



## THE VOICE OF EUROPEAN HUNTERS

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## REPORT ON THE 44<sup>ND</sup> BERN CONVENTION STANDING COMMITTEE

From 2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> December 2024, FACE was attending the 44<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention. The Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (or Bern Convention) is the first international agreement dedicated to nature conservation, covering most of Europe and some African countries (now 49 States in total).

Government representatives and organisations meet once a year at the Standing Committee meeting in Strasbourg to talk about environmental concerns and to take decisions. This year, the Standing Committee discussed achievements and issues at stake for the Bern Convention and its contracting parties, in particular the Financing and Strategic development of Bern Convention, Monitoring of legal aspect with a change of appendix for the wolf and several monitoring of species and habitats, but also species and populations. The standing committee ended by the programme of work for 2025 and the renewal of the bureau.

### Wolf on the agenda

On the agenda was also the proposal by European Union to move the Wolf from Appendix II (strictly protected) to Appendix III (protected). All the parties were asked to vote. The EU on behalf of its 27 Member States and Andorra, Armenia, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Moldova, Norway, North Macedonia, Serbia, Switzerland and Ukraine supported the amendment. With a majority of 38 votes in favour, the required two-thirds majority of the Contracting Parties was reached and the proposed amendment was adopted. The decision will enter into force in March 2025, only for those Parties which have not objected.

Despite the change in the wolf's protection status, the wolf populations need to be maintained at, or brought to, a level which corresponds to ecological and scientific requirements in accordance with Article 2. Their populations need to be kept out of danger.

The Standing Committee created a Working Group on exploring mechanisms to guide amendments to the appendices of the Bern Convention to reflect on a dedicated evidence-based mechanism and criteria for granting or changing the protection status of a species, as observers FACE will be part of this group.

Two other files were discussed regarding Wolf culling policy in Norway and Switzerland.

Observers organizations expressed strong concern with the extremely restricted population target in spite of the vulnerable status of the Scandinavian population of *Canis lupus*, and the species being listed as "critically endangered" (CR) on the Norwegian Red List of Species in 2021, due to the small number of animals and a very high inbreeding coefficient. The Standing Committee invited the government of Norway to prioritise proven, non-lethal measures of damage reduction and conflict mitigation to allow the population to recover to a more satisfactory conservation status, and to step up the promotion of long-term co-existence between humans and wolves based on the available best practice.



Regarding Switzerland, the Standing Committee expressed strong concern about the new wolf culling policy posing a risk of a large scale, culling of theoretically up to 65% of the population, the minimum threshold being currently fixed at 12 packs, as well as its concern for the pack whose territory contains the Swiss National Park.

In view of the facts presented by the Complainants and the Respondent, and regardless of the species protection status being “protected” or “strictly protected”, elevated the complaint to an Open File and invited all parties to send their progress reports for consideration by the Spring Bureau in 2025.

### Update on Ruddy duck management

The Ruddy Duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) is a North American species introduced in Europe which is threatening the native White-headed Duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*) through hybridization. In the Bern Convention framework, an action plan was developed in the 1990s and has been updated every five years, most recently in 2020 to frame and coordinate eradication efforts. Especially, the [Recommendation No. 209 \(2020\)](#) of the Standing Committee on the eradication of the Ruddy Duck in the Western Palaearctic by 2025 recommends that all Contracting Parties implement without delay the actions specified in the “Action Plan for the Eradication of the Ruddy Duck in the Western Palaearctic, 2021-2025”. The goal of the Action Plan was the functional extinction of the Ruddy Duck in Europe by 2025.

### What progress was made in 2024

Standing Committee, welcomed the progress in the eradication of the invasive Ruddy Duck in Europe, in light of the results presented during the meeting of the expert group on the species and the conclusions of the 2023 Progress Report on the Eradication and agreed that considering 1) the current situation in the European countries which reported to the expert meeting, 2) the mobility of the species, 3) the growing efforts that the eradication of the last remnants of an introduced species supposes, the target of Ruddy Duck being functionally extinct in the wild in Europe will not be reached by 2025.

### What’s next?

The expert group is tasked to prepare a progress review of the implementation of the Action Plan for the eradication of the Ruddy Duck in Europe 2021–2025 and a draft revised Action Plan for the period 2026–2030. FACE will continue to monitor the progress made and update the hunting community and other stakeholders and decision-makers.



## Conservation of Large Carnivores

Took note of the information presented regarding the involvement of the Bern Convention Secretariat in activities related to Large Carnivores. Several conference of the Alpine and Carpathian Conventions for the exchange of practices on management of large carnivores, took place in March, April and June in Slovenia and Bulgaria in the “Transnational exchange platform for the management of large carnivores in the Dinaric-Balkan-Pindos region”. The Balkan Lynx was listed in Appendix I of CMS and Eurasian Lynx in Appendix II

A meeting of the Group of Experts on Large Carnivores with the IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group is planned in the first semester 2025, at which lynx protection will be discussed, before presenting draft Conservation Strategies for the Carpathian Lynx and the Balkan Lynx to the Standing Committee.

## Follow-up of the open file

15 complaints were review by the committee and the different parties on various subject as the protection of sea turtle nesting zone, development of hydropower plant, impacts on Emerald network sites due to infrastructure developments, protection of fish in Alpine rivers.

## Election of a new board

In accordance with Article 18(e) of the Rules of Procedure, the Standing Committee elected :

- Mr Carl Amirgulashvili (Georgia) as Chair;
- Mr Claude Origer (Luxembourg) as Vice-Chair;
- Mr Burak Tatar (Türkiye) as Bureau member;
- Mr Charles-Henri de Barsac (France) as Bureau member;

Date and place of the 45<sup>th</sup> meeting will be in Strasbourg during the week of the 8 December 2025.