

THE COMMON QUAIL is a small bird from the Phasianidae family. It nests on the ground, in open agricultural habitats, often in crops. It is tiny and shy, so it is more common to hear it than to see it. It sings mainly at dusk and daybreak. Its song is a rhythmic, trisyllabic phrase "weet weet-weet", repeated 3 - 8 times. Its brood has 8 - 13 eggs. The quail feeds on plants and small invertebrates (insects). The main threats for the species are the loss of habitats, the use of pesticides and, especially in the Mediterranean, poaching.



Common quail. Image by Maciej Szymański

Croatia is a black spot when it comes to the number of illegally killed quail

There are 40 - 100 thousand illegally killed Common quail in Croatia every year. This is done with the help of calling devices. Each year, from the beginning of August until the end of October, on many agricultural areas in almost every Croatian county the recorded sound of calling devices can be heard throughout the night: "weet weet-weet, weet weet-weet, mau-vau". Early in the morning, poachers come to turn the devices off and start the illegal large scale killing of this sensitive species.

Project LIFE Against Bird Crime

The objective of the LIFE ABC project is to build capacity for tackling bird crime in Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Croatia. As part of the project, a campaign is carried out with the aim of raising public awareness on the scale and significance of bird crime. The project also aims to strengthen the institutions responsible for the prevention and prosecution of criminal activities



Giving quails a voice?

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The views expressed in this leaflet are solely those of Association Biom and does not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

LET'S UNITE AGAINST BIRD CRIME

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Image by Jonathan Slifkin

CALLING DEVICE

A tape lure or calling device is an electronic device which imitates the voice of a certain species. It consists of different playback devices connected to a battery and a speaker. The simplest DIY version is just a car radio connected to a car battery.



A NATURAL SONG

They are installed in places which birds in migration perceive as safe resting places, and consequently gather there in great numbers. Instead of 5 - 10 quail killed during legal hunting, poaching with the use of calling devices results in a number that is up to 10 times greater.

HOW TO RECOGNISE A CALLING DEVICE?

Most models of calling devices work constantly and reproduce quail song without longer breaks. Real quail will never sing from a single place without any pauses, and their song can never be heard from a significant distance. A calling device can be heard from a distance of up to 6 kilometres.



A CALLING DEVICE

If, during night time, you hear the sound “weet weet-weet, weet weet-weet” from a single place, constantly and without pauses, it is highly likely that a calling device is installed there.



Calling devices. Images by Biom



Criminal Police confiscates illegal calling devices. Image by Biom

POACHING IS A CRIME!

The Croatian law is very clear: using a calling device is a felony.

Article 204 (2) of the Croatian Criminal Code: “Whoever hunts game (...) by using prohibited accessory equipment, shall be punished by imprisonment not exceeding three years.”

Prohibited accessory equipment is defined by the Hunting Act, Article 66 (1) (3) as follows: “It is forbidden to hunt game (...) using sound transmitters.” No shots need to be fired at the birds in order to be liable for this crime – simply using calling devices is a violation of law, as confirmed by court rulings (judgement by the Bjelovar County Court, KŽ-89/14 of 31 July 2014).

HOW TO REPORT BIRD CRIME?

Please note that it is the police that can take action on illegal activities, so your direct report is important.

The information you need to file a successful police report is the exact location where illegal activity is happening and date and time of incident. Please note any further details that may help the police identify the suspect – suspect’s vehicle and license plate number, or details such as physical appearance and clothing, if possible.

For the police to be able to act on your report, you need to call them as soon as you witness the bird crime.

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