



Strasbourg, 22 January 2025

T-PVS/Files(2025)2021-05\_gov

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE  
AND NATURAL HABITATS

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**Standing Committee**  
45<sup>th</sup> meeting  
Strasbourg, 8-12 December 2025

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**Bureau of the Standing Committee**  
8-10 April 2025  
Strasbourg

**Complaint on Stand-by: 2021/5**

**Habitat loss in Baden-Württemberg threatening the  
conservation of Tetrao urogallus (Germany)**

**- REPORT BY THE GOVERNMENT -**

*Document prepared by  
Ministerium für Umwelt, Klima und Energiewirtschaft  
Baden-Württemberg*

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Herrn  
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Geschäftszeichen: UM72-8850-30/11/6  
(bei Antwort bitte angeben)  
Datum: 11.12.2024

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**Complaint No. 2021/5 under Bern Convention: Capercaillie (*Tetrao urogallus*) conservation in Baden-Württemberg  
Progress report**

Dear Mr Miller,

in a letter dated 15 April 2024, the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection of Germany asked for a progress report concerning the protection of the Capercaillie in the Black Forest, since the Bureau of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention re-examined the case at its meeting on 18-19 March 2024 and was setting the complaint on stand-by. Furthermore, we were requested to share information on the state of play of wind energy infrastructure expansion, data available on the *Tetrao urogallus* population (including nesting and hatching) and the results of the research on predator-related mortality.

In the following, we give information about the requested aspects and a brief progress report on Capercaillie conservation in the Black Forest.

The management scheme 2023-2028 for the conservation of Capercaillie is being further implemented in the administration and forest management. Currently many silvicultural measures to improve the habitat suitability for Capercaillie are being implemented. These measures are implemented in state forests as well as the Black Forest national park and in privately owned forests. Research looking at the effectivity of such measures shows that Capercaillie use such improved habitats.

**Current state of play of wind energy infrastructure expansion in the Black Forest**

Please find detailed background information on Wind power development, Capercaillie conservation and the corresponding planning framework for the Black Forest in our last report (Az. UM72-8850-30/11/4).

The regional planning offensive is currently being implemented in Baden-Württemberg. By September 2025, wind priority areas are to be designated to 1.8 % of the country's surface area. The wind energy planning framework serves the planning authorities regarding Capercaillie as an important basis for the selection of suitable and low-conflict locations. The planned wind priority areas in the five planning regions, which hold parts of Black Forest, comprises in total 40.463 hectares (only part of the five planning regions is located in the Black Forest). Up to date, just 124 hectares planned wind priority areas are located in areas with a „very high spatial resistance“ and just 758 hectares in areas with a „high spatial resistance“ according to the planning framework „Windenergy and Capercaillie“.

In these areas, the requirements of nature conservation law must be met in order to plan wind energy areas and be able to approve wind turbines later (a large part of the Capercaillie population is located within Special Protected Areas SPA). Compensating habitat restoration measures are being carried out for the wind turbines built in the areas of the Black Forest relevant to Capercaillie according to the planning framework "Windenergy and Capercaillie".

The planning offensive process is not finished, yet. Probably, there will be a further reduction of planned wind priority areas in Black Forest.

At present, wind turbines can also be planned and approved outside the planned wind priority areas. Here, too, approval is only possible in compliance with the requirements of nature conservation law.

As part of the Capercaillie action plan evaluation, the expansion of wind energy use in the Black Forest was analysed (as of 2018). For detailed information, please refer to evaluation report chapter 6.5.5, page 76 (download <https://www.wildtierportal-bw.de/filefly/api?action=stream&path=%2Fforschungsprojekte%2Fpdf%2Fapaevaluationabschlussbericht.pdf>).

Accordingly, in 2018 in the Black Forest (districts of Baden-Baden, Breisgau-Hochschwarzwald, Calw, Emmendingen, Freiburg, Freudenstadt, Lörrach, Ortenaukreis, Rastatt, Rottweil, Schwarzwald-Baar-Kreis and Waldshut) a total of 134 wind turbines were in operation.

In December 2024, 146 wind turbines are in operation and 206 turbines are planned in these districts in the Black Forest (Annex 2: map of running and approved wind turbines in Black Forest). Since completion of the Capercaillie action plan evaluation in 2018, ten wind turbines have been approved in areas with „high spatial resistance“, three in areas with „very high spatial resistance (stepping-stones for population connectivity)“ and one in an area with „very high spatial resistance“ according to the planning framework "Windenergy and Capercaillie". In those cases, compensating habitat restoration measures in suitable areas were carried out.

### **Current state of Capercaillie population in Black Forest**

The yearly census of Capercaillie males at lekking site throughout the Black Forest showed a slight increase in the number of males in the year 2024, compared to the previous three years. With 97 males which were recorded in the year 2022, an all-time low in the Capercaillie population was reached, in the year 2023 a total of 106 males were recorded, and in 2024 again slightly more males (111) were recorded (Annex 1).

Since 1989 every five years all available data on the Capercaillie population is collated to map the distribution area in the Black Forest. A new distribution area is delineated for the time period 2019-2023. Whereas in the first time period (1989-1993) Capercaillie still occurred in approximately 60.000 hectares, the total area decreased to only 34.000 hectares for the period 2014-2018. In the latest

Capercaillie distribution, area for the time period 2019-2023 showed a further decrease: Capercaillie occurred on an area of approximately 27.000 ha.

