabbits, rodents, foxes, marmots, ungulate cubs), medium-sized birds and reptiles and carrion to a lesser extent.

BREEDING Male and female Golden Eagles remain together for life, conquering a territory in which they remain for years, building several nests and choosing the most suitable one from year to year. The nests are not built on the highest peaks, but in trees or on rock walls in the mountains, where they find the best conditions in terms of relative abundance of prey.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORLD Many subspecies of Golden Eagle are found in Europe, North Africa, Asia and North America.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN ALBANIA It is a resident species in Albania and can be found mainly in the mountains as well as in coastal areas close to mountain ridges such as Velipoja and the Orikum Lagoon.

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS LC (Least Concern). The European population steadily declined until 1990, then it experienced a period of relative stability. In Albania, the species is declining and following assessment in 2020, it was officially considered as Critically Endangered.

THREATS The greatest threat is the scarcity of prey, to whose density the reproductive success is linked. This scarcity is also linked to the abandonment of traditional agro-pastoral activities resulting in the reduction of pastures and open environments. Another threat is the disturbance to breeding sites caused by over-exploitation for tourism and sport practices such as low-flying and climbing. There are also cases of poisoning, impact against power lines and illegal culling.

WHAT CAN WE DO? Protection of breeding sites; monitoring of reproductive success and environmental changes that can influence it; protection from human disturbance and the presence of high-voltage cables near the nests.



Great Reed Warbler

Acrocephalus arundinaceus

Family: Acrocefalidae

DESCRIPTION The Great Reed Warbler is a passerine bird with tawny-brown upper plumage and whitish underparts as well as a long, robust beak and grey legs.

FIELD MARKS It is one of the largest marsh passerines: it reaches a length of 19 cm and a weight of 30 g. The thin, well-marked eyebrow and a short crest of feathers on the head are characteristic features of this species.

HABITAT Marshes and wetlands, rivers and ponds, canals and lakes; it prefers flooded cane thickets.

DIET It eats insects, spiders, small invertebrates and berries.

BREEDING Its breeding season is in May. Its favoured nesting sites are marshes, lakes and river banks. Its nest is anchored to 3-5 canes and has an elongated cup shape, with an inner part that reaches a depth of 15 cm. Here the female lays three to six greenish-blue eggs, which are hatched for about two weeks.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORLD The species is distributed between continental and Mediterranean Europe, although the highest densities of specimens are found in the European lowlands, particularly in the eastern part of the continent; the preferred wintering area consists of sub-Saharan Africa.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN ALBANIA The species is abundant in Albania during migration and breeding season. It nests in reeds in Orikumi Lagoon, Divjakë-Karavasta, Lake Shkodra and Vjosë-Narta.

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS LC (Least Concern), decreasing. In the decade between 1990 and 2000, certain European populations, including the Greek and Turkish decreased, however the key populations in Eastern Europe are stable.

THREATS Destruction and alteration of wetlands, reduction of cane thickets.

WHAT CAN WE DO? Preserve extensive, flooded and dense cane thickets, limiting their cutting during the breeding season and promoting activities to restore nesting sites. It is also necessary to reduce indiscriminate water catchment that often causes wetlands to dry up at a particularly vulnerable time for this and other species living in these environments.



Eurasian Blackcap

Sylvia atricapilla

Family: Sylviidae

DESCRIPTION The Eurasian Blackcap is a chubby, stocky passerine. The males of the species are ash-grey with a black cap, while females are brown with a rust-red or brown cap. Its beak and legs are always dark, while its tail is entirely grey.

FIELD MARKS The well-shaped cap is the element that distinguishes the Eurasian Blackcap.

HABITAT It is a species that can easily adapt to different types of environments at varying altitudes. The presence of trees and tall shrubs that must not be too dense is of paramount importance. It can live in riparian, dry and coppice forests, orchards, urban green areas, wetlands, cultivated areas, shrublands. In its wintering quarters, it frequents savannahs, mangrove forests, shrub and bush thickets, mountain or coastal forests.

DIET It feeds on insects, small berries, and seeds.

BREEDING Nesting takes place twice a year, in May and June. The nest is located in thick bushes or in forests and thorny thickets and is always well hidden, small and well-groomed. If the brood is in danger, the parents attract the predator's attention by pretending to be in distress or injured.

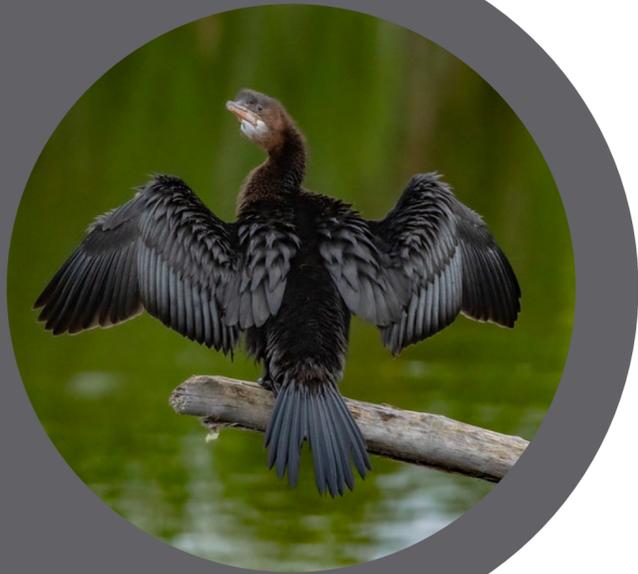
WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORLD It can be found in Europe, Siberia and North Africa and it can be long- or short-range migratory or resident. Migration journeys vary considerably.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN ALBANIA In Albania it is resident. Numerous groups can be found in lowland bushes during winter while less frequently in the breeding season, when most of the birds make vertical migration and breed in large numbers in deciduous mountain forests. It can be spotted at Lake Shkodra, Divjakë-Karavasta, and Vjosë-Narta while it is less common in Orikum.

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS LC (Least Concern), increasing.

THREATS A usual threat for this species is the removal of shrubs and trees, even maintenance actions such as pruning. During the breeding season, these actions can cause the destruction of nests, the abandonment of broods and a decrease in the availability of suitable breeding sites. Another potential threat is nest predation.

WHAT CAN WE DO? Preservation of shrubs and hedges in parks, urban green areas and deciduous forests, especially during the nesting period.



