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### **Open letter**

BirdLife International is a Partnership of 116 national conservation organisations and the world leader in bird conservation. BirdLife's unique local to global approach enables it to deliver high impact and long term conservation for the benefit of nature and people. We are contacting you as neighbouring BirdLife partners.

Protection of migratory birds continues to be one on the top of conservation agenda on international level as well as in our own countries, their protection being even more challenging and complex since long term conservation of migratory birds does not stop at the state borders. Therefore we are always alert of changes in countries along the major flyway routes, because of their broader impact on populations well outside those particular countries.

In the past we have all considered Slovenia as a bright example in Europe with its very advanced hunting legislation allowing hunting of only Mallard, Pheasant, Magpie, Jay, Grey Partridge (captive bred individuals) and Hooded Crow. We have always promoted it as an example of good practice and a compromise between hunters' interests and nature-conservation issues. As this legislation was adopted in Slovenia in 1993 we have been already expecting even more conservation-oriented changes promoted by Slovene hunters. But unfortunately we were shocked to hear that our best-example neighbours took another way, the way to the dark past of over exploiting bird populations and hunting many endangered species, which unfortunately still happens in our countries.

We see the Slovene hunters' attempt to include Black Grouse, Teal, Coot, native Grey Partridge, Snipe and Woodcock among hunted species as a dramatic act of regression and we do not understand why they changed their advanced positions from the past. The argument of Slovene hunters "if these species are being hunted elsewhere in Europe why not also in Slovenia?" is nowadays not acceptable for a conservation-oriented organisation. Such a standpoint does not contribute to conservation at all, and is a drawback in every our attempt to try spreading the advanced positions of Slovene hunters' from 1993 also outside Slovenia. Therefore we appeal to Slovene hunters association and authoritative Ministry to withdraw this proposal and keep Slovenia a safe oasis for migrating and other birds in Europe and a bright example in the field of bird hunting in Europe.

Best regards,

Gerald Pfiffinger, director BirdLife Österreich – Gesellschaft für Vogelkunde

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