Up to date, there is no extensive data available on the hatching or nesting of Capercaillie. Within the Black Forest National Park (approx. 10,000 ha), an increase from 17 Capercaillie males (2022) to 28 Capercaillie males (2024) was recorded (included in Annex 1). Since 2014, the Black Forest National Park has been monitoring Capercaillie breeding success (measured as the number of chicks observed per Capercaillie female observed). In 2024 breeding success was above average with a reproduction index of 1.4. Within the Black Forest National Park, the observed offspring rate should currently compensate for the mortality in that year. However, these values cannot be extrapolated to the whole area. Further habitat restoration has been undertaken in this relatively small area (100 ha in 2022, 140 ha in 2023, at least 125 ha in 2023) as part of an emergency plan limited to the area of the national park.

### **Predation pressure**

The hunting associations and the society for Capercaillie conservation (Auerhuhn im Schwarzwald e.V.) are closely working with the landowners (both private, communal as well as state owned forests) to increase the hunting bag of Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) as well as Marten species (*Martes martes* and *Martes foina*). Locally this has worked and an increasing number of predators have been culled. There are discussions about the legislations surrounding the culling of predators, such as an adjustment of the hunting seasons. First recommendations, to prolong the hunting seasons for some species have been implemented. Furthermore, a relatively new predator in the Black Forest is the Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*). Regarding this species there are also discussions on how to effectively reduce the predation pressure. The FVA as a research facility is accompanying the work of the local hunting associations and the society for Capercaillie conservation. Since these coordinated efforts have just begun in 2023, no data on the effects of the increased hunting pressure on predators is available yet.

With the improved implementation of the Capercaillie Action Plan (APA) and the planning framework „Windenergy and Capercaillie“, the overall protection of Capercaillie in Baden-Württemberg is strengthened while allowing for the expansion of wind energy in Black Forest.

We hope that we have been able to answer all your questions and are happy to answer any further queries you may have.

Yours sincerely,

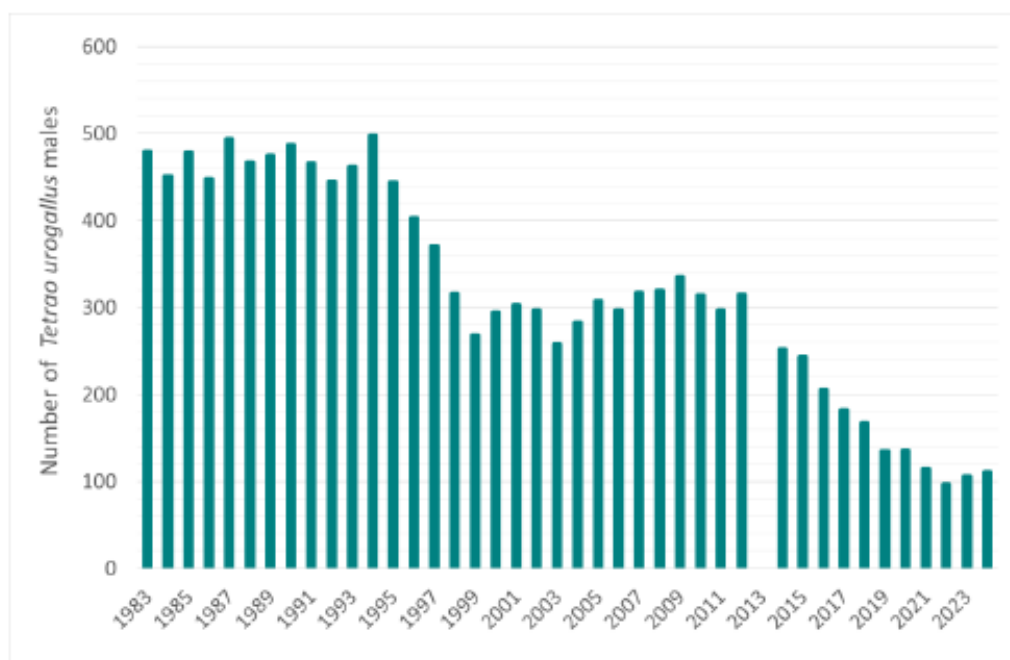
gez. Karl-Heinz Lieber  
Head of the Department Nature Conservation

### **Annex**

1. Number of Capercaillie males recorded at the yearly spring census in Black Forest (period 1983-2024)
2. Map of running and approved wind turbines in Black Forest (status 9.12.2024)

## Annex 1

The number of Capercaillie males in Black Forest recorded at the yearly spring census. Census were performed by hunters, forestry personnel (ForstBW), as well personnel of the Black Forest National Park and the Forest research institute (FVA).



## Annex 2: Map

Approved (but not yet built or operating, n=52) and operating wind turbines (n = 146) in the Black Forest (districts of Baden-Baden, Breisgau-Hochschwarzwald, Calw, Emmendingen, Freiburg, Freudenstadt, Lörrach, Ortenaukreis, Rastatt, Rottweil, Schwarzwald-Baar-Kreis and Waldshut). The spatial resistance categories of the planning framework „Windenergy and Capercaillie“ are also shown.

### Legend:

Wind turbines

STATUS

▲ Wind turbine approved, but not yet built or operating

● Wind turbine in operation

□ District border

▨ Special Protected Area (SPA)

Planning framework "Windenergy and Capercaillie"

Kategorie

■ high spatial resistance

■ very high spatial resistance

■ very high spatial resistance (stepping-stones for population connectivity)



