



# THE KILLING

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Unlawfully shot, trapped or glued.  
Every year around 25 million birds are slaughtered  
in the Mediterranean. Read our first review  
of illegal killing of birds in the region

## INTRODUCTION

### KEEPING THE FLYWAYS SAFE

The BirdLife Partnership presents this review based on the first ever comprehensive scientific study to quantify the scale and scope of illegal killing across the Mediterranean region. The results are gruesome. Despite legal protection, illegal bird killing is taking place at quite extraordinary and unsustainable levels. While many turn a blind eye, an estimated 25 million birds are being illegally massacred annually.

In some countries such as Cyprus, Syria and Egypt, more than two million birds are illegally shot, glued or trapped each year. The report identifies three individual locations – the Famagusta area in Cyprus, the Menbej-Tishreen Dam area in Syria and the El Manzala area in Egypt – where, staggeringly, more than half a million birds are being illegally slaughtered each year.

Populations of 40 different migratory songbird species that were once abundant in Europe are declining and some are now in free-fall. Many have already disappeared from much of their former range.

European Turtle-dove (*Streptopelia turtur*) has declined by 30% throughout Europe since the start of the millennium and in some countries by as much as 90% in the same period. Yet more than one million are still illegally killed each year.

Our birds deserve safer flyways. To tackle these threats, our conservation efforts need to be scaled up at the worst locations we have identified, coupled with effective and well-coordinated local, regional and national advocacy.

We invite you to share the information in this review so we can all prevent the future of these birds ending in nets, glued to branches or illegally shot for fun. The BirdLife Partnership is committed to making the Mediterranean a safer place for birds, biodiversity and people. Join the cause!

Patricia Zurita  
BirdLife International, CEO

Find out how you can help at  
[www.birdlife.org/illegal-killing](http://www.birdlife.org/illegal-killing)



The data presented in this report were gathered by BirdLife Partners and experts in 26 Mediterranean countries during the period 2014-2015. The numbers presented represent the best estimates based on available data, and the associated uncertainty is quantified in a scientific paper underpinning this report, soon available online. Here, we discuss in more detail the situation in the 10 countries with the highest numbers of illegally killed birds. On the country maps, we highlighted the 3 worst locations for the top 5 countries.