Pygmy Cormorant

Microcarbo pygmeus

Family: Phalacrocoracidae

DESCRIPTION The Pygmy Cormorant is the smallest among the cormorants and measures less than 50 cm in length, with a wingspan of up to 85 cm. Its plumage colour varies slightly depending on the season: it is generally dark, almost blackish with greenish reflections. In the breeding season, it has brown head and neck with reddish hues, and on its head, neck and underparts, it has small tufts of white feathers.

FIELD MARKS It is quite small with an extremely long tail, proportionally large, short beak. Its neck is also short yet can be stretched out while swimming.

HABITAT It lives in lowland wetlands or in riparian areas. It is usually found in still or slow-flowing freshwater that is not very deep and is rich in fish. Only outside the breeding season may it venture into brackish waters.

DIET It feeds mainly on fish.

BREEDING It nests in colonies in freshwater lakes and coastal deltas where it builds nests in tree vegetation.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORLD It is present in Eurasia and North Africa. It nests in South-Eastern Europe, in the Middle East and North Africa.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN ALBANIA It is a resident species with a large colony in Divjakë-Karavasta National Park. Numerous species can be seen on Lake Shkodra and Orikum, particularly during winter. It is seen less frequently in Vjosë-Narta as it shows a preference for fresh and brackish waters.

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS LC (Least Concern).

THREATS Its survival is linked to the wetlands conservation status. Threats include changes in water levels, poaching and disturbance at nesting sites. The species suffers particularly from the exploitation of its habitat for fishing purposes, and from the pollution of wetlands by toxic metals.

WHAT CAN WE DO? Protect breeding sites from anthropogenic disturbance and protect wetlands from overexploitation for fishing purposes, which is a direct threat to the species and causes a decrease in prey availability.



Western Marsh Harrier

Circus aeruginosus

Family: Accipitridae

DESCRIPTION This is a smaller raptor compared to the Buzzard, approximately half a metre long with a wingspan that can almost reach 150 cm. The male has a reddish-brown coat, with three-coloured wings that change from brown on the inside to grey and finally to black on the outside. The black wing tip is rather obvious and conspicuous even when seen from a distance, while the tail is of a uniform light cerulean-grey colour, the head and breast are a light cream-white hue. The female has a more uniform, dark brown plumage with ochre head and shoulders.

FIELD MARKS This raptor has a typical silhouette with visible “fingers”. It flies with raised “V-shaped” wings, it glides with a raised “arm” and a flatter “hand”.

HABITAT The species prefers shallow, fresh or brackish waters with extensive reed beds of *Phragmites australis*, typhoid and sparse tree cover near lakes, slow-running rivers or reservoirs.

DIET It feeds on small aquatic mammals, moorhen eggs, coots and other waterfowl, amphibians, and reptiles.

BREEDING It nests in wetland reedbeds.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORLD The Western Marsh Harrier has a very wide nesting range from Scandinavia to North Africa to Asia, India and Australia.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN ALBANIA In Albania it is a resident species and can be seen in Shkodra, Divjakë-Karavasta, Vjosë-Narta, Orikum etc.

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS LC (Least Concern). Favourable conservation status due to evident range and population expansion.

THREATS It is quite easily disturbed and rather vulnerable not only to reclamation operations but also to excessive use of pesticides in agriculture. The destruction of wetlands and, secondarily, direct persecution, have led to a continent-wide decline of the species in the past decades. Likewise, a key role in its recovery and significant expansion has been played by the increasing protection of remaining wetlands, as well as the protection provided by modern hunting legislation which protects all species of birds of prey.

WHAT CAN WE DO? Careful protection of remnant wetlands is vital to sustain the increase of the species, which has been ongoing in recent years. It is of paramount importance to reduce pesticide loads in adjacent agricultural areas, an important feeding ground for the species.



Eurasian Coot

Fulica atra

Family: Rallidae

DESCRIPTION The Eurasian Coot is a black bird with dense, waterproof plumage, distinguished by a typical white patch on the shield of its forehead that echoes the colour of its beak. Its eyes are red, and the grey-green legs end in long lobed toes covered in scales and equipped with fleshy expansions with a semi-circular outline on the sides of the phalanges, the result of adaptation to aquatic environments. They reach a length of approximately 45 cm. Coots are excellent swimmers and divers. Their shy, shrewd nature completely changes when they feel threatened: they all gather together, clapping their legs on the water, ready to splash the predator. Males and females behave in rather similar ways.

FIELD MARKS It has a black cloak and a white shield on its forehead.

HABITAT Its ideal habitat is calm freshwater ponds, wetlands and slow-flowing waters with many aquatic plants and marsh reeds.

DIET The species is omnivorous, and food is gathered according to seasonal availability.

BREEDING It builds its nest in reeds or other aquatic vegetation, where it lays 3 to 12 eggs, brooding for approximately 21 days.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORLD It lives in Central and Eastern Europe, but also from North Africa to Siberia and Australia. They are mainly sedentary: only those in colder regions migrate south in winter.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN ALBANIA It is a resident species in Albania, preferring freshwater wetlands. It is quite numerous in Lake Shkodra while it occurs in Orikum Lagoon, Divjakë-Karavasta, Vjosë-Narta etc.

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS LC (Least Concern).

THREATS The species is threatened by poaching, anthropogenic disturbance, lead poisoning; it also appears sensitive to factors such as the removal of riparian vegetation, reclamation, improper wetland management, and accidental capture in fishing nets. Other documented risk factors are mortality due to avian influenza (bird flu) or predation.

WHAT CAN WE DO? Preservation of habitats from loss and degradations, control of poaching, targeted research to the most important territories of presence, as well as deepening the analysis of data on variations in the distribution and abundance of the species throughout the year.



Common Crane

Grus grus

Family: Gruidae

DESCRIPTION One of Europe's largest birds, it has very long legs and a long, slender neck. Its plumage is mainly light ash grey but is often stained brownish-rust during nesting. Its head and neck are black and white, while the bare skin on the apex is dark red.

FIELD MARKS The Crane has an unmistakable appearance (its grey plumage stands out on very long legs and contrasts with its downwards-curved tail), it has a distinctive white patch on its head, while its beak is surrounded by black feathers extending towards its neck.

