

Albania bans hunting to save endangered animals

February 4 2014



An Albanian boy plays in the village of Gjergjevice on June 14, 2010

Albania said Tuesday it will ban all hunting for two years to protect animals threatened with extinction.

Environment Minister Lefter Koka said the ban was necessary to protect species whose numbers had fallen dramatically after two decades of rampant hunting.

The environment ministry says [brown bears](#) and eagles are now seriously endangered in [mountainous areas](#) of Albania. The number of pheasants and wild quail have also fallen dramatically.

"We have been forced to adopt strict measures to protect endangered species from [illegal hunting](#)," Koka told AFP.

But Astrit Beko of the Association of Albanian Hunters blamed the government for failing to implement controls.

"The authorities' inability to control hunting and the [illegal trade](#) in wildlife is behind this intolerable massacre," he said.

Thousands of hunters travel to Albania every year, many of them from Italy, attracted by the hitherto lax restrictions.

Police estimate there are 75,000 hunting rifles registered in the Balkan country of three million, but the number of unregistered weapons is thought to be significantly higher.

The ban will be introduced later this month.

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