# THE MAP OF ILLEGAL KILLING

## IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

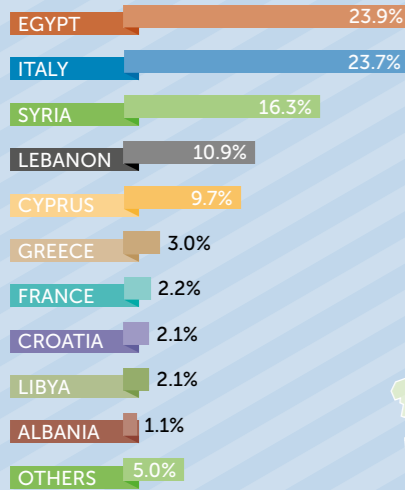
### TOTAL BIRDS ILLEGALLY KILLED

MILLION PER YEAR

13 MIN 25 MEAN 37 MAX



### BY COUNTRY



### BY FAMILY

PIGEONS, DOVES 0.7 MILLION



SONGBIRDS 20.1 MILLION



RAPTORS 0.1 MILLION



WATERBIRDS 1 MILLION

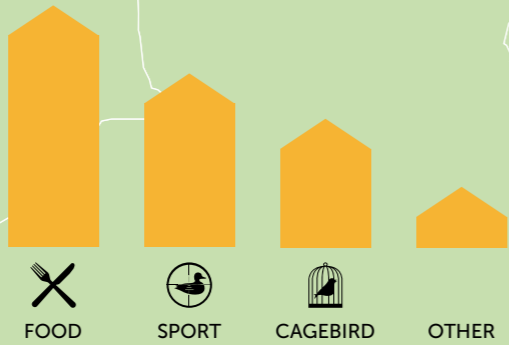


OTHERS 1.8 MILLION

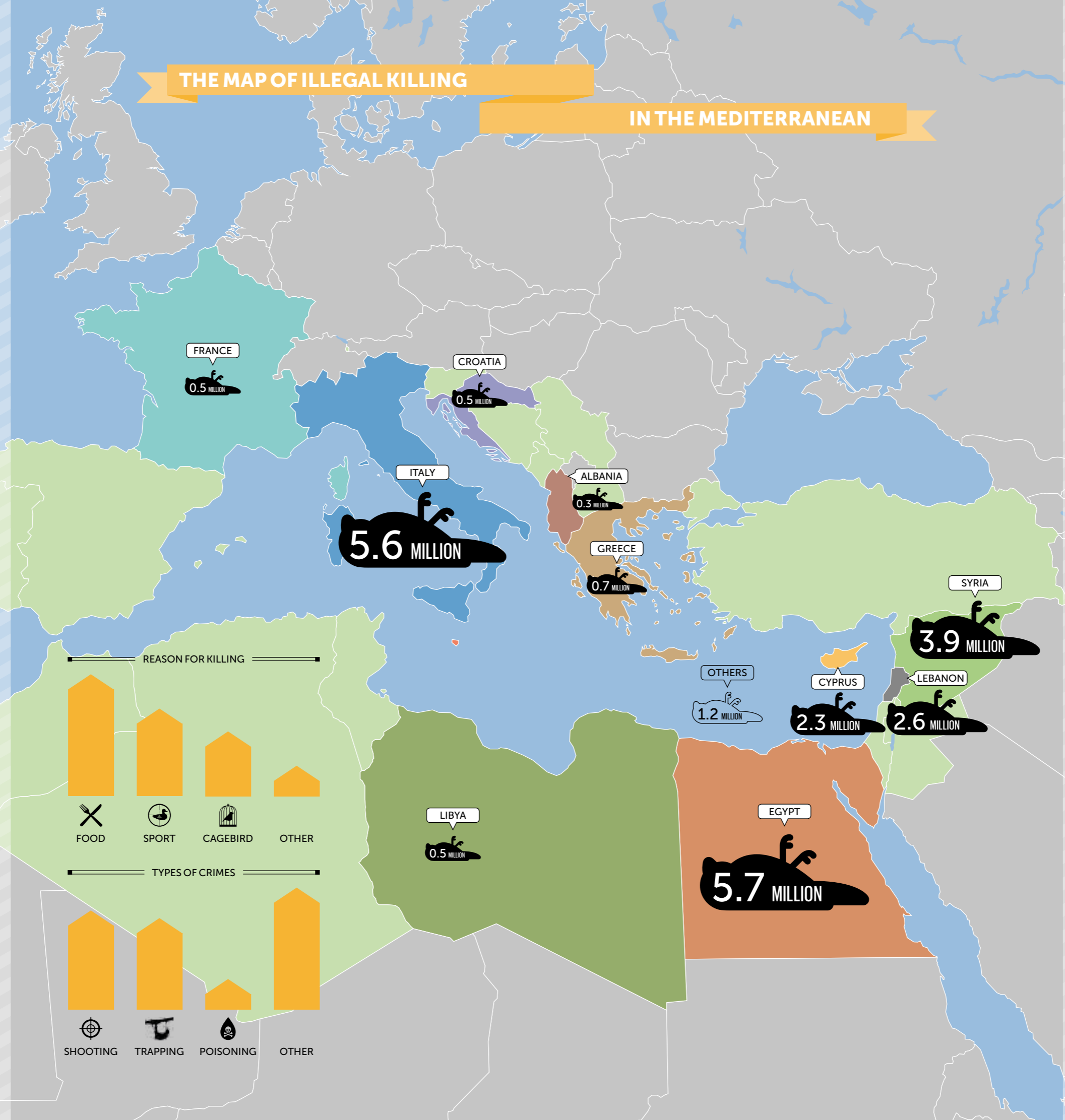
### UNIT OF MEASURE



### REASON FOR KILLING



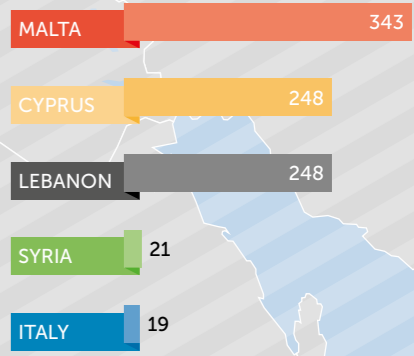
