

RESULTS OF EUROBIRDWATCH 2005 **40,000 EUROPEANS TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT THE COUNTRYSIDE AND** **SPOT RECORD NUMBERS OF BIRDS**

Last weekend, nearly 40,000 people took part in BirdLife International's EuroBirdwatch 2005. During the pan-European event, nearly three million birds were observed in a single weekend. Based on initial reports, the event looks set to have exceeded all records in terms of the numbers of participants involved and birds observed.

EuroBirdwatch is BirdLife International's annual festival of events which invites members of the public from all over Europe, to get out, observe, explore and enjoy birds. This year's event carried a special theme: "Take a closer look at the countryside".

BirdLife Partners in 35 countries across Europe held a total of 1,427 national events. The wide variety of events across the continent included bird watching excursions, special bird watching events on organic farms, contests for children on identifying birds by their song, bird fairs, excursions to watch birds in national parks, and many more activities.

Eray Caglayan from Doga Dernegi - BirdLife's affiliate in Turkey, which coordinated this year's event – is delighted with the results; "EuroBirdwatch 2005 has been a resounding success and demonstrates people's growing fascination and interest in birds. Organisations in countries such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Serbia and Montenegro, Estonia and Lithuania have joined the EuroBirdwatch this year. Bird watching activities took place over a huge area across Europe. This is such a great network that millions of people from all over Europe are becoming one body for birds", he said.

Highlights in terms of species include observations of the globally threatened Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* in Armenia, just a few days before the birds leave for their wintering grounds. Already on their way to warmer lands, Swallows *Hirundo rustica* and House Martins *Delichon urbica* were observed migrating through several countries. Observers in Andorra watched a Buzzard *Buteo buteo* eating a snake. In Slovakia, an Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* was the highlight for bird watchers. In Russia, one of the most numerous species observed was Common Gull *Larus canus*, while Red-fronted Serin *Serinus pusillus* were observed in Armenia. Participants enjoyed the raptor migration in Andorra, and Black-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles orientalis* and See-see Partridge *Ammoperdix griseogularis* were seen in Turkey's steppes.

Although the results are still coming in, adding further to the totals, the initial EuroBirdwatch 2005 statistics show that:

- The most frequently observed species were 1. Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* 2. Coot *Fulica atra* and 3. Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*.
- The country with largest number of events was **Germany** where 391 events were organized.
- The country with most participants was **Spain** where 22,500 participants were involved.
- The country with the largest number of birds seen was **Sweden** where 788,620 birds were observed.
- The country with the most diverse bird list was **Sweden** where 259 species were observed.

A special website at <http://eurobirdwatch.birdlife.org> has been set up with more information on the event, links to national organizations and their events, and useful information on getting started with bird watching.

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Notes for Editors

- For information on EuroBirdwatch 2005 <http://eurobirdwatch.birdlife.org>
- EuroBirdwatch is part of World Birdwatch – a global initiative established over 10 years ago by BirdLife International.
- In 1993, the first World Birdwatch was held to promote interest in and appreciation of nature through birding. The goal was to encourage as many people as possible to go bird watching over one weekend, and to record sightings of as many as possible of the world's 10,000 bird species.

Since then, World Birdwatch has become a regular event, taking place every two years. So far, more than 750,000 people have participated from all over the world. EuroBirdwatch has developed as a successful spin-off from this initiative, and has been held annually since. In 2001, BirdLife International organised the first World Bird Festival, which was repeated in 2004. The festival lasts a full month and features hundreds of exciting events all over the world, representing the largest ever celebration of birds. World Birdwatch and EuroBirdwatch herald the start of the festival in those years when it is held.