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EC CASH THREAT TO EUROPE'S MOST SPECTACULAR BIRD —UK GOVERNMENT MUST ACT

EC funded projects to irrigate vast areas of farmland in the Spanish steppes are threatening Europe's most spectacular bird, the globally threatened Great Bustard, with extinction.

The British Government's Presidency of the EC, starting on 1 July, means UK Ministers must take a lead in ensuring the EC schemes do not cause the Great Bustard to disappear forever. The steppes are also important for two other globally threatened birds, Little Bustard and Lesser Kestrel, and many that are seriously declining.

Many farmers in the steppes strongly oppose the irrigation schemes, which require them to invest substantial amounts of money, but seldom result in sufficient increases in crop yield to be economically viable.

The irrigation projects are also against EC law. Under the EC Wild Birds Directive, the most important areas for birds listed on Annex 1 of the Directive must be protected. The annex includes at least 15 species that regularly occur on the Spanish steppes, including all three species mentioned above. Irrigation is also unsustainable, as the water tables to be tapped will not withstand exploitation.

The International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP), working with the Spanish Ornithological Society (SEO) and with technical help from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), is launching a Spanish Steppes Appeal calling for the irrigation schemes to be cancelled, and Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) to be established in the most important steppe regions. ESAs would provide subsidies for farming in the traditional non-intensive way, and would allow the birds to flourish. Local farming communities fully support the ESA proposals.

Dr. Graham Tucker of ICBP said, "We are horrified that British taxpayers' money is being used to destroy one of the continent's most important, and most rapidly declining, wildlife habitats. The British Government must take advantage of the UK Presidency of the EC to highlight this issue, and press for immediate action."

Film of Great Bustard is available "down the line" (free of rights costs).

Contact Anglia TV West Newsdesk, (0603) 615151.

The Great Bustard's amazing call is available on CD or cassette (free of rights costs).

Contact Duncan Macdonald at Wildsounds, (0932) 350444.

For further information and pictures, contact Georgina Green (0223) 277318.

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Received 27 Dec. 1990; accepted 27 Nov. 1991.

CENTENNIAL MEETING
Cooper Ornithological Society
April 13-18, 1993
Sacramento, California

SYMPOSIUM: A CENTURY OF AVIFAUNAL CHANGE IN NORTH AMERICA

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- * Ornithological film festival
- * Full slate of outstanding scientific papers

Symposium: The Status and Biology of the Northern Goshawk in Western North America

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TIOF ENDOWMENT FUND PROPOSAL

The International Osprey Foundation (TIOF) is seeking applications for its fourth grant to support research activities of a graduate student primarily focusing on ospreys. Work with other raptor species may be considered, however. The award recipient will be expected to provide a report on his or her research and use of the funds within a year of receiving the grant.

Applicants should submit a proposal outlining their project and the intended use of the funds by December 31, 1992. The grant will be awarded on March 31, 1993. Please send a project description of no more than two pages. Also provide an itemized estimate of expenses and the name, address and phone number of the graduate supervisor. Send applications to: TIOF, Endowment Fund, P.O. Box 250, Sanibel, Florida 33957-0250 USA.

subspecies. Where known-age birds are available from other subspecies, it would be beneficial to examine this currently accepted aging technique in more detail.

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North American Loon Fund Grants

The North American Loon Fund (NALF) announces availability of 1993 grants in support of management, research and educational projects directly related to the conservation of the family Gaviidae.

Proposals in the range of \$500 to \$3000 are most likely to be considered for funding. Further guidelines for prospective applicants are available upon request from the NALF Grants Committee. Deadline for submission of proposal is December 15, 1992. Funding awards will be announced by March 17, 1993.

Please submit guideline request to:

North American Loon Fund
6 Lily Pond Rd.
Gilford, NH 03246