

Merops apiaster -- Linnaeus, 1758

ANIMALIA -- CHORDATA -- AVES -- CORACIIFORMES -- MEROPIDAE

Common names: European Bee-eater; Bee-eater; Guêpier d'Europe

European Red List Assessment

European Red List Status

LC -- Least Concern, (IUCN version 3.1)

Assessment Information

Year published:	2015
Date assessed:	2015-03-31
Assessor(s):	BirdLife International
Reviewer(s):	Symes, A.
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Assessment Rationale

European regional assessment: Least Concern (LC)

EU27 regional assessment: Least Concern (LC)

At both European and EU27 scales this species has an extremely large range, and hence does not approach the thresholds for Vulnerable under the range size criterion (Extent of Occurrence 10% in ten years or three generations, or with a specified population structure). The population trend appears to be stable, and hence the species does not approach the thresholds for Vulnerable under the population trend criterion (30% decline over ten years or three generations).

For these reasons the species is evaluated as Least Concern within both Europe and the EU27.

Occurrence

Countries/Territories of Occurrence

Native:

Albania; Armenia; Austria; Azerbaijan; Belarus; Belgium; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Bulgaria; Croatia; Cyprus; Czech Republic; Denmark; Finland; France; Georgia; Germany; Greece; Hungary; Italy; Latvia; Macedonia, the former Yugoslav Republic of; Moldova; Montenegro; Netherlands; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Russian Federation; Serbia; Slovakia; Slovenia; Spain; Sweden; Switzerland; Turkey; Ukraine; United Kingdom; Gibraltar (to UK)

Vagrant:

Estonia; Iceland; Ireland, Rep. of; Liechtenstein; Luxembourg; Norway

Population

The European population is estimated at 2,800,000-5,050,000 pairs, which equates to 5,600,000-10,100,000 mature individuals. The population in the EU27 is estimated at 2,470,000-4,440,000 pairs, which equates to 4,950,000-8,870,000 mature individuals. For details of national estimates, see [Supplementary PDF](#).

Trend

In Europe and the EU27 the population size is estimated to be stable. For details of national estimates, see [Supplementary PDF](#).

Habitats and Ecology

In Europe, this species inhabits broad river valleys, pasture and cultivated land with shelter-belts and scattered trees; sunny hillsides, meadows, clover fields, plains, dissected steppe, shrubby riverbanks in semi-desert, and practically any open and well-timbered country, such as cork-oak woods, olive groves, tamarisks, rice fields, cereal and root crops, and Mediterranean macchia scrub. Egg-laying is from May to June, in Europe and clutches can be from four to ten eggs. The nest is a burrow, which is occasionally excavated in flat or sloping sandy ground but more often in an earthen cliff (Fry and Boesman 2014). It feeds on flying insects, primarily Hymenoptera, and it hunts from perches. The species is migratory and winters almost entirely within Africa (Snow and Perrins 1998).

Habitats & Altitude			
Habitat (level 1 - level 2)		Importance	Occurrence
Artificial/Terrestrial - Arable Land		suitable	breeding
Artificial/Terrestrial - Pastureland		suitable	breeding
Artificial/Terrestrial - Plantations		suitable	breeding
Forest - Temperate		suitable	breeding
Grassland - Temperate		suitable	breeding
Shrubland - Mediterranean-type Shrubby Vegetation		suitable	breeding
Shrubland - Temperate		suitable	breeding
Wetlands (inland) - Permanent Rivers/Streams/Creeks (includes waterfalls)		suitable	breeding
Altitude	max. 2400 m	Occasional altitudinal limits	

Threats

In the past the species has been killed as an apiary pest in Moldova, Hungary, Russia and Azerbaijan but present attitudes are unknown. Large numbers are shot in Malta and Cyprus each year (Tucker and Heath 1994). In the long term, greater threats are likely to be depression of insect faunas by the wide scale application of pesticides, increases in large-scale crop monoculture, the canalization of rivers resulting in the loss of riverbank nesting sites, and the development of wilderness land (Fry and Boesman 2014).

Threats & Impacts					
Threat (level 1)	Threat (level 2)	Impact and Stresses			
Agriculture & aquaculture	Agro-industry farming	Timing	Scope	Severity	Impact
		Ongoing	Minority (<50%)	Slow, Significant Declines	Low Impact
		Stresses			
		Ecosystem conversion; Ecosystem degradation			
Biological resource use	Hunting & trapping terrestrial animals (intentional use - species is the target)	Timing	Scope	Severity	Impact
		Ongoing	Majority (50-90%)	Negligible declines	Low Impact
		Stresses			
		Species mortality			
Biological resource use	Hunting & trapping terrestrial animals (persecution/ control)	Timing	Scope	Severity	Impact
		Past, Unlikely to Return	Minority (<50%)	Unknown	Past Impact
		Stresses			
		Species mortality			
Natural system modifications	Other ecosystem modifications	Timing	Scope	Severity	Impact
		Ongoing	Minority (<50%)	Rapid Declines	Medium Impact
		Stresses			
		Ecosystem conversion			
Pollution	Herbicides and pesticides	Timing	Scope	Severity	Impact
		Ongoing	Majority (50-90%)	Slow, Significant Declines	Medium Impact
		Stresses			
		Indirect ecosystem effects			
Residential & commercial development	Housing & urban areas	Timing	Scope	Severity	Impact
		Ongoing	Majority (50-90%)	Slow, Significant Declines	Medium Impact
		Stresses			
		Ecosystem conversion			

Conservation

Conservation Actions Underway

CMS Appendix II. Bern Convention Appendix II. There are currently no known, specific conservation measures for this species.

