



**CODE  
OF PRACTICE**  
for Responsible Hunting of  
Migratory Birds in MTC Countries



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# Code of Practice for Responsible Hunting of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean Countries of North Africa and the Middle East

## Facilitated by

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## Project partners





## About the Code of Practice

This Code of Practice is an associated part of the Guidelines for Moving Towards Sustainable Hunting of Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean countries of North Africa and the Middle East. The Guidelines and Code have been prepared through a constructive dialogue with key stakeholders in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia and Syria, including: national Government agencies; national hunting groups; national conservation NGOs; key individuals; international hunting councils and international conservation NGOs. The Guidelines development process is further described in the Guidelines document in section 1.4.2, and key participants in the Guidelines working groups are listed in Annex 1 .

The project team gratefully acknowledges the invaluable contribution from all the individuals, groups, agencies and organisations in the working groups. Without their participation and input it would not have been possible to prepare the Guidelines and the Code of Practice .

This document is a direct output from the ***“Building Capacity for Sustainable Hunting of Migratory Birds in Mediterranean Third Countries”*** (LIFE 04 TCY/INT/000054) supported by the European Union’s LIFE Third Countries financial instrument and the AEWA Secretariat. The Code is intended as a regional code to aid encouraging responsible hunting practices and behaviour among hunters and hunting groups and to supplement national legal and management systems governing the hunting of migratory birds, and are not an overarching statement of best practice for other regions or globally. This document should therefore be taken in both a regional and project context, and should not be taken as a global position statement by any of the individuals or organisations involved .



## The Code

The continued acceptance by modern society of bird hunting demands that hunters not only meet hunting legislation requirements, but that they also demonstrate an ethical and humane approach to hunting. The purpose of this Code is to encourage responsible hunting practices and behaviour among hunters and hunting groups and to supplement national legal and management systems governing the hunting of migratory birds. The Code stresses the two principal obligations that hunters share – to comply with hunting laws and regulations and to respect the rules governing the ecological balance. The Code requires that hunting associations and groups, individual hunters (whether locals or visitors to a site, nationals or foreign tourist hunters), managers of shoots, gamekeepers and their employees maintain hunting sustainable, paying attention to management of habitat and avoiding nuisance to others. All who hunt or are involved in hunting in any way have a duty to abide by and remind others of the provisions of the Code .

The Code draws heavily on Appendix 2 to Recommendation N° R (85) 17 of the Committee of Ministers - “Suggestions for a code of conduct for hunters” – of the Council of Europe, the British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) “Code of Good Shooting Practice”, and the “Guidelines for Ethical Hunting” prepared by the Danish Hunter’s Association and the Wildlife Management Council and National Forest and Nature Agency, Denmark. The Code mostly applies to hunting by shooting but also covers other legal hunting practices employed to take migratory birds .



## 1. Respect the restrictions on your hunting rights

These are dictated primarily by the ecological requirements of species and their habitats

- i. Hunt only those migratory bird species for which hunting is permitted; shooting or trapping of a protected species is unworthy of a hunter, affects the ecological balance and ultimately adversely impacts hunting through creating a negative image of hunting among non-hunters .
- ii. Respect hunting closed seasons and bag limits – the best hunter is not the one with most kills to his credit .
- iii. Only hunt using authorised methods and do not use non-selective or mass capture methods, such as snares, mist nets, lime sticks, illegitimate semi-automatic weapons <sup>1</sup> or poisons .
- iv. Do not hunt close to the borders of hunting refuges and protected areas – these are indispensable to the conservation of many migratory bird species and for sound game management – and abide by official hunting boundaries where they exist .

## 2. Treat quarry with respect

An ethical hunter shows respect for his/her quarry.

- i. Learn all you can about the ecology of birds passing through or resident in your country, including their populations, movements, habitat and dietary needs, and the threats they face.
- ii. Do not hunt when migratory bird populations or their ability to survive are reduced by natural conditions – help wildlife to survive in difficult circumstances.
- iii. Try to ensure an appropriate balance in the hunting of male and female birds and of young and old individuals, based on sound ecological and behavioural knowledge of the species targeted, and do not shoot birds when moulting flight feathers.
- iv. Limit the disturbance due to hunting, particularly when shooting as this can seriously impact non-target species and give consideration to the need for disturbance-free feeding and resting areas for migratory birds.
- v. Do not shoot into a group of birds in the hope of hitting one as it is likely to miss most and wound several of them - aiming a shot at a specific bird (back or side of group best) is the most likely way of killing it.
- vi. Avoid inflicting unnecessary suffering on birds - do not abandon wounded or dead game, mark and retrieve lost birds (use trained dogs if available) before targeting another bird, and be able to promptly and humanely kill disabled birds. Before starting to shoot decide which shots will not be taken to minimise the risk that a falling bird will be irretrievable.

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1- semi-automatic weapons with a maximum of 3 cartridges capacity are allowed in many countries including for example Lebanon (Law 580/2004).

vii. When shooting, use the second barrel to ensure a first-barrel bird is dead, rather than for shooting another bird, and risking only wounding and losing it.

viii. Make the best possible use of the game you have killed – all game must be, whenever possible, utilised as food or for animal products or trophies . Hunting must not be reduced to mere target shooting of game.

