Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 783 (1976)[1]

Protection of birds and their habitats in Europe

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Having taken cognisance of the report by its Committee on Regional Planning and Local Authorities on the protection of birds and their habitats (Doc. 3798) ;

2. Having regard to its Recommendation 720 (1973) on the results of the European Ministerial Conference on the Environment, paragraph 7. II.b of which asked the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to define a coherent policy for the protection of wildlife ;

3. Considering that birds form an indispensable part of the ecological cycle and that they play an essential role in the control of insects ;

4. Fearing that more and more insects will become resistant to pesticides and that for this reason birds will become even more important to check the growth of the insect population ;

5. Considering, therefore, that bird protection is not only an ethical or aesthetical matter, but also of essential importance to agriculture ;

6. Convinced that migratory birds are a res communis, belonging to the whole international community, and that all states concerned should therefore be responsible for their protection ;

7. Observing that birdlife and bird habitats in Europe are seriously declining, and that 58 bird species, including 15 species of birds of prey, are rare or vulnerable ;

8. Alarmed at the continual slaughter of migratory birds (particularly wildfowl and passeri-formes) ;

9. Pointing to the need to maintain the diversity of bird species by means of an international programme of comprehensive protection ;

10. Observing that the relevant international conventions cover only some aspects of bird protection ;

11. Welcoming Resolution No.2, on the protection of wildlife, adopted by the 2nd European Ministerial Conference on the Environment (Brussels, 23-24 March 1976), which asks the Committee of Ministers to set up an ad hoc committee of experts in the Council of Europe to draft a legal instrument on the conservation of wildlife,

12. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers :

promptly set up the ad hoc committee of experts to draft the convention referred to in paragraph 2 of Resolution No. 2 ;

instruct the ad hoc committee to submit a draft convention in time for the 3rd European Ministerial Conference on the Environment ;

ensure that the convention includes a clause enabling any state outside the Council of Europe to accede to it ;

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1. SeeDoc. 3798, report of the Committee on Regional Planning and Local Authorities. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 28 June 1976.

forward this recommendation and the report of its Committee on Regional Planning and Local Authorities (Doc. 3798) to the ad hoc committee, drawing its attention to the following principles :

a. protection of all bird species, unless specifically stipulated otherwise ;

b. protection of biotopes, due regard being paid to the provisions of Committee of Ministers Resolution (76) 17 ;

c. special measures for migratory birds, viz. :

protection adapted to their behaviour and the variety of their species ;

creation of a network of stopping places or migration routes ;

introduction of harmonised hunting and shooting arrangements (season dates and species to be chosen annually according to brood figures and migratory behaviour) ;

d. devising of an active management system for birdlife (covering the training and remuneration of reserve wardens, and the surveillance of relevant areas) ;

e. prohibition of pesticides harmful for birds and supervision of the sale of authorised pesticides ;

f. strict control of the keeping of birds of prey, including an obligation to notify the possession, purchase, and sale thereof (ban on the importing of dead or live birds without specific authorisation) ;

g. teaching of basic elements of birdlife and bird protection in primary and secondary schools ;

speed up work under the medium-term plan on the revision of the list of threatened birds in Europe ;

urge member states, if they have not yet done so, to ratify and implement :

the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar (Iran), 1971) ;

the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (Washington, 1973) ;

ask the Sub-Committee on Poisonous Substances used in Agriculture (Partial Agreement) to pay particular attention to the risks involved in the use of chemical substances in agriculture, such as fertilisers and pesticides, with a view to prohibiting the sale and use of persistent pesticides with a cumulative effect ;

ask the ad hoc committee of experts referred to under I above, to include in the draft convention appropriate measures to generally prohibit the importation, exportation and trade in endangered birds ;

ask the European Information Centre for the Conservation of Nature to promote the education of the public in the field of bird protection ;

forward this recommendation to the members of the Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, to the local and regional authorities, and to the relevant non-governmental organisations, in order to alert public opinion to the problems of protecting birds and their habitats ;

make an urgent call on member states, the Mediterranean countries in particular, to take effective action to stop the annual slaughter of migratory birds on their territory.