Conservation Actions Proposed

Food availability may be difficult to increase and may not be the limiting factor of bee-eater populations in any case; this may be nest-site availability. If so the provision of small sand cliffs free of vegetation, erosion

and interference would be beneficial for this species. The implementation and enforcement of legislation could reduce the number of birds shot in Malta, Cyprus and other counties with high levels of hunting (Tucker and Heath 1994). Research should be undertaken to identify the limiting factors of this species to help inform future conservation measures.

Bibliography

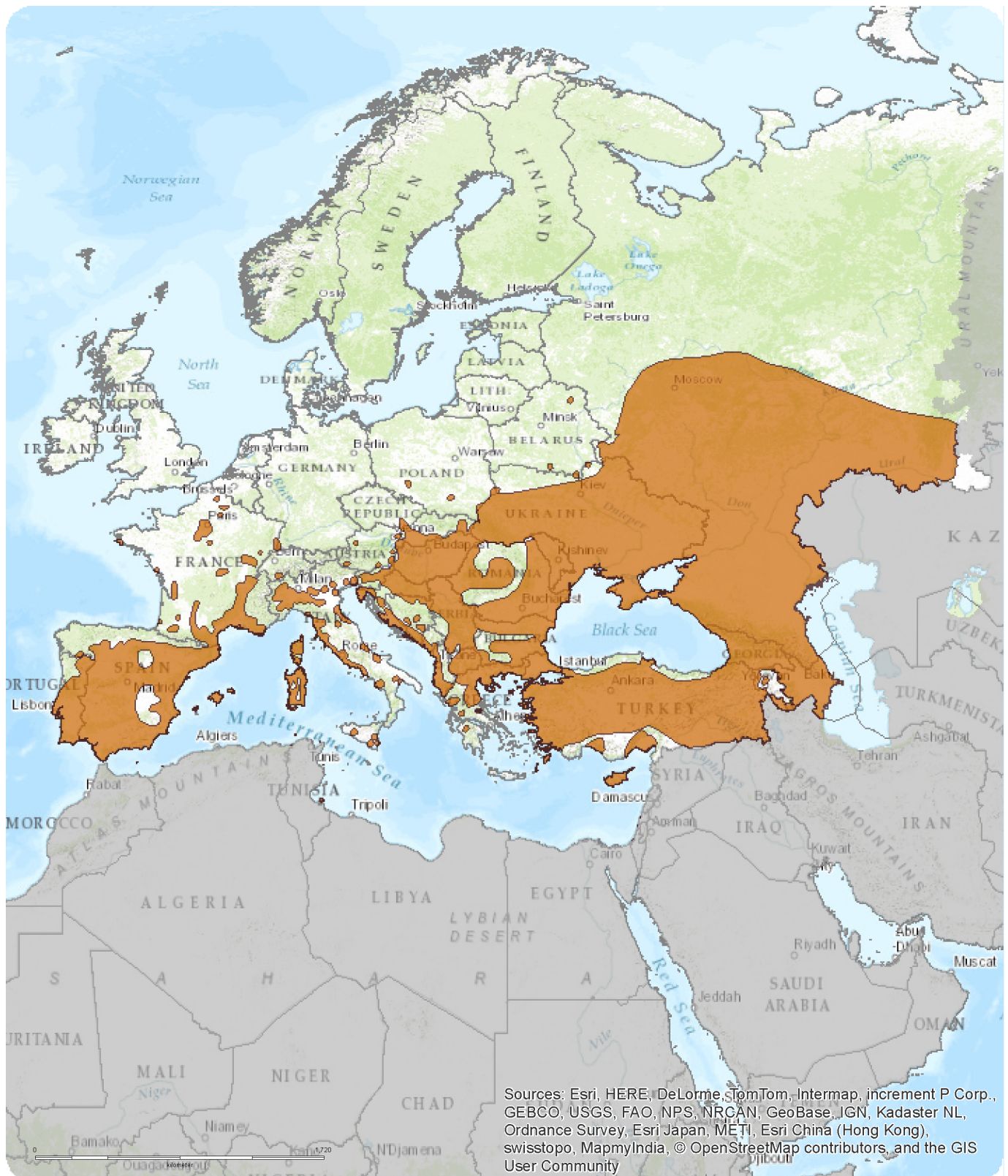
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Snow, D.W. and Perrins, C.M. 1998. *The Birds of the Western Palearctic – Concise Edition – Volume 1 – Non-Passerines*. Oxford University Press.

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Map (see overleaf)

European Regional Assessment



Merops apiaster

Range

Extant (breeding)

Citation:
BirdLife International (2015)
European Red List of Birds



Map created 05/12/2015