HABITAT During the breeding season, this species uses a wide variety of shallow wetlands, including high-elevation, treeless heaths or bogs, usually with standing water, and clearings of swampy forests, marshes, and rice fields. The wintering and non-breeding migration habitats of this species include floodplains, marshy meadows, sheltered shallow bays, rice fields and pastures.

DIET The species is omnivorous in both the breeding and non-breeding seasons. It feeds on grass roots and shoots, rhizomes, tubers (e.g. potatoes), leaves of wild crops and grasses, seaweed, and cereals (e.g. wheat, barley, oats, rye, corn, rice). The diet of this species also includes adult insects, fish and sometimes small mammals and reptiles (frogs, rodents, lizards).

BREEDING Spectacular courtship rituals, including synchronous dancing and movements. It builds its nest on the ground and is made of plant matter.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORLD The Crane is a migratory bird and it breeds in Central, Northern and Eastern Europe, from the Balkans to Russia, and on to Mongolia and Asia Minor. It is present in Southern Europe in autumn, rarely stopping to overwinter. More often it reaches Northern and Eastern Africa, where this species spends the winter.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN ALBANIA It is seen in Albania during migration with very few specimens seen during winter. Large flocks cross through Divjakë-Karavasta and on Lake Shkodra during spring migration.

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS LC (Least Concern).

THREATS This species is mainly threatened by habitat loss and degradation due to dam construction, urbanisation and agricultural expansion. The species is also threatened by nest disturbance caused by tourism and recreational activities, which reduce its reproductive success.

WHAT CAN WE DO? Legal protection of wetlands and other habitats where this species breeds. Its migratory routes and wintering areas should be strengthened.



European Bee-Eater

Merops apiaster

Family: Meropidae

DESCRIPTION The European Bee-eater can be recognised by the plumage that is reddish-brown on its back and blue on its breast and belly, yellow on its throat and forehead. The plumage also features hues of green, black and orange. Its beak is blackish, long and slightly curved downwards while its legs are greyish-brown. It can reach a length of 25-29 cm and has a particularly elongated tail. Male and female specimens of this species are very similar and difficult to tell apart.

FIELD MARKS It is easily recognisable thanks to its colourful plumage.

HABITAT Open spaces with few trees at river courses, wetlands and shorelines.

DIET It feeds mainly on insects caught in the air, which are repeatedly struck on a hard surface if they are equipped with a stinger.

BREEDING It nests in colonies along river banks, sand quarries, agricultural environments with scattered groves, vast clearings, shrublands, vineyards, sandy dunes, pastures, steppes. Its nest consists of a deep burrow. This species carries out no more than one brood per year, in colonies.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORLD It lives mainly in the Mediterranean basin and nests at Albanian latitudes, wintering in Sub-Saharan Africa. Pre-reproductive migration to the nesting quarters takes place between the end of April and the end of May, migration takes place between mid-August and the beginning of October.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN ALBANIA In Albania, it breeds in large colonies at Orikum Lagoon, Vjosë-Narta, Divjakë-Karavasta, on Lake Shkodra etc.

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS LC (Least Concern), stable.

THREATS In Albania, threats include poaching as well as the destruction of breeding habitats for sand extraction. The conditions found in Africa during the wintering and migration journey are also of paramount importance.

WHAT CAN WE DO? Ensure the conservation of breeding sites and reduce anthropogenic disturbance.



Common Kingfisher

Alcedo atthis

Family: Alcedinidae

DESCRIPTION It is a small, chubby bird weighing only 40g, with a short tail and legs, a large head and a long beak. During the breeding season, the male has a beak that is all black, while the female has a reddish lower jaw. It is easy to observe it motionless, lurking near water, into which it usually dives as soon as it spots a potential prey. It also performs hovering flights on the spot when exploring.

FIELD MARKS It has unmistakable brightly coloured plumage, with a turquoise and emerald green back and a deep orange breast.

HABITAT Wetlands and riparian areas.

DIET Fish is its main prey in Europe. Kingfishers can swallow relatively large prey, compared to their size: they can be of equal or greater size. They kill them by pecking them insistently on a stone placed near the water.

BREEDING It nests on the banks with few trees and available for nesting, of slow-flowing, fish-rich rivers.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORLD The Kingfisher has an extensive range that includes much of Eurasia, North Africa and the western portion of Oceania. However, the species is only sedentary in the vast majority of its European range, the Indian subcontinent, Japan, Indochina and Melanesia. In northern areas, the species is only present in summer for nesting, while with the arrival of cold weather it tends to migrate southwards where it spends the wintering season.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN ALBANIA In Albania, it is a resident species and can be seen in the main wetland sites including Lake Shkodra, Divjakë-Karavasta. Vjosë-Narta Orikum lagoon etc.

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS LC (Least Concern).

THREATS The species has suffered greatly from the progressive cementing of rivers and streams. Another critical factor is pollution, which has both impoverished and chemically altered its diet, consisting almost exclusively of fish.

WHAT CAN WE DO? Protect watercourses and wetlands, with particular reference to the preservation of sandy and earthy slopes, avoiding riverbank regulation and concretisation.



Common Reed Bunting

Emberiza schoeniclus

Family: Emberizidae

DESCRIPTION The Common Reed Bunting measures about 15 cm and is covered largely with brown feathers which are striped on its back. The differences between the two sexes are more pronounced during the breeding season: at this time, the hood and tail of the male turn black, while the female's head is dark brown with a light-coloured collar and eyebrows. A characteristic feature in both sexes is the stubby, conical-shaped beak.

FIELD MARKS See above.

HABITAT Typical of marsh environments, it lives mainly in wetlands between ponds and reed beds; during winter it becomes gregarious, and forms mixed groups, it also frequents agricultural areas, especially uncultivated areas.

DIET Seeds, insects, molluscs.

BREEDING It nests on the ground or a few inches above the ground, in the thick vegetation, among reeds or brambles, where the female lays 4-5 eggs, which she broods for about two weeks.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORLD It has a wide range that includes Europe, Asia and North Africa. Most birds migrate south in winter, but those in the milder south and west are resident species.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN ALBANIA It is a resident species in Albania and is present on Lake Shkodra, Divjakë-Karavasta, Vjosë-Narta, Orikum lagoon etc.

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS LC (Least Concern) - minimum risk. This species is protected by the Birds Directive.

THREATS Degradation and mismanagement of wetlands.

WHAT CAN WE DO? Proper management of wetlands and wetland environments.