### TYPES OF CRIMES



### MOST AFFECTED SPECIES

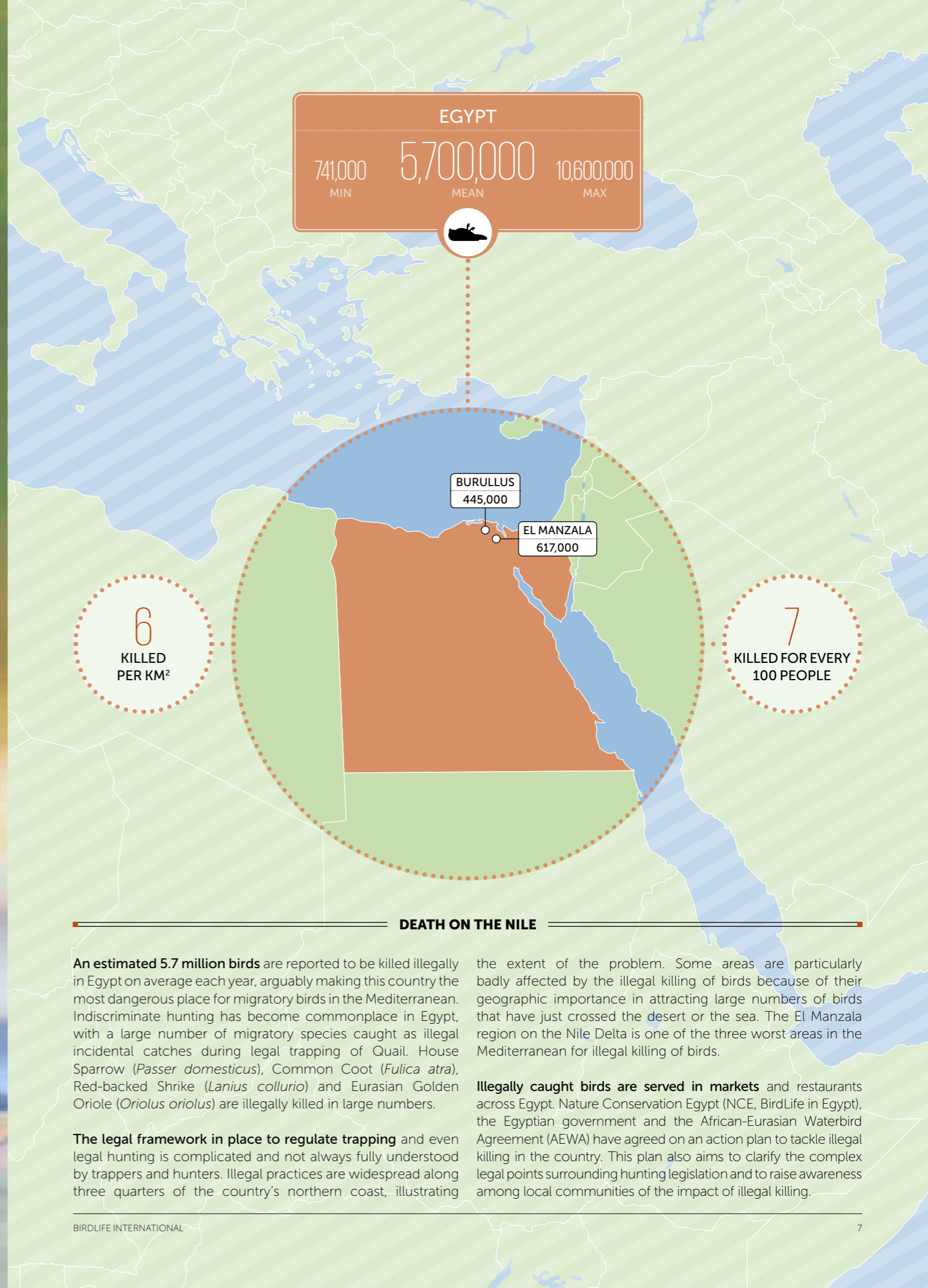


### BY INTENSITY\*



\* Mean estimated number of birds illegally killed per km<sup>2</sup> every year.

NOTE All numbers in the map are mean best estimates, for further details and minimum/maximum estimates, see the scientific paper: Preliminary assessment of the scope and scale of illegal killing and taking of birds in the Mediterranean (Brochet et al., in revision).

