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## How a manual could help stop the illegal use of poisoned-baits to kill birds

**Using poisoned-baits to kill predators deemed a threat to livestock and crops continues in the EU despite being banned by the Nature Directives. To stop this practice, SEO/BirdLife (BirdLife Europe's <sup>[1]</sup> partner in Spain) developed the manual *Illegal use of poisoned-baits: Legal analysis and investigation* <sup>[2]</sup>. The manual has now been translated into English and will serve as an important tool for the European Network against Environmental Crime (ENEC) <sup>[3]</sup>.**

The use of poisoned-baits in the countryside is one of the most widely used predator eradication methods used worldwide and a major threat to biodiversity in the European Union. Poisoning, particularly of birds of prey, is considered one of the most common yet deadly ways to illegally kill birds because of its direct impact on a number of threatened species in Europe. These include the Spanish Imperial Eagle (*Aquila adalberti*), Eastern Imperial Eagle (*Aquila heliaca*), Red Kite (*Milvus milvus*), and Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*).

Even though the use of poisoned-baits in Spain is a criminal offence, criminal investigations of poisoning cases are often very difficult to conduct, since most cases lack direct witnesses and take place in remote areas which are difficult to access. The manual by SEO/BirdLife, *Illegal use of poisoned-baits: Legal analysis and investigation*, was developed with the support of the Life+ VENENO project in 2015<sup>[4]</sup> with the aim of wiping out the illegal use of poisoned-baits in Spain's countryside.

Now translated into English, it presents case studies where different police investigative techniques have been used (such as toxicological analyses, forensic entomology, fingerprinting, DNA samples, forensic psychology, search warrants, phone tapping and vehicle inspections), along with an analyses of the laws in Spain on the use of poisoned-baits. Since the implementation of these investigative measures, there has been a sharp increase in the number of convictions brought in Spain: during the term of the Life+ VENENO project, 12 convictions were won against users of illegal poisoned-baits. Seven criminal proceedings are still under way.

**David de la Bodega, manager of the ENEC at SEO/BirdLife said:** “A very large number of birds are killed annually by poisoned-bait. This unnecessary killing has severe effects on the conservation status of vulnerable species, including many listed under international and EU law, and/or protected nationally. We need a transboundary approach to solve this problem especially in the case of migratory species<sup>[5]</sup>.”

## ENDS

### **For further information, please contact:**

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### **Notes:**

[1] BirdLife Europe is a Partnership of nature conservation organisations in 47 countries, including all EU Member States, and a leader in bird conservation. Through its unique local to global approach BirdLife Europe delivers high impact and long term conservation for the benefit of nature and people.

[2] The manual “Illegal use of poisoned-baits. Legal analysis and investigation” can be found here: [http://www.seo.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/ILLEGAL-USE-OF-POISONED-BAITS\\_SEO\\_BirdLife\\_March2016-1.pdf](http://www.seo.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/ILLEGAL-USE-OF-POISONED-BAITS_SEO_BirdLife_March2016-1.pdf)

[3] For more information on European Network against Environmental Crime (ENEC), click here: <http://lawyersfornature.org/>

[4] For more information on Life+ VENENO, click here: <http://www.venenono.org/>

[5] More statistics on deaths caused by the illegal use of poisoned-baits in Europe: <http://www.birdlife.org/europe-and-central-asia/news/meet-pesticides-silent-bird-killers-protect-our-crops>