Zydjon Vorpsi is nervous. “I am standing in the midst of a hail of bullets, I can’t wait any longer!” “OK, we’re coming straight away!”, the voice of the policeman snapped back over the phone. Zydjon had already received the same message half an hour before. The lagoon is a dangerous place to be in the middle of the night, and the area round Durrës is a hive of criminal activity.

On this December night, Zydjon Vorpsi is tracking duck poachers for the Albanian conservation organisation PPNEA. Bang! Another shot echoes through the darkness. Torch beams sweep over the surface of the water. Then, after what seems like an age, the police finally arrive. But even before the two men get out of their car, Zydjon cannot help feeling suspicious. Suddenly the guns have gone quiet! There can be no doubt about it: the poachers have been warned by the police. Earlier, after his first phone call to the local police station, Zydjon had observed a police car turning off some distance from him. It was the very same vehicle as the one now stopped in front of him. The officers are not here to pursue the poachers, but to ask questions of Zydjon. He understands only too well where this might now going: the police will give his phone number to the poachers and he will get anonymous threatening phone calls. This wouldn’t be the first time this has happened to him.

Please make a donation and help make Albania safer for its birds and its conservationists!

When the police warn the poachers

Klea Duro and Erald Xeka from the bird conservation organisation AOS likewise feel abandoned by the police and especially by the Albanian government. “So far we have had no confrontations with the poachers, and we are hoping it stays like that,” says Klea.

All the same, it’s depressing when we go out in the field in the morning. We see men with guns and hear their shots, but at the moment there is no official authority in Albania to report such incidents to. Usually we contact the police, but they don’t always respond because they supposedly have more important things to do. They also don’t know how to deal with cases of wildlife crime. When, for example, we reported bird catchers with nets to the police, we had to accompany the officers to the scene of the crime and explain which birds are not allowed to be caught. These are tricky situations for us. We’d prefer some of these people not to see our faces,” says Erald. Yet he, Klea, and also Zydjon are in complete agreement: to watch birds being killed and do nothing is not an option.

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"We hear shots, but nobody does anything to stop it"
Opportunity #1
As a result of our pressure, the Albanian government decided in November 2020 to establish a committee for wildlife management, whose role will be to advise the environment ministry. Conservationists from our Albanian partner organisations have been appointed to this committee and participate in decision making.

It is imperative that our Albanian partners continue to document all cases of poaching. This will help to prove that a hunting ban on paper alone will not resolve the problems.

Opportunity #2
Authorities which look after protected areas in Albania are being granted extra personnel to deal with the slaughter of wild birds. This aim has already been realised. Our partners from PPNEA and AOS will help the government in the training of the new staff to be deployed.

Opportunity #3
“For two years we were sending letters to the ministry, but nothing happened. Only when the matter appeared in the international media were we listened to,” say our partners in Albania.

We will continue to direct the spotlight of European public opinion onto the wholly unsatisfactory state of affairs in Albania, particularly through the use of the media.

In the coming months we will need at least 300 donations each of 100 Euros to implement these and other measures.

A call for your solidarity
Being a conservationist in Albania is anything but a dream job. During the hunting season, Klea Duro, Erald Xeka and Zydidion Vorpsi even go out on patrol at the weekends and at night, frequently putting themselves in danger. Please support our conservation partners in their important mission! If the ban on hunting is extended in March 2021, nothing will have been gained as long as it only exists on paper. Urgently needed are better legislation, proper hunt management and a strict application of the law on the part of the government. With the help of your donation we intend to make the state take full responsibility for the protection of birds in Albania.

“Albania wants to join the EU and make a good impression. The greater the pressure from outside, the better is the chance that the government will finally clamp down on the illegal hunting of birds. Your support is important to us,” says Zydidion Vorpsi, bird conservationist of the PPNEA.

With your donation we can take advantage of all the opportunities:

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