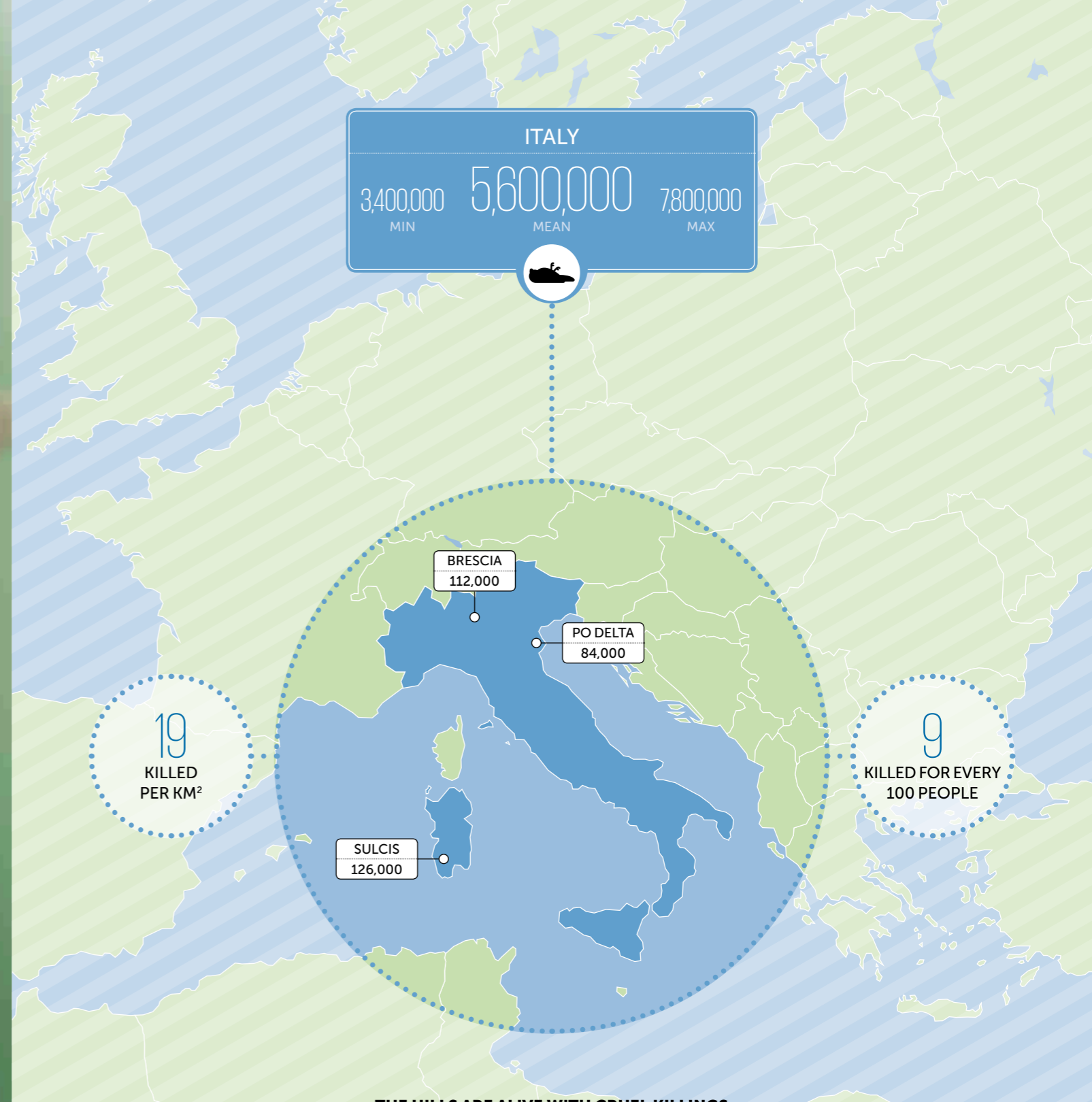


An estimated 5.7 million birds are reported to be killed illegally in Egypt on average each year, arguably making this country the most dangerous place for migratory birds in the Mediterranean. Indiscriminate hunting has become commonplace in Egypt, with a large number of migratory species caught as illegal incidental catches during legal trapping of Quail. House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), Common Coot (*Fulica atra*), Red-backed Shrike (*Lanius collurio*) and Eurasian Golden Oriole (*Oriolus oriolus*) are illegally killed in large numbers.

The legal framework in place to regulate trapping and even legal hunting is complicated and not always fully understood by trappers and hunters. Illegal practices are widespread along three quarters of the country's northern coast, illustrating

the extent of the problem. Some areas are particularly badly affected by the illegal killing of birds because of their geographic importance in attracting large numbers of birds that have just crossed the desert or the sea. The El Manzala region on the Nile Delta is one of the three worst areas in the Mediterranean for illegal killing of birds.

Illegally caught birds are served in markets and restaurants across Egypt. Nature Conservation Egypt (NCE, BirdLife in Egypt), the Egyptian government and the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) have agreed on an action plan to tackle illegal killing in the country. This plan also aims to clarify the complex legal points surrounding hunting legislation and to raise awareness among local communities of the impact of illegal killing.



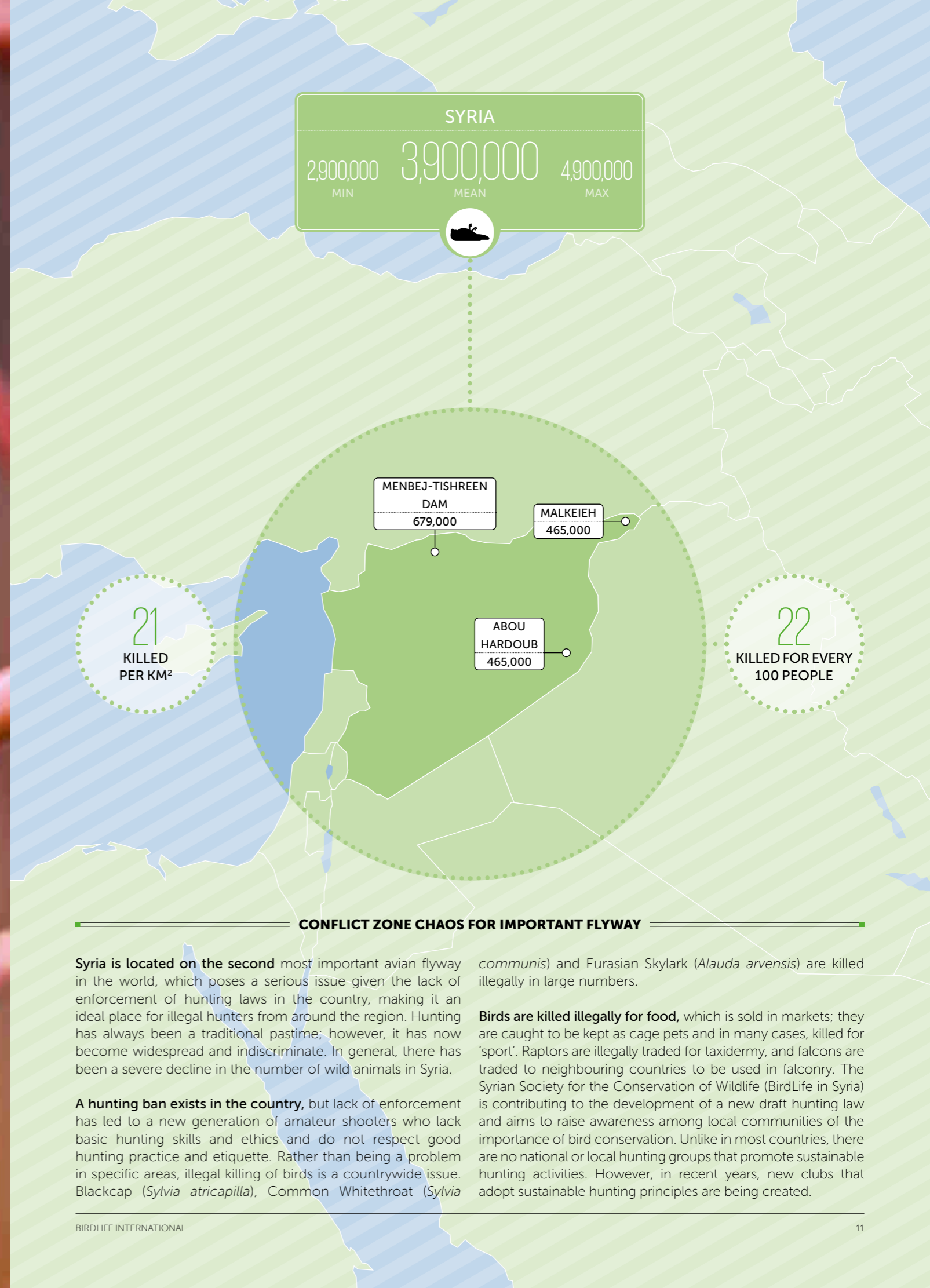
#### THE HILLS ARE ALIVE WITH CRUEL KILLINGS

Italy is estimated to be the worst of the EU's Mediterranean member states in terms of illegal killing, with an estimated 5.6 million birds reported to be killed illegally each year. On average, 19 individuals/km<sup>2</sup> are illegally killed in Italy each year. Of the 348 species of birds that regularly occur in Italy, 43% are being killed illegally in significant numbers.