Whiskered Tern

Chlidonias hybrida

Family: Laridae

DESCRIPTION It is white on its cheeks, neck, flight feathers, belly and tail, while the tuft on its head is black and its chest and wing tips are greyish.

FIELD MARKS The Whiskered Tern is the biggest among the “Chlidonias” genre in Europe. Compared to the other two species, it has a larger beak and a slightly forked tail.

HABITAT Wetlands and riparian zones. It nests in freshwater wetlands.

DIET It feeds on larvae, insects and amphibians.

BREEDING It is a medium to long-distance migrator and forms large colonies with nests placed close together. The breeding season is between May and June, and it broods once or twice a year. The nest consists of a pile of aquatic vegetation or dry grass placed on floating emerged vegetation or on the seabed in shallow water.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORLD The Whiskered Tern is present as a breeder in North Africa and Asia, as well as in Europe. Two other subspecies inhabit Africa and Australia.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN ALBANIA It is a breeding bird in Albania. It can be mostly seen on Lake Shkodra where it forms large colonies. It can also be found in the Orikum Lagoon, Divjakë-Karavasta, Vjosë-Narta etc.

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS LC (Least Concern). Still threatened, the Whiskered Tern currently has a favourable conservation status both in the European Union and at a continental level.

THREATS Extreme vulnerability of the nesting habitat. The increase in predators and the very high sensitivity to disturbance by human activities can cause the decline of colonies too.

WHAT CAN WE DO? Protection and restoration of nesting sites.



Western Black-Eared Wheatear

Oenanthe hispanica

Family: Muscicapidae

DESCRIPTION The Western Black-eared Wheatear's plumage varies from white to straw yellow. The male has a black mask on its face, which reaches down to its throat. Its wings are also black, while its tail is black and white.

FIELD MARKS See above.

HABITAT It lives and nests in arid, open areas on bare, rough terrain.

DIET Insects and other invertebrates, berries and seeds.

BREEDING During the year, it broods once or twice from the beginning of May. Its nest is built with blades of grass and moss, carpeted with fine material and hair, in crevices between rocks or on the ground under the shelter of low bushes or a boulder.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORLD

It is a migratory species and is widespread in Southern Europe, Northern Africa, the Middle East, and Arabia; it winters in tropical Sub-Saharan Africa from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea. Post-reproductive migration to wintering quarters takes place between September and October, while pre-reproductive migration to nesting quarters takes place in April.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN ALBANIA

In Albania, it is a breeding species and can be observed all over the country including Lake Shkodra, Orikum, Divjakë-Karavasta, Vjosë-Narta etc.

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS

LC (Least Concern), decreasing.

THREATS

The species is threatened by certain dynamics related to the loss of traditional agriculture and animal husbandry: an increase in intensive farming, the implementation of irrigation projects, the abandonment of pastures resulting in forest advancement.

Hiking or sport climbing may disturb the species, which also suffers from predation by foxes and feral dogs. Climate changes recorded in wintering territories are also critical.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Preservation of landscape features typical of its habitat: abandoned quarries, areas with landslides, rock slabs, extensive boulder fields. Possible forest advancement should also be prevented in these areas.



Tufted Duck

Aythya fuligula

Family: Anatidae

DESCRIPTION The Tufted Duck is about 40 cm long and prefers water bodies with very deep water, where it dives to a depth of 5 or 6 m, spending long periods underwater in search of food. As for other Anatidae species, the colour difference between the males and females of the Tufted Duck is very pronounced. The adult male has a two-tone plumage. It is glossy black with violet highlights on the upper part of its plumage, while its belly and breast are white. It has a black crest that reaches down the back of its neck. The scientific name of this species derives from the dark, ashy colour of its body: 'fuligo', i.e. ash. The female, on the other hand, has brown plumage which fades down its sides. Its irises are bright yellow while its legs are grey. It is gregarious with other species: when the time comes to migrate to warm areas, it takes flight together with pochards and coots, adopting the typical 'V' formation. It is an excellent swimmer and diver.

FIELD MARKS See above.

HABITAT It nests mostly on small islands, however in the vicinity of watercourses, marshes, ponds and lakes, rivers and estuaries. Decisive for the presence of the species is the abundance of vegetation, where the Black Duck builds its nest, well hidden.

DIET Its main diet consists of aquatic plants, herbs and berries, which it complements with plankton, tadpoles, fry and mussels.

BREEDING The female lays 5 to 12 grey-green eggs, which are brooded for about twenty days. From the moment of hatching onwards, it is always the female that takes care of the chicks, while the male spends the time following hatching together with the other males. In fact, during the hatching period, the Tufted Duck's sense of territoriality is not as strong as it is during the mating season.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORLD Its distribution range is very wide: from Eurasian areas to Siberia, from North America to the Mediterranean area, where it inhabits territories of medium-high latitude, avoiding extreme climatic areas and favouring low-lying plains. The Tufted Duck spends the winter on the Mediterranean coast, the areas south of the Sahara and Southern Asia, but it can also occasionally be found on the US and Canadian coasts, in the south of the Scandinavian peninsula and in Central Europe. It nests in North-Eastern Europe, the British Isles and Northern Asia.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN ALBANIA It is a wintering species in Albania, more commonly found on Lake Shkodra, on Lake Ohrid, on Lake Prespa and in the Orikum Lagoon. It can also be found in Divjakë-Karavasta, Vjosë-Narta etc.

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS LC (Least Concern).

THREATS The main threats to this species include: predators such as the fish *Rutilus rutilus*, which feeds on the same food resources as the Tufted Duck; damage caused by human disturbance; recreational and tourist activities carried out on reservoirs and within watercourses inhabited by the species that adversely affect the breeding rate; habitat degradation, and in particular pollution caused by hydrocarbons, water drainage, peat extraction, and changes in area management. It is a species potentially exposed to avian influenza (bird flu).

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Favour suitable nesting conditions for the species in areas already inhabited. In particular, the environmental integrity of the main resting and wintering areas must be ensured, also preventing potential forms of human disturbance. The Tufted Duck could benefit from both a ban on hunting and the restriction of water sports in the most visited areas, especially during the breeding season.



Ferruginous Duck

Aythya nyroca

Family: Anatidae

DESCRIPTION A small to medium-sized duck with a rather short body and predominantly reddish-brown plumage, long beak and neck, and long, sloping forehead. Although both sexes are similar, they can, however, be distinguished by the colours of their plumage, which in the male are brighter, as well as by the iris, which is white in the male and dark in the female of the species.

