

# EAZA Position Statement on songbird trafficking



Approved by EAZA Council  
19 April 2018

This statement presents the position of the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) on songbird trafficking<sup>1</sup>, and is supported by our partners in the 'Silent Forest Campaign', IUCN Species Survival Commission Asian Songbird Trade Specialist Group, Birdlife International, and TRAFFIC.

EAZA and its partners recognize the multiple severe threats posed by the global trade in songbirds. The recent International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List update moved many Asian songbird species into increasing endangered status categories (IUCN, 2016), largely as a result of excessive trapping for trade. These up-listings serve as evidence of the negative impacts of trafficking on Asian songbird species survival; sadly, this trend is likely to be replicated for songbirds in other regions of the world.

EAZA and its partners recognise that, despite European Union (EU) 319/2013 legislation<sup>2</sup> banning the importation of wild caught songbirds, the numbers and species of birds being offered for sale in the EU indicate that Europe is still a consumer destination. This could indicate that Member State National Authorities which lack capacity and access to specialist knowledge have difficulties in effectively implementing the legislation. Derogations to the legislation, such as the exemption for facilities with a zoo licence to import birds or for private people to import a limited number of birds as pets, could be misused and may provide opportunities for exploitation via onward sale into trade.

In addition, current EU legislation<sup>2</sup> does not recognise the status of country-of-origin export regulations. This provides further potential loopholes for trade that threatens species. Lastly, many traded songbird species, including threatened species, are not listed in the appendices of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). Until these listings are updated, trade will continue to have a detrimental impact on species survival.

EAZA and its partners welcome the EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking (COM (2016) 87) as a means to address these challenges. The current EAZA Conservation Campaign 'Silent Forest' ([www.silentforest.eu](http://www.silentforest.eu)), run in conjunction with partners IUCN Species Survival Commission Asian Songbird Trade Specialist Group, Birdlife International and TRAFFIC, commits to undertaking activities that help reduce trafficking of wild caught songbirds and is closely aligned to the following three priority areas outlined in the EU Action Plan:

1. Preventing wildlife trafficking and addressing its root causes
2. Implementing and enforcing existing rules and combating organised wildlife crime more effectively
3. Strengthening the global partnership of source, consumer and transit countries against wildlife trafficking

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<sup>1</sup> Defined in the EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking as 'international and non-international illegal trade in wild animals and plants and derived products, and closely interlinked offences such as poaching'

<sup>2</sup> Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 139/2013 of 7 January 2013 laying down animal health conditions for imports of certain birds into the Union and the quarantine conditions thereof

### **EAZA and its partners calls for:**

- A. Improved regulation and enforcement of existing legislations
- B. Tighter controls on licensing of facilities permitted to import and hold songbirds
- C. Legislative recognition of the negative impact of trade in songbird species

### **Through:**

- A. Strengthening enforcement by utilising the scientific expertise of EAZA and partners in cases of queries over songbird species identification, current status in the wild and human care.  
For example, by:
  - Linking to an EAZA and partners register of expert advisors capable of providing information across a range of languages
  - Facilitating ways to gain regular updates on species held in EAZA Ex Situ Programmes for population management, and the likelihood of species' breeding in human care
  - Working with EAZA and partners to gain current information on distribution and status in the wild via increased information exchange and cooperation with countries of origin
  - Providing technical and financial support for efforts to collect data and evidence to monitor trade, including online trade
  - Working with EAZA to provide advice on suitable facilities for confiscated songbirds
- B<sub>1</sub> The European Union advocating adoption of EAZA Standards as good practices to minimise misuse of derogations to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 139/2013 leading to songbird trafficking. Using such Standards as guidance when National Authorities are licencing facilities holding songbirds that gain this derogation: For example, EAZA Standards on:
  - Acquisition:
    - All songbirds (in the collection) should come from a trustworthy source (ideally captive bred) and accompanied by all relevant legislative paperwork
    - Be confident that such acquisitions will not have a deleterious effect upon the wild population and are obtained only from sustainable sources
  - Keeping records of all individual animals
  - Providing proper veterinary care
  - Complying with international agreements such as CITES
- B<sub>2</sub> The recognition that there is a legitimate need for approved conservation breeding programmes to obtain wild-caught birds from range countries for population management purposes, and that this is always done with non-commercial intent. These acquisitions should be in accordance with relevant national and international legislation and aimed at building up self-sustainable populations in the EAZA region.
- C. The European Union working with EAZA and partners to facilitate improved control of existing CITES listed songbird species as well as considering CITES proposals for listing of new songbird species threatened by high levels of trade.

Reference: IUCN (2016) *New bird species and giraffe under threat – IUCN Red List*. IUCN news pages at <https://www.iucn.org/news/secretariat/201612/new-bird-species-and-giraffe-under-threat-%E2%80%93-iucn-red-list>

## **Background to EAZA**

EAZA is a non-profit conservation organisation, with Members across Europe and the Middle East. Its mission is to facilitate cooperation within the European zoo and aquarium community towards the goals of public education and engagement, scientific research and nature conservation. EAZA believes that zoos and aquariums have a strong role to play in the conservation of nature and wildlife both at our Member institutions and out in the field, and believes that wild animals in human care are central to this mission.

EAZA is Europe's key centre of excellence for scientific knowledge about wild animal welfare and management, and one of the continent's foremost environmental education networks. With more than 400 Members in 47 countries, of which 26 are EU Member States, EAZA is the world's largest regional zoo association and is represented in EU Member States through National Zoo Associations and individual zoos.

## **Background to IUCN SSC Asian Songbird Trade Specialist Group**

The IUCN SSC Asian Songbird Trade Specialist Group is an international network of dedicated wildlife trade and songbird experts concerned with the illegal, as well as unsustainable, songbird trade. Songbird-keeping is a pastime that is firmly entrenched in local culture and tradition in many parts of Asia. The demand for songbirds is high, involving hundreds of species and millions of individual birds every year. Capture for the songbird trade is recognized to be the primary threat for many species in Asia, particularly in the Southeast Asian region. Through the development of a regional conservation strategy for Asian songbirds in trade, this group is committed to the overarching goal of songbird conservation by working together effectively to reduce the threat of the trade to, and to ensure the survival of, songbirds in Asia.

## **Background to BirdLife International**

BirdLife International is the world's largest Partnership of independent, national non-governmental nature conservation organisations. Through their local-to-global approach, they deliver effective and long-term conservation for the benefit of nature and people. The BirdLife Partnership spans across 122 countries and territories and are actively working in at least 15 countries across Asia. BirdLife works on addressing the illegal wildlife trade globally through its Preventing Extinctions Programme.

## **Background to TRAFFIC**

TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network, is the leading non-governmental organization working globally on trade in wild animals and plants in the context of both biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. TRAFFIC's mission is to ensure that trade in wild plants and animals is not a threat to the conservation of nature. TRAFFIC's vision is of a world where wildlife trade is: managed in a way that maintains healthy wildlife populations and ecosystems; contributes to meeting human needs; supports local and national economies; and helps motivate commitments to conserve wild species and habitats.



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