The country has a long history of hunting and illegal killing for food, recreational purposes and persecution of predators. Despite existing laws regulating the hunting of birds, problems still exist, particularly in Brescia province, the Po Delta and Sulcis (Sardinia), although illegal killing is considered a very widespread activity in the whole of Italy.

In the Brescia Alps, birds are trapped in tension snares, where many die of thirst or exhaustion. Migrant birds caught in nets are sometimes used to trap other birds: they are kept in the dark and released into daylight only in autumn. They mistake this for spring and then sing, attracting even more birds to the trap.

Birds hunted in the Sulcis district are sold at high prices to restaurants and other private dealers to be consumed. Large numbers of Eurasian Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*), Meadow Pipit (*Anthus pratensis*) and Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*) are killed in Italy. The Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli (LIPU, BirdLife in Italy) is working with other NGOs and local partners on action plans to raise awareness of the issue of illegal killing in Italy.



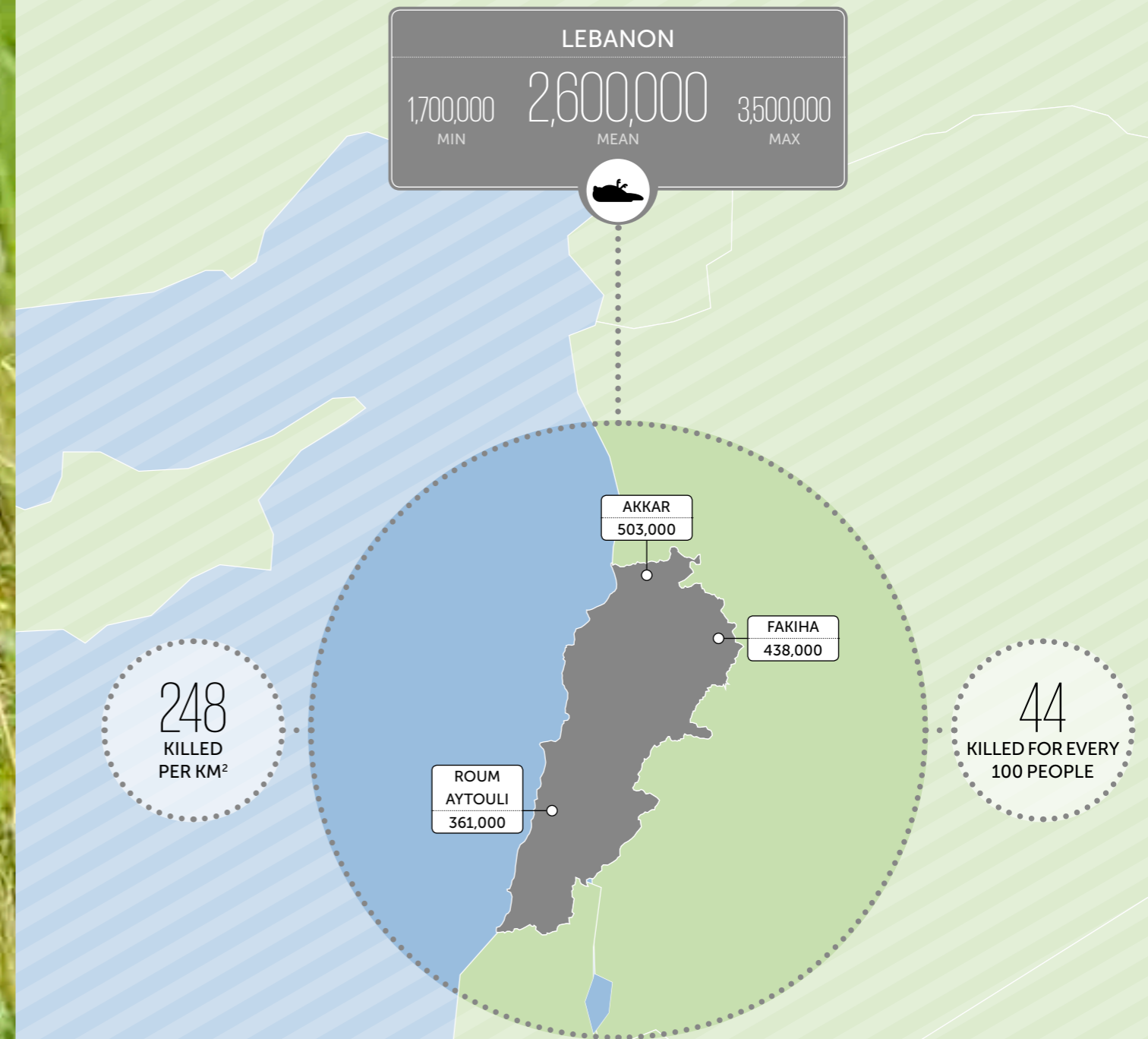
**CONFLICT ZONE CHAOS FOR IMPORTANT FLYWAY**

Syria is located on the second most important avian flyway in the world, which poses a serious issue given the lack of enforcement of hunting laws in the country, making it an ideal place for illegal hunters from around the region. Hunting has always been a traditional pastime; however, it has now become widespread and indiscriminate. In general, there has been a severe decline in the number of wild animals in Syria.

A hunting ban exists in the country, but lack of enforcement has led to a new generation of amateur shooters who lack basic hunting skills and ethics and do not respect good hunting practice and etiquette. Rather than being a problem in specific areas, illegal killing of birds is a countrywide issue. Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*), Common Whitethroat (*Sylvia*

*communis*) and Eurasian Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*) are killed illegally in large numbers.

Birds are killed illegally for food, which is sold in markets; they are caught to be kept as cage pets and in many cases, killed for 'sport'. Raptors are illegally traded for taxidermy, and falcons are traded to neighbouring countries to be used in falconry. The Syrian Society for the Conservation of Wildlife (BirdLife in Syria) is contributing to the development of a new draft hunting law and aims to raise awareness among local communities of the importance of bird conservation. Unlike in most countries, there are no national or local hunting groups that promote sustainable hunting activities. However, in recent years, new clubs that adopt sustainable hunting principles are being created.

