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SICILY – HUNTING: BIRDS TEMPORARILY SPARED – THE SICILIAN REGIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE COURT OVERTURNS THE REGION’S DECISION.

The associations call for hunting to be replaced by birdwatching and eco-tourism – sources of income, social progress and beauty – and for an end to the infliction of death and suffering that favours a group of individuals at the expense of the common good.

By an order dated 27 July 2026, issued following an appeal by the organisations **Federazione Nazionale Pro Natura and LEAL** – with the support of **CABS and Green Impact** – the Sicilian Regional Administrative Court has suspended the hunting calendar decided by the Sicilian Regional Government, acknowledging all the concerns raised by the environmental organisations, represented in court by lawyers D’Agostino, Giovinazzo and Loprete.

“As a result of this order,” the organisations state, “the pre-season hunting period has been abolished, and this will benefit wild turtle doves – a species that has suffered a dramatic decline across Europe due to hunting. Despite this, the Sicilian Regional Government has for years insisted on allowing hunting, under pressure from hunting associations, including them at all costs – against scientific evidence – amongst the species open to hunting.” Among the points raised by the environmental organisations is not only the observation that Sicily has once again opened the hunting season for endangered species – for which strict protection measures should have been introduced as long as 20 years ago, when these species began to show clear signs of decline (such as the skylark, which has declined by 50 per cent in Italy over 20 years), but also the eight-year absence of a wildlife management and hunting plan – an essential tool for authorising culls, required by both Italian and European law, yet still lacking in Sicily.

It is clear that the Sicilian Regional Government is keen to open up hunting to as many species as possible and to favour hunting associations – which provide ‘death as a hobby’ – whilst investment in wildlife conservation (a collective good) is non-existent, denounces the CABS, the European association that supported the appeal to the Regional Administrative Court (TAR). Furthermore, the necessary controls are lacking; the Region has never established dedicated and competent surveillance units – an issue already highlighted on several occasions by ISPRA, the state’s technical and scientific body – which has for years emphasised the importance of Sicily as a transit territory for species vital to the whole of Europe and Africa, the seriousness of poaching, and the Region’s complete disregard for effective surveillance and prevention.

According to the applicant organisations, the contested document itself was flawed by specious reasoning, shortcomings in the preliminary investigation, and a lack of sound scientific data as well as authoritative sources. The hearing on the merits of the appeal will take place on 20 October.

In the meantime, until 20 September, birds will be able to migrate in peace – without the risk of being killed – at least those authorised to do so, across Sicily.

FURTHER INFORMATION.

Sicily is one of the Mediterranean's main migratory corridors and is home to breeding populations of European significance. Every year, tens of thousands of birds of prey and hundreds of thousands of other birds cross the Strait of Messina and the island's coastal wetlands. Many of these species are already endangered or in an unfavourable conservation status. Sicily's geographical position, at the heart of the Mediterranean and acting as a bridge between Africa and Europe, makes it one of the continent's most important birdwatching sites. The region combines three distinct ecological functions: a migration corridor, a stopover and wintering area, and a breeding site. Birdwatching is now recognised as one of the most underrated segments of sustainable tourism: the sector is growing in Europe at an annual rate of over 5.8 per cent, and Italy ranks among the countries with the greatest ornithological biodiversity on the continent. Sicily, with the Strait of Messina as Italy's most sought-after destination for international birdwatchers and boasting a number of significant sites, possesses a natural heritage capable of generating specialised tourist flows that are less subject to seasonal fluctuations and are also distributed across peripheral areas not reached by seaside tourism. Unlike **hunting — an activity experiencing a progressive structural demographic decline (hunters now account for less than 1 per cent of those eligible to vote in Italy — projected to fall to 0.4 per cent by 2030 — and are aged between 60 and 80)**— ecotourism generates income through international tourism, nature guides, local accommodation, catering and services – all without depleting the natural resource that sustains it (the birds), but simply by observing their extraordinary beauty.

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