FIELD MARKS In flight, it is possible to notice the broad white bands on its wing that reaches up to the tip. The white lower feathers and the white spot on the belly are also distinctive characteristics of this species.

HABITAT These birds inhabit freshwater or moderately saline wetlands, with average depths of about 1 metre and limited expanses of water with good vegetation cover; during migration and in winter, they also stop in large lakes and slow-flowing rivers and occasionally in the sea not far from the coast. In late summer, when the moulting birds are unable to fly, they take refuge in large groups in areas well sheltered by emergent vegetation or in the centre of extensive open areas.

DIET Its diet mainly consists of invertebrates, small aquatic animals and parts of aquatic plants.

BREEDING Its nesting range is rather fragmented and extends in temperate latitudes from Western Europe to Western China and Mongolia.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORLD There are two breeding populations in the Western Palearctic Region, one in the Western Mediterranean and North Africa and the other in Eastern Europe. The former mainly winters in West Africa, the latter in Egypt, the Eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea. The Mediterranean populations are locally resident species.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN ALBANIA In Albania, it is a resident species and can be found in the Orikum Lagoon where it breeds. It is present also in Shkodra, Divjakë-Karavasta, Vjosë-Narta etc.

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS NT (Near Threatened).

THREATS The main threats to the species include habitat degradation, water drainage, hunting activity, and changes in area management.

WHAT CAN WE DO? Ensuring the environmental integrity of the main distribution areas, preventing all potential forms of human disturbance.



Common Pochard

Aythya ferina

Family: Anatidae

DESCRIPTION This is a medium-sized diving duck, with a voluminous body and a short neck. The male has a reddish brown head, a black neck, a white belly and a light grey back, ending in a black rump and undertail. Its beak is black with a pale blue stripe. The plumage on the female, on the other hand, is a more uniformly greyish-brown, with an indistinct pale spot around the beak and chin and a bluish ring on its beak. Both sexes are characterised by light grey stripes visible on the wings during deployment.

FIELD MARKS It is easily recognisable thanks to a fairly distinct head profile, a long, continuous beak with a sloping forehead, ending in a pointed crown in both sexes.

HABITAT Wetlands and riparian areas.

DIET It feeds on plants, molluscs, small crustaceans, insects, worms, amphibians and small fish.

BREEDING It breeds in both inland and coastal areas, preferably in freshwater but also in brackish water or within reservoirs, as long as they are surrounded by emergent vegetation.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORLD The Common Pochard is a species that can be found throughout the Eurasian area; all over Central Europe, from the Lake Baikal regions in the east to the Iberian Peninsula, from Iceland and the British Isles to North Africa. It can also be found in North America.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN ALBANIA In Albania, it can be found in good numbers in Lake Shkodra, and Orikum Lagoon. Although in limited numbers, the species occurs in Vjosë-Narta and Divjakë-Karavasta as well.

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS LC (Least Concern).

THREATS The main threat to the species is the destruction or reduction of its breeding or wintering habitats, mainly due to eutrophication, i.e. the increase in nutrients such as nitrates and phosphates in the water, from both industrial and civil wastewater discharges. Other threats are water contamination by toxic metals, poaching, disturbance from recreational activities, urbanisation and predation by alien species.

WHAT CAN WE DO? Integrated management plans are needed to solve problems such as eutrophication and pollution, and measures to protect the habitat and minimise disturbance to the species.



Dalmatian Pelican

Pelecanus crispus

Family: Pelecanidae

DESCRIPTION This is the largest bird in Europe and one of the most majestic birds in the world: it can reach a length of 160-180 cm, with a wingspan of approximately 3.1-3.45 m and a mass ranging between 10 and 13 kg. Its large beak measures 37-45 cm and it has an elastic skin pouch on its lower jaw with which it catches fish and that turns a reddish colour in the breeding season. Its plumage is greyish-white, the feathers on the nape of its neck are ruffled, and its legs are grey. It has a yellowish spot on its breast and it has a clear iris surrounded by a small area of discoloured skin. Unlike storks and large raptors, this species is a specialised sailor and it flies in orderly, synchronised groups. In flight, the almost all-clear underwing can be seen, whiter in the central band.

FIELD MARKS It is similar to the Great White Pelican, but its larger and with curly nape feathers. It has mainly bare facial skin from the base of the bill including sides of forehead to around its eye.

HABITAT It feeds mainly on fish. It often goes on collective fishing trips: several specimens arrange themselves in a semi-circle near a school of fish and force them to gather in areas where they can be caught easily; keeping its beak partly submerged, it collects the prey in the skin bag with which its beak is equipped at the bottom.

DIET It nests in shallow water and very rarely breeds in lakes and swamps. It can also nest in a cup in the ground, either sheltered or unprotected by shrub vegetation. Its nest is roughly arranged using grasses, sticks, seaweed and even rotting reeds. It makes only one brood per year, and egg-laying takes place between April and May. The 3-4 eggs laid are incubated by the female alone for about a month. The chicks stay in the nest for some time. Both parents provide food for the offspring: the young insert their beaks and heads inside the parent's beak bag and feed on the partially digested fish.

BREEDING It is a short-range migrant: it is not a great flyer and makes migrations only over short distances, often moving in flocks. It nests in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Montenegro, Albania, Armenia, Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, Georgia, Russia, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Ukraine, Mongolia, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan. European nesters winter in Eastern Mediterranean countries, Russian and Central Asian nesters in Iran, Iraq and the Indian subcontinent, and Mongolian nesters along the east coast of China. The population is estimated at 10,000-20,000 specimens.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORLD

The Dalmatian Pelican is the flagship species of Divjakë—Karavasta. The National Park is the only nesting site in Albania for this species and it hosts more than 1% of the global population and more than 3% of the regional population. The status of the Dalmatian Pelican has improved thanks to measures taken in the last 20 years: from just 19 breeding pairs in 2000, today the colony consists of more than 80 pairs. The species is present also on Lake Shkodra, where it nests along the Montenegrin shore. Nevertheless, numerous specimens can be spotted in the Albanian part of the lake.

Vjosë-Narta is another area where the species can be found in high numbers with large flocks that can be seen fishing or resting in the lagoon or in the Skrofotinë salt pans.