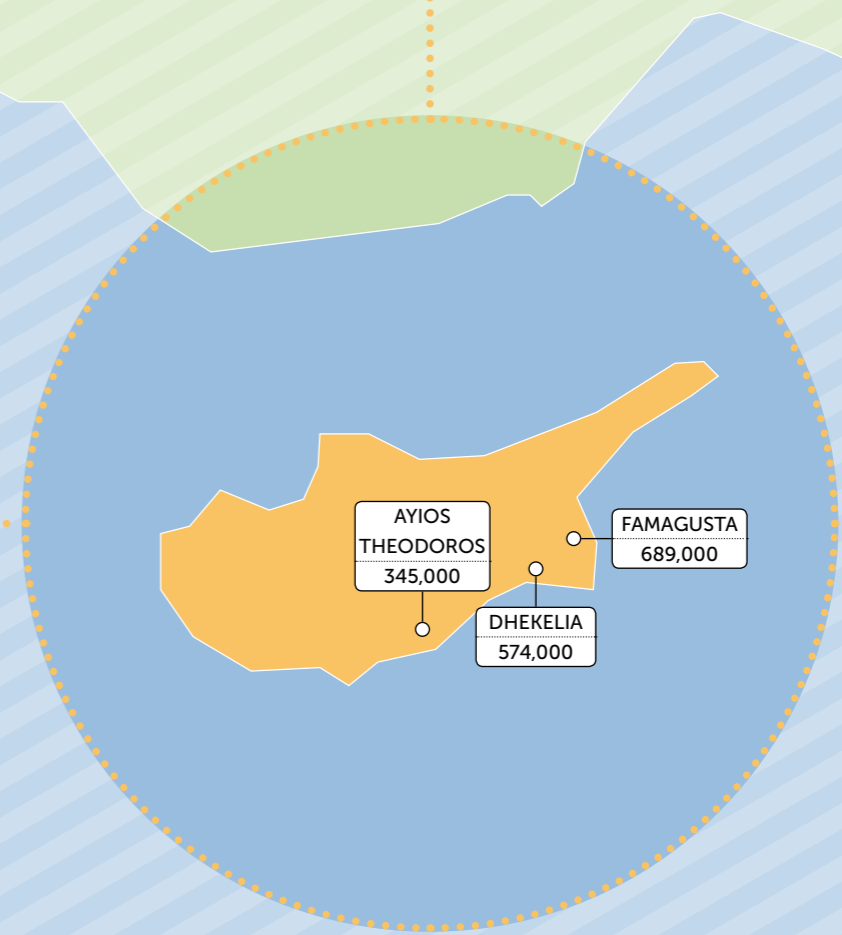


### HUNTING LAW DELAYS LEAD TO NEW UNSKILLED GENERATION

Located on the same important flyway as Syria, Lebanon is a strategic location for migratory birds. Unfortunately, widespread problems with the illegal killing of birds exist across the country. Normalised in society, illegal shooting and trapping has become an extremely popular pastime in Lebanon. As a result, the mean estimated number of illegally killed birds in Lebanon is more than 2,600,000 annually. The estimated mean number of individual birds killed illegally is 248 per square kilometre each year. There are 327 species of bird occurring regularly in Lebanon, with around 59% of these being killed illegally in significant numbers. A law on hunting was finally agreed on in 2004 after years of delays, although it was more than a decade before application decrees were then announced in 2012. As a result of the unclear legal situation, amateur shooters lacking the skills of those more

experienced hunters are illegally killing birds across the country. In fact, an estimated 400 people die each year due to their lack of expertise. New methods for mass killing of birds are being used in the country, such as song playback devices, mist-nets and bright lights at night to attract birds into traps. Common Quail (*Coturnix coturnix*), Calandra Lark (*Melanocorypha calandra*) and Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*) are killed in large numbers.

**Irresponsible illegal killing and trapping** in Lebanon is thought to be one of the main factors behind the decline of many migratory bird species in Lebanon. The Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL, BirdLife in Lebanon) and its partners have been tasked by the government with the responsibility of setting the scene for the implementation of the new hunting law.



#### A TRAPPER'S TREASURE ISLAND

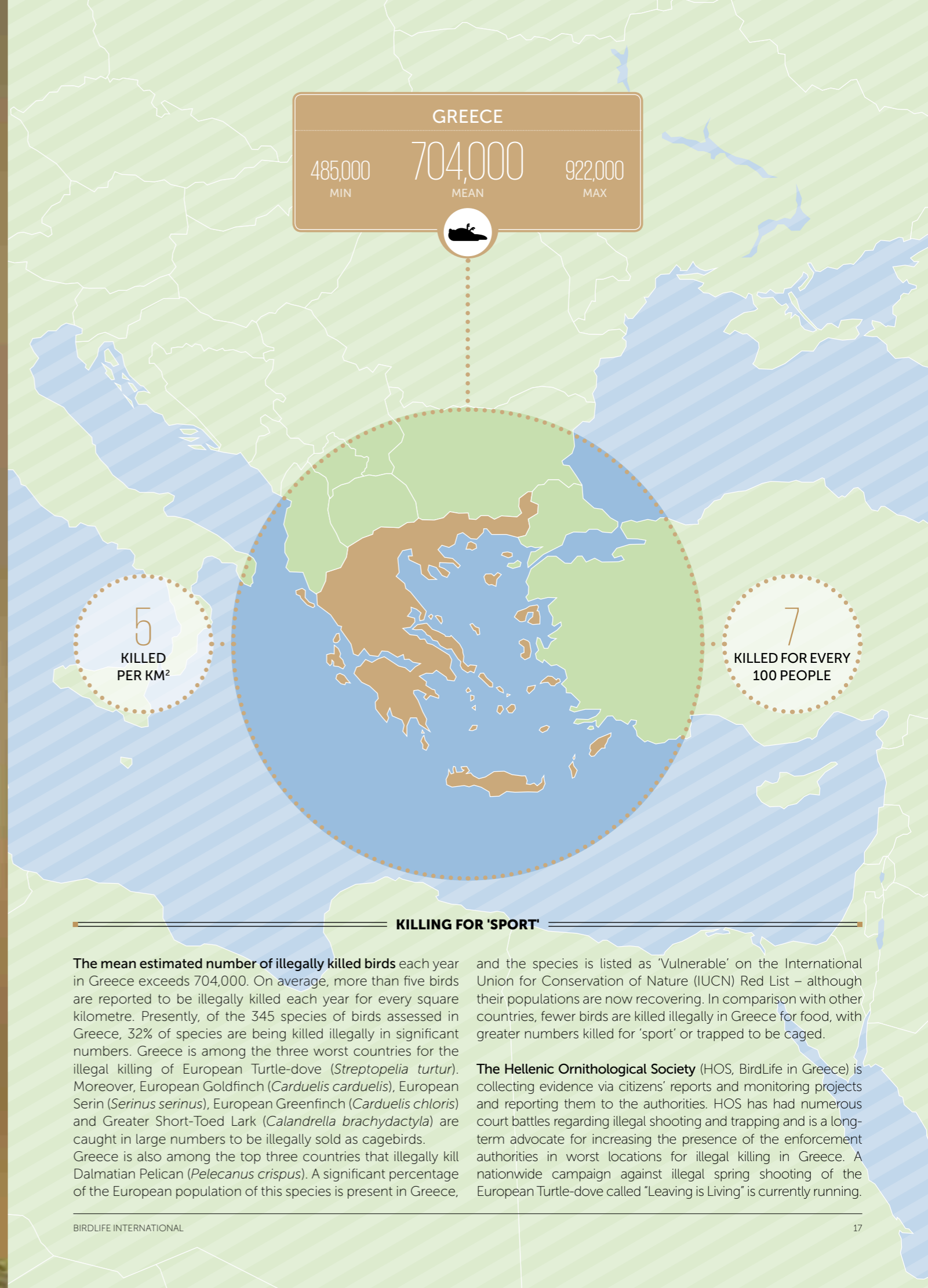
The Famagusta district of Cyprus is seen as the worst in the Mediterranean area for the mean estimated number of illegally killed birds each year. Geographically, Cyprus is a key stopover location for many migratory birds on their route across the sea. Unfortunately, birds tend to concentrate in particular parts of the island when leaving or arriving on migration – thus making things easier for those engaged in illegal killing.