### **3. Seek to be a competent and responsible hunter**

All hunters should seek to improve their practice to minimise simply wounding and causing unnecessary suffering to birds.

i. Know the laws and regulations governing hunting and the conservation of migratory birds, including any local rules and restrictions particularly those operating in or close to a nature reserve or other protected area.

ii. Be able to distinguish lawfully hunted migratory birds from protected species - practice identification skills - and be sure of the identity of the quarry before shooting – if in doubt, don't shoot.

iii. Shooters should undertake training in range estimation and marksmanship, and shoot only at normal distances and in normal shooting conditions - the "might just hit it..." approach is irresponsible and does not show respect for our quarry.

iv. Be aware of your shooting competence and shotgun limitations and able to select the correct gun/cartridge combination for the quarry being hunted.

v. Only shoot when you have an absolutely clear shot.

vi. Do not shoot in poor light and weather conditions - poor visibility at sunrise and sunset or at night, during fog or rain, can significantly reduce the ability to distinguish bird species and protected species could be mistakenly killed, and neighbouring hunters and members of the public accidentally injured.

vii. Never shoot game birds at very close range as this will destroy the meat - edible game birds are quality food and should be treated as such.

viii. Always carry your gun certificate, game licence, and (if needed) a local permit.

ix. Further the education and behaviour of young hunters by example, offer mentoring in responsible hunting practices and encourage all hunting companions to comply with the Code of Practice.

x. Promote cooperation and agreements with other neighbouring hunters and hunting groups on issues concerning hunting areas and frequency, joint search and collection of dead or wounded game birds, migratory bird habitat management, illegal hunting, and adoption of the Code of Practice.

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This should also apply to birds that are culled in pest-control programmes aimed at reducing damage to crops, forestry, domestic animals and birds, etc.

#### **4. Contribute towards effective hunting management and environmental protection**

Responsible hunters seek to promote the conservation of their quarry and nature.

- i. Maintain contacts with the authorities and associations responsible for hunting and support their measures to combat poaching and achieve sustainable hunting.
- ii. Participate in actions designed not only to defend the interests of hunters but also to promote the conservation of migratory birds and their habitats among rural communities, in particular sites of national and international importance for migrating birds (e.g. Important Birds Areas, Ramsar sites).
- iii. Keep a record of your day's hunting activities, including numbers and kills, fill out game bird statistics reports, send rings found on shot or trapped birds to the relevant authority, and contribute to ring collection efforts (where they exist), to assist with club or hunting agency monitoring programmes and scientific research into migratory bird species.
- iv. Do not cause pollution – if shooting avoid the use of lead shot, especially within 200m of wetlands, pick up spent cartridges, bury entrails and feathers from field dressed birds or unusable game, and remove all refuse from the hunting area.

#### **5. Show respect for others**

As a hunter, you need to be aware of and show respect for the views of others who live in and use the countryside.

- i. Seek the owner's permission before entering private land to hunt.
- ii. Avoid damaging farms, wetlands and woodland (trampling over crops, disturbing domestic animals, leaving gates open, inconsiderate parking of vehicles, driving over ecologically sensitive habitats, etc.), and accept liability and provide compensation for any damage caused.
- iii. Preserve public property (signs, sign-posts, telephone wires, power lines, etc).
- iv. Be courteous and helpful to others in the vicinity, show consideration for other users of the countryside, and remember that other people may not be familiar with weapons.
- v. Carry third party legal liability insurance cover.

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It is notoriously difficult to judge range well - hunters tend to under-estimate range, especially as it gets longer and against an open sky. If your cartridge-to-kill ratio rises above 3:1 you need to improve your shooting skills at a clay ground.

## 6. Observe safety rules

Special attention needs to be paid when in possession of firearms - you are responsible for your own actions and the security of others.

### i. When not hunting:

- Store firearms safely (gun unloaded and dismantled) out of reach of children and other adults; the same precautions apply to ammunition;
- Make sure your gun is in good working order;
- When driving keep your gun dismantled or in its case.
- Modern vehicles such as 4 wheel drive, motor boats, motorcycle 4 wheel take into account the concepts of safety precautions. Always keep your gun dismantled and in its allocated case provided in these modern vehicles while driving.

### ii. While hunting:

- Use the most suitable weapons and ammunition so that shooting is carried out properly and effectively;
  - Obey instructions from the leader of the hunting party;
  - Only load a firearm when ready to shoot – never move from one place to another with a loaded gun during the hunt (carry the gun unloaded in the open or drawn position and with the barrels vertical);
  - Always point firearms in a safe direction including when reloading and waiting for a shot and always make sure of the final destination of your projectile;
  - Locate your neighbours and everyone taking part in the hunt, as well as walkers and other members of the public, and make sure that they know where you are;
  - Do not shoot in the vicinity of houses and be aware of public tracks, paths and other public areas and features;
  - Maintain a reasonable distance between yourself and other shooting companions both to ensure safety and enable you to concentrate on effective shooting - never have two people shooting in the same hide, butt or punt;
  - Never take alcohol before or during a shoot;
  - Never shoot from a moving vehicle – taking aim is difficult, birds are more likely to be wounded than killed and it is potentially dangerous to other people in the area.
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