**WHERE IT CAN BE
FOUND IN ALBANIA**

It even frequents small inland and coastal wetlands, rich in islets and emergent marsh vegetation.

**GLOBAL
CONSERVATION STATUS**

NT (Near Threatened).

THREATS

The sharp decline that has occurred since the early 1900s can be attributed to wetland reclamation, insecticide contamination, persecution by fish farmers, and disturbance by humans in nesting areas.

Recent waves of avian influenza (bird flu) have hit the Dalmatian Pelican colonies hard, particularly in Greece.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Monitor nesting, numbers of wintering specimens, and ecological changes at key sites; monitor key wintering areas; manage wetlands sustainably. Establish guarded and closed areas around breeding colonies; install underground or visible power lines; legally protect the species and its habitat; conduct awareness campaigns and mediate potential conflicts with fishers; prevent poaching and overfishing.



Western Rock Nuthatch

Sitta neumayer

Family: Sittidae

DESCRIPTION The Western Rock Nuthatch is a small passerine bird in the family Sittidae, native to South-Eastern Europe. It measures about 13 cm long and weighs about 30g. The upper part is slate blue with a black line running from its beak to its nape, across its eye, while its breast and throat are white and creamy yellow (not orange) on its belly and undertail. Its tail is entirely bluish-grey.

FIELD MARKS It resembles a very faded, long-billed nuthatch.

HABITAT Slopes, steep cliffs and gullies with bare rock and shrub vegetation. Nests in rocky (often calcareous) terrain with scattered bushes and trees at varying heights (often between 1,000 and 2,500 m above sea level).

DIET Invertebrates and seeds.

BREEDING The nest is built mainly by the male and is a flask-shaped structure, with an entrance tunnel up to 10 cm long. It is sited on a rock face, usually under a slight overhang or sometimes on a building or other man-made structure. It is built of mud, animal dung, hair, feathers, beetle wings and similar materials. The chamber is lined with hair, wool, feathers and grass. The surrounding area is sometimes decorated with various objects, both natural and man-made.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORLD It is commonly found in South-Eastern Europe.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN ALBANIA In Albania, it is a resident species. It can be found in Shkodra, Orikum, and in rocky habitats all over the country.

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS LC (Least Concern).

THREATS Habitat loss at the coastal area due to urban development is a threat in Albania.

WHAT CAN WE DO? Protection of breeding habitats.



Black Woodpecker

Drycopus martius

Family: Picidae

DESCRIPTION It is the largest woodpecker in Europe, about the size of a crow. It is entirely black except for a red spot on its head in the male and only on the nape of the neck in the female. Its eyes are bright, and its beak is long and sharp.

FIELD MARKS See above.

HABITAT It prefers large trees with a high proportion of dead wood, mainly beech but also spruce, larch, pine, poplar; in large forests, yet occasionally also in small woods. Glades and grasslands favour the species by providing abundant food. It prefers mountainous environments but recently the range has been expanding towards hills and sometimes even plains.

DIET Ants, which it catches between the cracks in the bark using its sticky tongue.

BREEDING It digs its nest in large trees, preferably very old or diseased ones, because dead wood makes it easier to do so.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORLD The distribution area is wide, ranging from Europe to Siberia. A particular subspecies is present in China.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN ALBANIA In Albania, it is a resident species and can be seen on Lake Shkodra and Velipoja, thanks to the fluvial ecological corridors.

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS LC (Least Concern). Recently, a range expansion has been observed at lower altitudes, whereas the species used to be limited to mountainous areas.

THREATS Incorrect forest management practices. In fact, this species needs old trees, and the holes they dig can be used for several years even by other species.

WHAT CAN WE DO? Correct forest management of areas currently or potentially inhabited by the species, with particular attention to the preservation of older plants, and monitoring of expansion ecological corridors.



Bar-Tailed Godwit

Ardeola ralloides

Family: Ardeidae

DESCRIPTION Similar to the Black-tailed Godwit, this species also has a two-tone beak. Its breeding plumage is dark brick red (male) or pale orange (female); its overall non-breeding plumage is greyish-brown with a white belly. This species is a full long-distance migrant, with satellite data showing Western Alaskan specimens can travel >11,000 km to New Zealand without stopping.

FIELD MARKS It is almost the size of the Black-tailed Godwit, yet it differs as it has shorter legs and a slightly shorter, upwardly-curved beak.

HABITAT It nests in tundra and taiga, swampy areas, near wet river valleys, lakes and bogs.

DIET The species feeds on insects, annelid worms, molluscs, bivalves and crustaceans; occasional larval amphibians (tadpoles) and small fish, seeds and berries.

BREEDING It nests in tundra and taiga (Alaska, Scandinavia, North Asia). The nest consists of a cup located on a dry, elevated site.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORLD During the breeding period, it lives in the tundra and taiga of Alaska, Scandinavia and North Asia. During migration and the wintering period, it can be found along the coasts of Europe, Africa, Australia and South-East Asia.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN ALBANIA In Albania, it can be observed mostly during migration. It prefers the coastal mudflats of Vjosë-Narta, Divjakë-Karavasta, Patok, Lalzi and on Lake Shkodra.

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS NT - Near Threatened.

THREATS Threats on the breeding grounds include oil and gas exploration and associated infrastructure development, legal subsistence harvesting and illegal hunting, and increases in predator numbers. This species is threatened by the degradation of stopover sites due to land reclamation, shellfisheries, pollution, human disturbance and reduced river flows.

WHAT CAN WE DO? Protect remaining intertidal habitats across the range of this species to prevent further habitat loss and degradation and attempt to restore or create new areas of suitable habitat. Adequate protection and management of all important staging sites should be ensured.



Squacco Heron

Ardeola ralloides

Family: Ardeidae

DESCRIPTION The Squacco Heron has golden-brown plumage, a tuft resembling a crest, its beak is bluish and black at its tip, while its tail and belly feature lighter shades that range between golden-brown and reddish tones to white. It has crepuscular habits.

FIELD MARKS It can be identified by the long silver crest that runs from its head down to its neck.

HABITAT It depends on wetlands, preferring deltas, estuaries and freshwater lagoons, but also settling in small ponds, canals and ditches lined with dense aquatic vegetation. For feeding purposes, it also frequents rice fields.

DIET It feeds mainly on amphibians and fishes.