Laws forbidding trapping have been in place since 1974, but these are frequently flouted. Audio equipment is used, illegally, to broadcast birdsong and attract birds to trapping locations. Many birds are illegally sold as 'delicacies' for consumption – in particular, Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*), Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*), Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca*) and

Common Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*). Species that are not wanted are caught in the same traps, and are incidentally injured, discarded or killed.

Cyprus is an island with ongoing political sensitivities, with the northern half (where the majority of the Famagusta district is located) mostly in the control of the unofficial Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The Akrotiri and Dhekelia areas are controlled as British military bases by the UK. BirdLife Cyprus finalised a National Strategic Action Plan to tackle the illegal killing of birds, which was also adopted by the British Sovereign Base Areas. Awareness campaigns have been launched by BirdLife Cyprus in schools and universities, particularly focussing on illegal serving of birds in restaurants.



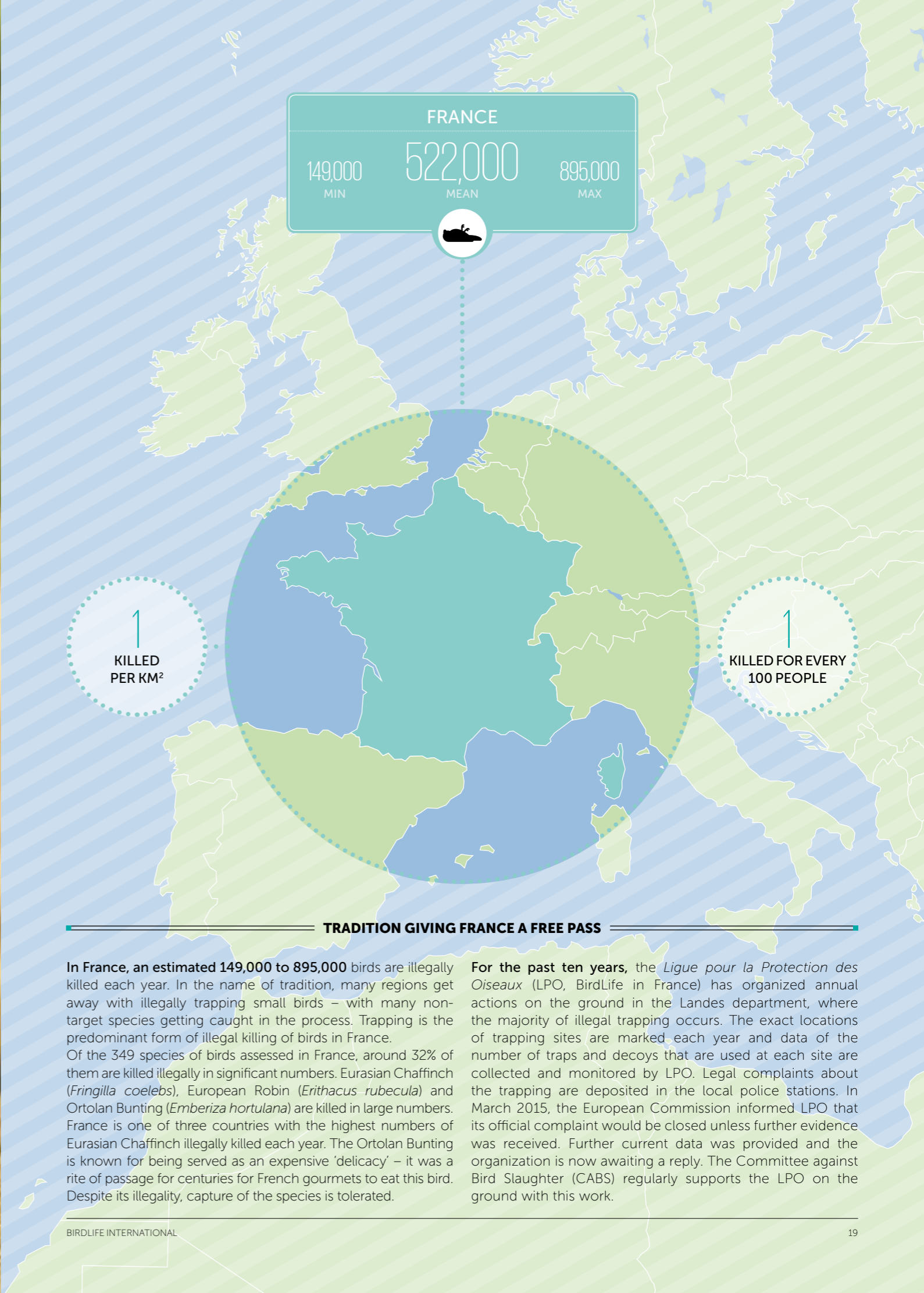


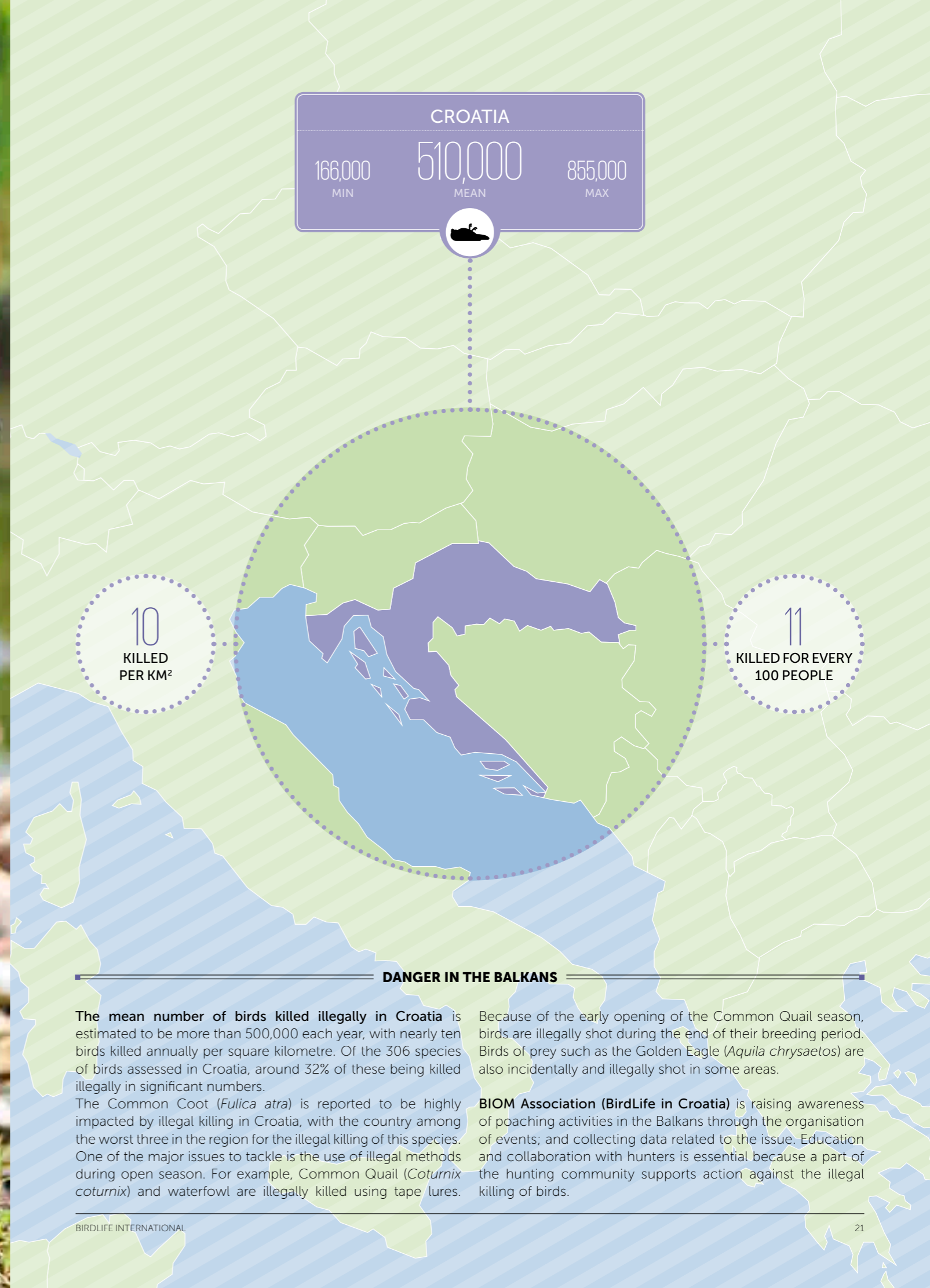
#### KILLING FOR 'SPORT'

The mean estimated number of illegally killed birds each year in Greece exceeds 704,000. On average, more than five birds are reported to be illegally killed each year for every square kilometre. Presently, of the 345 species of birds assessed in Greece, 32% of species are being killed illegally in significant numbers. Greece is among the three worst countries for the illegal killing of European Turtle-dove (*Streptopelia turtur*). Moreover, European Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*), European Serin (*Serinus serinus*), European Greenfinch (*Carduelis chloris*) and Greater Short-Toed Lark (*Calandrella brachydactyla*) are caught in large numbers to be illegally sold as cagebirds. Greece is also among the top three countries that illegally kill Dalmatian Pelican (*Pelecanus crispus*). A significant percentage of the European population of this species is present in Greece,

and the species is listed as 'Vulnerable' on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List – although their populations are now recovering. In comparison with other countries, fewer birds are killed illegally in Greece for food, with greater numbers killed for 'sport' or trapped to be caged.

The Hellenic Ornithological Society (HOS, BirdLife in Greece) is collecting evidence via citizens' reports and monitoring projects and reporting them to the authorities. HOS has had numerous court battles regarding illegal shooting and trapping and is a long-term advocate for increasing the presence of the enforcement authorities in worst locations for illegal killing in Greece. A nationwide campaign against illegal spring shooting of the European Turtle-dove called "Leaving is Living" is currently running.



