European Red List Status

LC -- Least Concern, (IUCN version 3.1)

Assessment Information

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Assessor(s): BirdLife International
Reviewer(s): Symes, A.
Compiler(s): Ashpole, J., Burfield, I., Ieronymidou, C., Pople, R., Wheatley, H. & Wright, L.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Habitat (level 1 - level 2)</th>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Occurrence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artificial/Terrestrial - Arable Land</td>
<td>suitable</td>
<td>breeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artificial/Terrestrial - Pastureland</td>
<td>suitable</td>
<td>breeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artificial/Terrestrial - Plantations</td>
<td>suitable</td>
<td>breeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest - Temperate</td>
<td>suitable</td>
<td>breeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grassland - Temperate</td>
<td>suitable</td>
<td>breeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shrubland - Mediterranean-type Shrubby Vegetation</td>
<td>suitable</td>
<td>breeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wetlands (inland) - Permanent Rivers/Streams/Creeks (includes waterfalls)</td>
<td>suitable</td>
<td>breeding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Altitude**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>max. 2400 m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasional altitudinal limits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 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

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

## 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

Fry, H. and Boesman, P. 2014. European Bee-eater (*Merops apiaster*). In: del Hoyo, J., Elliott, A., Sargatal,

Non-Passerines*. Oxford University Press.


Map (see overleaf)
Merops apiaster

Range

- Extant (breeding)

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