BREEDING It is a colonially nesting bird. It builds its nest on trees together with other species of heron, preferring willows and alders, which often grow on river banks.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORLD This is a migratory species that breeds in Southern Europe, South-Western Asia and Africa. Wintering takes place in sub-Saharan Africa, the Nile delta and the Middle East. Post-reproductive migration to wintering quarters takes place from mid-August to September, while pre-reproductive migration to breeding grounds takes place from late March to May.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN ALBANIA In Albania, it is a breeding bird, nesting in the colonies of Divjakë-Karavasta and Kune-Vain. Quite common also in Vjosë-Narta, Orikum, on Lake Shkodra etc.

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS LC (Least Concern). The Squacco Heron is a rare species throughout the European Union.

THREATS An important factor in the success of this species is the amount of rainfall in African wintering quarters. It has benefited from the fight against poaching as it was hunted for its feathers, sold for ornamental purposes.

WHAT CAN WE DO? Protect nesting and feeding sites and monitor breeding populations and continue to study the species.



Common Tern

Sterna hirundo

Family: Laridae

DESCRIPTION The Common Tern is candid white on its upper body and light grey on its lower part. The top of its head is black, and its beak is red with a black tip. It has modest size (less than 40 cm in length including its tail) yet it has a large wingspan (which could exceed 80 cm).

FIELD MARKS The Common Tern is distinguished from other similar species by the conformation of its tail, which is particularly long and forked, enabling it to fly skillfully.

HABITAT It has a good adaptability to aquatic environments, from coastal areas to inland rivers, yet it avoids frozen waters, sites too exposed to the inclement weather and areas with extremely dense or thick vegetation. Along the coasts, it prefers rocky stretches, islands, beaches, lagoons, and brackish waters.

DIET It feeds on small fish, annelid worms, crustaceans, molluscs and insects.

BREEDING For nesting purposes, it needs shallow waters in which to feed and islets, in both coastal and inland wetlands. It nests in colonies or single pairs.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORLD The Common Tern is widespread throughout virtually the entire northern hemisphere of the globe, from North America to the Caribbean, from Europe to North Africa, and as far as the Middle East and Siberia. Other subspecies inhabit Eastern Siberia, then Central Asia to China and Mongolia. A long-range migrator, it is found in Europe from March to October and winters in Africa. The breeding season is between April and May, and it only makes one brood in the year. Post-reproductive migration to wintering grounds takes place between August and mid-November, while pre-reproductive migration to nesting grounds takes place between late March and May. The nest consists of a simple cup in the ground by the water among shell debris and adorned with blades of grass and seaweed.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN ALBANIA In Albania, it is a breeding species that can be found at Divjakë-Karavasta, Vjosë-Narta, Shkodra etc.

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS LC (Least Concern).

THREATS The Common Tern is sensitive to changes in breeding habitat, and during nesting to bad weather, flooding, excessive predator presence, and disturbance by humans.

WHAT CAN WE DO? Important actions to be taken include interventions to protect nesting sites and to encourage the recovery of declining populations. One effective response would be the introduction of artificial nesting platforms.



European Nightjar

Caprimulgus europaeus

Family: Caprimulgidae

DESCRIPTION The European Nightjar is a nocturnal bird. Nightjars are sometimes called Goatsuckers, due to the ancient folk tale that they sucked the milk from goats (the Latin for Goatsucker is *Caprimulgus*). It measures 24-28 cm long.

FIELD MARKS It can be recognised by its large head, wide beak, very large eyes and greyish camouflage plumage with various lighter and darker stripes.

HABITAT This species is highly dependent on a varied environment typical of extensive agriculture or pasture areas, in which open environments and small wooded areas alternate. It appreciates sparse woodland, tree and shrub thickets, clearings in forests, moors and steppe areas with scattered trees and bushes.

DIET It feeds mainly on flying insects especially moths.

BREEDING During the year, it broods twice between May and August, laying its eggs in a cup in the ground among shrubby vegetation. The post-reproductive migration to the wintering quarters takes place between August and September, while the pre-reproductive migration to the nesting quarters starts at the end of March and lasts until at least mid-June.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORLD Tendentially migratory, it is widespread in Europe, the Near East and through Central Asia to China, it winters on African coasts.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN ALBANIA In Albania, it is a breeding species that can be spotted at Divjakë-Karavasta, Vjosë-Narta, on Lake Shkodra, in Orikumi Lagoon etc.

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS LC (Least Concern). The species is decreasing, and there is evidence that it is abandoning the lowlands and low hills and retreating to medium altitudes that are less subject to anthropic disturbance.

THREATS The main threats include the abandonment of traditional extensive agricultural areas and urban development. Pesticide abuse in agriculture causes a decrease in the availability of insects threatening the survival of the species.

WHAT CAN WE DO? For the conservation of the species, it is important to preserve the 'mosaic' environment, in which open areas alternate with others with shrub-arboreal vegetation that is not too dense.



Great Crested Grebe

Podiceps cristatus

Family: Podicipedidae

DESCRIPTION The Great Crested Grebe is the largest and most common Grebe in Europe. Its body is elongated, slender and low, its neck is long and thin, held well straight and lowered with its head resting on its back feathers; its beak is long, thin and pointed. It is also paler in colour compared to that of other Grebe species; it has a double crest on its head and has very prominent ear tufts. During the courtship period, it performs spectacular nuptial parades.

FIELD MARKS See above.

HABITAT It nests in fresh or brackish water wetlands with abundant emergent or submerged vegetation, with a preference for eutrophic bodies of water with flat banks and a muddy or sandy substrate, usually up to 5 m deep and with large areas of open water. Other suitable habitats include small ponds, standing waters, rivers with weak currents, and bodies of artificial bodies of water. In winter, it can be seen in open sea or ice-free inland lakes and reservoirs, moving during cold waves to shallow coastal waters, especially in Western Europe.

DIET The diet consists of fish caught during long dives. It also feeds on tadpoles, crustaceans, molluscs, aquatic insects and seeds.