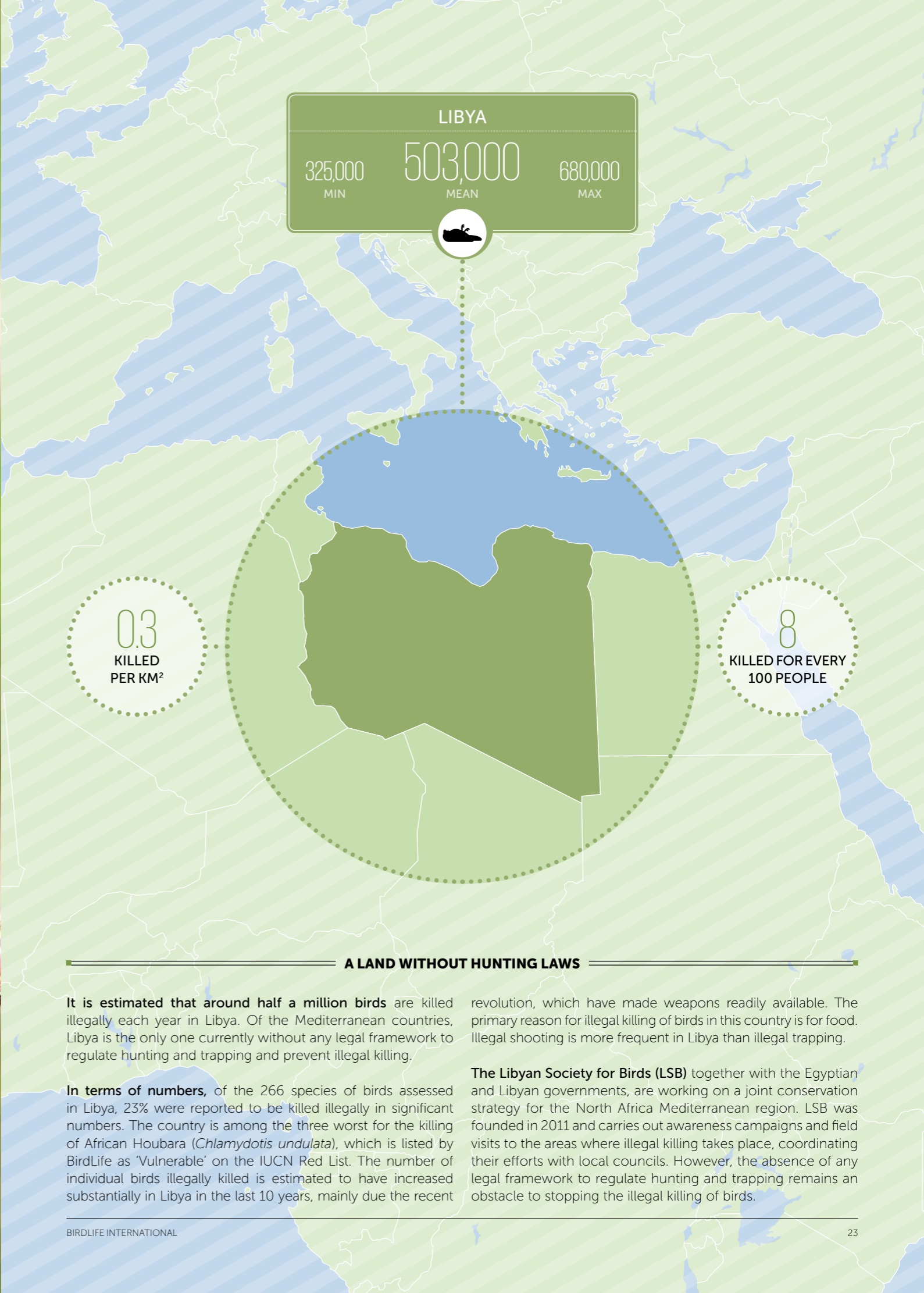


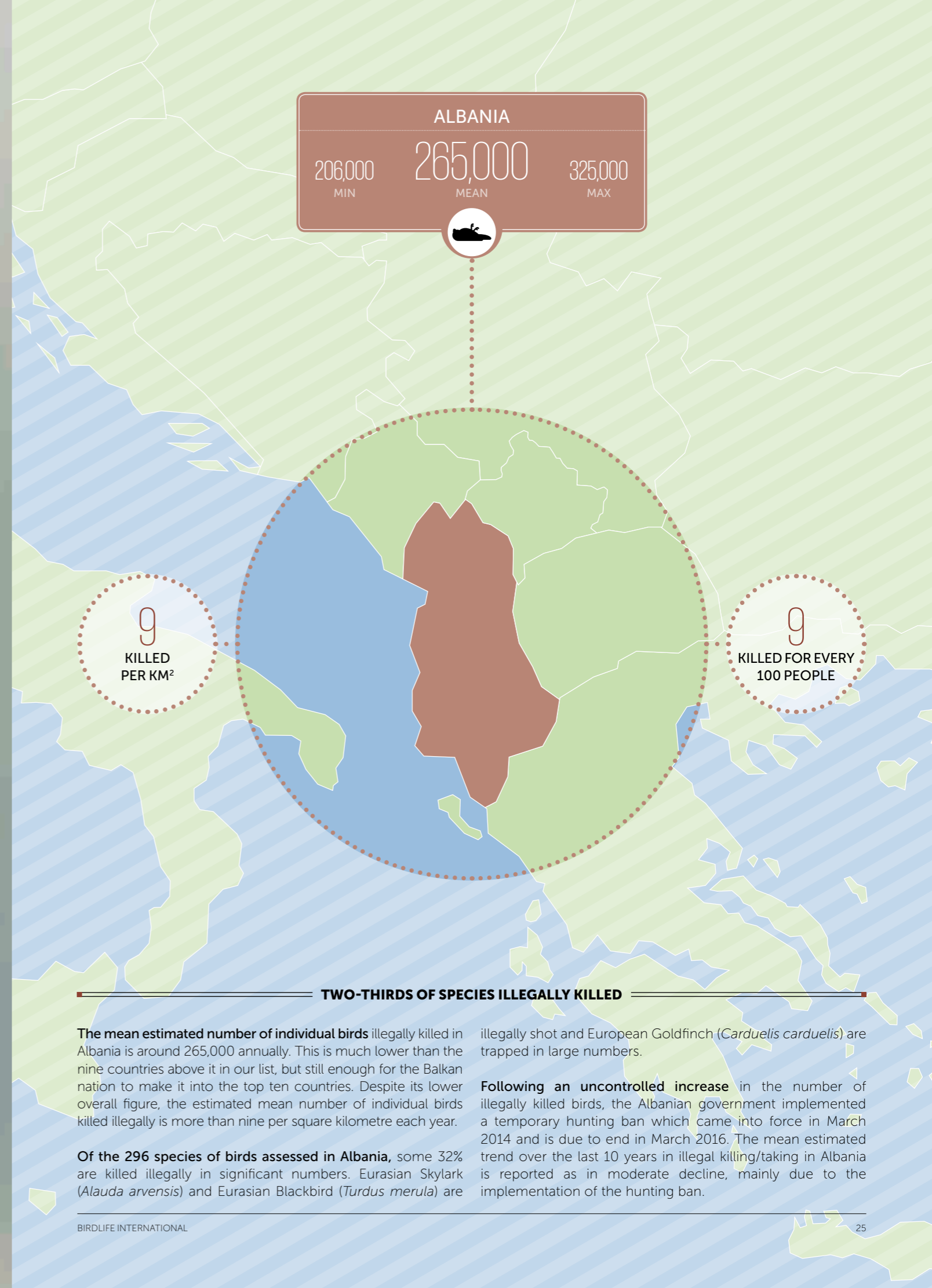
The mean number of birds killed illegally in Croatia is estimated to be more than 500,000 each year, with nearly ten birds killed annually per square kilometre. Of the 306 species of birds assessed in Croatia, around 32% of these being killed illegally in significant numbers.

The Common Coot (*Fulica atra*) is reported to be highly impacted by illegal killing in Croatia, with the country among the worst three in the region for the illegal killing of this species. One of the major issues to tackle is the use of illegal methods during open season. For example, Common Quail (*Coturnix coturnix*) and waterfowl are illegally killed using tape lures.

Because of the early opening of the Common Quail season, birds are illegally shot during the end of their breeding period. Birds of prey such as the Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) are also incidentally and illegally shot in some areas.

**BIOM Association (BirdLife in Croatia)** is raising awareness of poaching activities in the Balkans through the organisation of events; and collecting data related to the issue. Education and collaboration with hunters is essential because a part of the hunting community supports action against the illegal killing of birds.





The mean estimated number of individual birds illegally killed in Albania is around 265,000 annually. This is much lower than the nine countries above it in our list, but still enough for the Balkan nation to make it into the top ten countries. Despite its lower overall figure, the estimated mean number of individual birds killed illegally is more than nine per square kilometre each year.

Of the 296 species of birds assessed in Albania, some 32% are killed illegally in significant numbers. Eurasian Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*) and Eurasian Blackbird (*Turdus merula*) are

illegally shot and European Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*) are trapped in large numbers.

Following an uncontrolled increase in the number of illegally killed birds, the Albanian government implemented a temporary hunting ban which came into force in March 2014 and is due to end in March 2016. The mean estimated trend over the last 10 years in illegal killing/taking in Albania is reported as in moderate decline, mainly due to the implementation of the hunting ban.

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THE SCIENTIFIC REVIEW OF ILLEGAL KILLING IN THE MEDITERRANEAN  
WAS FUNDED BY AN ANONYMOUS DONOR.  
THE PRODUCTION AND PUBLICATION OF THIS LEAFLET  
WAS FUNDED BY THE MAVA FOUNDATION



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COVER PHOTO  
A LESSER WHITETHROAT (*Sylvia curruca*) IS FATALLY STUCK  
ON A LIME STICK BIRD TRAP IN PARALIMNI, CYPRUS  
© COMMITTEE AGAINST BIRD SLAUGHTER (CABS)

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PUBLISHED  
AUGUST 2015

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