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BirdLife perspective on changes since the 1980s

IAN BURFIELD^{1*}, CHRISTINA IERONYMIDOU¹, ROB POPE¹ & ARIEL BRUNNER²

¹ BirdLife International, Cambridge, UK

² Stichting BirdLife Europe, Brussels, Belgium

* Email: Ian.Burfield@birdlife.org

At global level, relatively few European bird species of upland and alpine habitats are listed as threatened or near-threatened on the IUCN Red List. These include Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*, Cinereous Vulture *Aegypius monachus*, Caucasian Grouse *Tetrao mlokosiewiczzi*, Rock Partridge *Alectoris graeca* and Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*. At European scale, some 30 upland and alpine birds are considered to be species of European conservation concern (SPECs), as listed in one or other editions of *Birds in Europe* (1994 and 2004) – BirdLife's comprehensive assessments of the conservation status of all European birds.

Compared with the larger numbers and proportions of SPECs characteristic of some other habitats, such as wetland and lowland farmland, this might be taken to suggest that upland birds are generally faring comparatively well. However, as the quality of the data provided for *Birds in Europe* makes clear, and the number of 'provisional' status assessments reflects, many upland birds are amongst the most poorly monitored species in Europe. This is particularly true of some montane species and passerines. The challenges to monitoring such species are obvious, but given the growing threats that they face (as described elsewhere at this conference), the consequences of not knowing how they are faring are becoming ever more serious.

With funding from the European Commission, BirdLife is currently collating and analysing new data from across Europe, to reassess the regional conservation status of all species and update *Birds in Europe*. This exercise has been integrated with the first round of a new reporting process under Article 12 of the Birds Directive, which means that EU Member States are now obliged to report on the population status and trends of every native bird species in their country every 6 years. The data set that emerges will be the most up-to-date, best available and widely agreed, as well as the official source of EU bird data until the next reporting round in 2019. It will be fascinating to see how upland birds have fared since the turn of the millennium – and to follow how Member States respond to the challenges of both monitoring and conserving these species over the coming years.