BREEDING It nests in the calm waters of natural and artificial lake basins, in marshes, ponds, quarries, rivers, canals and lagoons. The nest is formed by a platform of plant material, floating or anchored to vegetation or the bottom in shallow water. Its typical nesting site can be found in reedbeds or flooded groves, as well as over mats of floating algae or leaves of the algae genus *Laminaria*.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORLD It nests between April and September in Europe, in solitary nests, in few pairs or in colonies (the latter only where sites are safer and food more abundant). Once the breeding phase is over, the adults may disperse in the area near lakes or water reservoirs to undergo a moulting period, during which thousands of specimens (occasionally more than 10,000) gather in the same place. During the winter, the specimens lead a solitary life, although flocks of more than 5,000 specimens may gather in certain areas.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN ALBANIA In Albania, it is a resident species that can be observed in Divjakë-Karavasta, Vjosë-Narta, on Lake Shkodra and in the Orikumi Lagoon.

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS LC (Least Concern).

THREATS In feeding areas, specimens can get caught in fishing nets. Other threats are the presence of invasive alien species and other problematic species, diseases.

WHAT CAN WE DO? Strengthen the breeding population by protecting all the main or potential breeding sites; protect and restore freshwater environments, rich in riparian vegetation, without abrupt changes in water level, especially during the breeding season; limit human activities at key conservation sites and increase nesting habitats in predator-free environments.



European Turtle Dove

Streptopelia turtur

Family: Culumbidae

DESCRIPTION The European Turtle Dove reaches a length of 27-31 cm and a wingspan of 50-54 cm. Its head, neck and rump are blue-grey, its back is brownish and its tail is edged with black and white. The upper parts of its wings, closest to its body, have a tawny coloration with blackish-brown speckles that first feature a grey band in the centre of the wings and then tend towards black on the tips. Its legs are red, its beak black and its eyes are bright red. Juveniles have a less contrasting and duller coloured plumage.

FIELD MARKS This species is fairly easy to observe in flight due to its tawny colours as well as the black and white edge of its tail. It occasionally associates with other columbids such as the Eurasian Collared Dove and the Common Wood Pigeon.

HABITAT It nests in wooded, warm and sunny areas, preferring rural lowland and hillside areas cultivated with cereals. It avoids large urban centres, but occupies suburban wooded areas, as well as parks, gardens, vegetable gardens and orchards. In late summer they become gregarious, eating various seeds on the ground and regularly watering wherever there is a little clean water and a quiet environment. It is easy to notice the morning comings and goings of the European Turtle Doves between the trees, where they sleep, and the fields where they eat, while later in the year, in warmer temperatures, they tend to go to the watering hole by a water course.

DIET It normally feeds by searching for food walking on the ground. It feeds mostly on grains and seeds of wild and cultivated plants, leaves and berries; occasionally catches small molluscs.

BREEDING It is a monogamous species and tends to nest in communities. During the breeding season, which is between mid-May and June-July, the male performs nuptial displays in flight, on branches or on the ground and makes an insistent cooing sound; it inflates its plumage and bows before its mate. The nest is built in trees or on tall, thick bushes by coarsely interweaving sticks, twigs and roots. It sometimes uses the nests of other birds. During the year, it performs up to two broods. 2 eggs are normally laid 1.5 days apart, which are also brooded for approximately 13-14 days by the male, who alternates with his mate for short periods each day. The nestlings are fed by both parents with the caseous secretion produced by the inner mucous membrane from the goitre ("pigeon's milk"); at about 3 weeks of age they leave the nest.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORLD Eurasia and Africa.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN ALBANIA It is a breeding bird in Albania, and it is spread all over the country. It is breeding in Vjosë-Narta, Divjakë-Karavasta, on Lake Shkodra while it can be seen in the Orikum Lagoon.

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS VU (Vulnerable), due to range and population declines as well as the degradation and reduction of its optimal habitat. The breeding population in Europe declined during the period 1970-2000 and the decade 1990-2000. In the latter period, although the species has been stable or increasing in several countries, especially in Central Europe, most populations have declined. The species is also of concern on a global scale.

THREATS The main negative factors for the species are the destruction and transformation of breeding and feeding habitats. Particularly negative are the destruction of hedgerows, frequent mowing in meadows, which inhibits the production of the seeds on which they feed, the use of herbicides, which eliminates many seed-producing herbaceous species, the use of chemical fertilisers in hay meadows, which reduces species diversity as only certain species benefit, drought and hunting pressure.

WHAT CAN WE DO? Preservation and restoration of habitats suitable for breeding and feeding, starting with the preservation of the traditional rural landscape, particularly through the protection and restoration of hedgerows and rows, important nesting habitats. Reduction in the use of herbicides in the agricultural environment during the breeding season may be an additional element in favour of the species. There is also a need to stop spring hunting and poaching and to work on threat factors in wintering areas.



Eurasian Hoopoe

Upupa epops

Family: Upupidae

DESCRIPTION It has a chamois pink and black body with white-striped wings, a broadly-rounded apex with an erect crest. Its beak is long, narrow and slightly curved. It has a black tail with broad white band. It has rather deep wingbeats with characteristic short, irregular undulations, a hint of gliding, and with a discontinuous low rhythm on the ground. It moves energetically and jerkily over the ground, just like a Starling.

FIELD MARKS Its unmistakable plumage, orange-brown on its head, neck, and chest with black-white horizontal stripes on its lower back and wings along with an erectile tuft of feathers on its head.

HABITAT This species occupies open lands such as pastures, parks, orchards, sandy heaths, olive groves, and vineyards, as well as dry, forested steppes and savannas. It is often found near villages and in traditionally cultivated areas.

DIET It feeds on invertebrate larvae, large insects, worms and spiders.

BREEDING The species is monogamous, solitary and a territorial breeder. It nests in agricultural and open areas, coppice, hedgerows and bushes and may use the same site for several seasons. It typically lays 7-8 eggs.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN THE WORLD It occupies an extremely wide range: Europe, Asia and Africa.

WHERE IT CAN BE FOUND IN ALBANIA The Eurasian Hoopoe winters in Africa and it is a summer visitor to Albania. It is seen during the migration period in the coastal area and nests in Shkodra and Divjakë-Karavasta.

GLOBAL CONSERVATION STATUS LC (Least Concern).

THREATS It is adversely affected by transformations that have occurred in the agricultural environment; intensification of agricultural practices on the one hand and abandonment on the other result in a marked reduction in environmental suitability for the species.

WHAT CAN WE DO? Set up the management of vineyards, orchards and other agricultural areas by preserving dry stone walls and mature trees, ensuring alternating vegetated strips on the ground with little or no grass (essential factors for predation).

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