



**Committee Against
Bird Slaughter - CABS**
Komitee gegen den Vogelmord e.V.

Stiftung Pro Artenvielfalt[®]
Foundation Pro Biodiversity[®]

Field Report:
CABS & SPA SPRING 2021
BIRD PROTECTION CAMP
CYPRUS

(11th April – 16th May 2021)



Photo on the cover: Blackcap rescued from a limestick during CABS & SPA Spring 2021
Bird Protection Camp (Photo: CABS)

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SUMMARY

Between 11th of April and 16th of May 2021, the Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) and the Foundation Pro Biodiversity (SPA – Stiftung Pro Artenvielfalt) conducted their 12th spring bird protection camp in Cyprus.

Three bird protection activists participated in the camp to monitor and investigated illegal bird trapping in the southern-eastern part of the island: in Famagusta and Larnaca Districts within Republic of Cyprus and in the Eastern Sovereign Base Area, the British overseas territory on Cyprus.

During the camp, CABS and SPA activists confirmed 59 cases of bird trapping activity across 43 trapping sites in south-eastern Cyprus. Immediate actions to stop the on-going trapping activity were taken for 31 of confirmed trapping cases. The activists reported 25 cases of bird trapping to the enforcement officers on duty and all of these cases were subsequently investigated by enforcement officers. For 17 reported cases offenders were caught and issued fixed penalty notices for their offences. Traps were seized at 26 of the reported cases.

A total of 586 limesticks and 4 electronic callers were removed from active trapping sites found during the camp. 80 protected wild birds, belonging to 9 different species, were rescued from traps and a further 22 wild birds were found dead in traps or in the suspects possession.

Bird trapping trends, derived from the percentages of checked trapping sites confirmed as active during the spring camps for the period 2011-2021, are showing an increase of trapping activity recorded this spring in the south-eastern part of Cyprus in comparison with previous springs.

Beside investigations of illegal bird trapping, participants of the camp investigated also illegal hunting activity in south-eastern Cyprus. Two cases of illegal bird hunting activity were confirmed during the camp. The remains of more than 100 shot birds were found during the investigations of the illegal hunting cases.

1 INTRODUCTION

Cyprus lies on one of the key migratory routes that wild birds use during their journey between Europe, Asia and Africa: The Eastern Mediterranean Flyway (BirdLife International) and is an important stopover for a large number of bird species feeding and resting during their migration (Roth 2008, Richardson 2014).

The widespread trapping and indiscriminate hunting of migratory birds poses a significant threat for migratory birds passing through the island. Cyprus is one of the main hotspots for the illegal killing of migratory birds in the Mediterranean (Brochet et al. 2016). In autumn 2020, CABS and SPA teams confirmed bird trapping and illegal bird hunting activity across 216 locations in the southern and eastern part of the island (Debersek 2021). As only small part of Cyprus was investigated, it can be reasonably deduced that illegal killing of birds took place in several thousand locations across the island during the previous autumn.

Illegal killing of birds during the spring migration of birds over the island is less intense as during their autumn migration, nevertheless it is still common in the most eastern part of Cyprus, the area which is the bottleneck of spring migration over Cyprus.

Illegal bird trapping in Cyprus is affecting a large number of bird species with many of them considered endangered and/or species of conservation concern. Since 2001, birds belonging to 86 different species have been rescued from traps found by CABS & SPA activists in Cyprus (CABS 2021). Eleven of these species are conservation priority species in the EU and listed on Annex 1 of the EU Birds Directive (European Union 2009).

Each year, CABS together with support from SPA, coordinate and conduct several extensive anti-poaching field operations in Cyprus, called 'bird protection camps' to prevent illegal killing of migratory birds passing through Cyprus with a particular focus on the peak migration periods during spring, autumn and winter.

2 WORKING METHODS

In spring 2021 the 12th Spring Bird Protection Camp was organised by CABS & SPA in Cyprus. It took place from 11th April – 16th May 2021.

Three bird protection activists from, two from Italy and one from Slovenia participated at the camp.

2.1 FIELD INVESTIGATIONS AND ACTIONS AGAINST ILLEGAL BIRD KILLING METHODOLOGY

Field investigations conducted during the camp were carried out with the intention of identifying active cases of illegal bird killings and stopping them in shortest possible time.

Priority was given to the investigations of illegal bird trapping as it is much more common as the illegal bird hunting during spring season. Among all trapping locations, known to CABS & SPA in Cyprus, priority was given to the investigations at the locations with the highest and most recent trapping activity recorded during previous spring bird protection camps.

Investigations were mostly carried out during the early mornings, when bird trapping is highest and therefore easiest to detect and stop. Field investigations were carried out covertly, both to avoid confrontations with poachers and to prevent jeopardising the operations, made by the enforcement officers at the reported sites.

When trapping or illegal hunting activity was confirmed, it was immediately reported by phone to the relevant enforcement agencies in order to get their support and attendance in shortest possible time. As each illegal bird killing incident usually lasts just few hours, quick response from enforcement officers is vital to disrupt the killings and to apprehend suspects. If enforcement officers were not available to attend and investigate the cases reported by the participants of the camp, the participants either took no action until intervention could be ensured at a later date, or they took proportionate action on their own to stop illegal bird killing there and then.

Preventative actions taken by the activists under their own initiative were taken only as a last resort for cases where postponement of anti-poaching operations to a later date was considered illogical; due to probable lack of available enforcement patrols also at a later

date or it was unlikely that illegal bird killing would occur again on the same location in the near future.

As the actions, taken by the participants of the camp against illegal bird killings have the central role at bird protection camps, the participants are referred to as 'activists' in the report. It has to be noted that all actions, taken by the activists during the camp were completely legitimate and were taken to assist the competent enforcement agencies in the prevention of illegal bird killing activity.

Bird trapping activity is defined as 'any activity involving the use of traps to actively catch wild birds'. A case of bird trapping activity was counted for each individual occasion, where CABS & SPA teams found set traps or evidence of recent, previously unknown, trapping activity at the investigated site. Evidence of recent trapping activity includes fresh feathers on the ground or remnants of glue on branches, as they indicate recent use of traps. Use of electronic bird callers at trapping sites, even if there are no traps set out at the time caller is in use, is also recorded as trapping activity. These callers are sometimes used solely during the night to attract birds to the trapping site and the trappers subsequently set their traps in-situ in the early morning.

Illegal bird hunting activity is defined as 'any activity that does not comply with regulations for bird hunting in Cyprus, defined in 'The Law on Protection and Management of Wild Birds and Game Species' (Law 152(I)/2003) and in the EU Birds Directive. The most common method of illegal hunting in Cyprus is hunting with use of electronic callers, which are used to lure birds within range of the hunters by playbacks of conspecific songs. The hunting of bird species, which are listed on Annex 2 of the EU Birds Directive and prohibited to hunt, is also a common practice of illegal hunting in Cyprus.

2.2 FIELD INVESTIGATIONS AREA

During the camp, CABS & SPA activists investigated bird trapping and bird hunting activity in the south-eastern part of Cyprus: in Famagusta and Larnaca Districts within the Republic of Cyprus and in the Eastern Sovereign Base Area (ESBA) (figure 1).

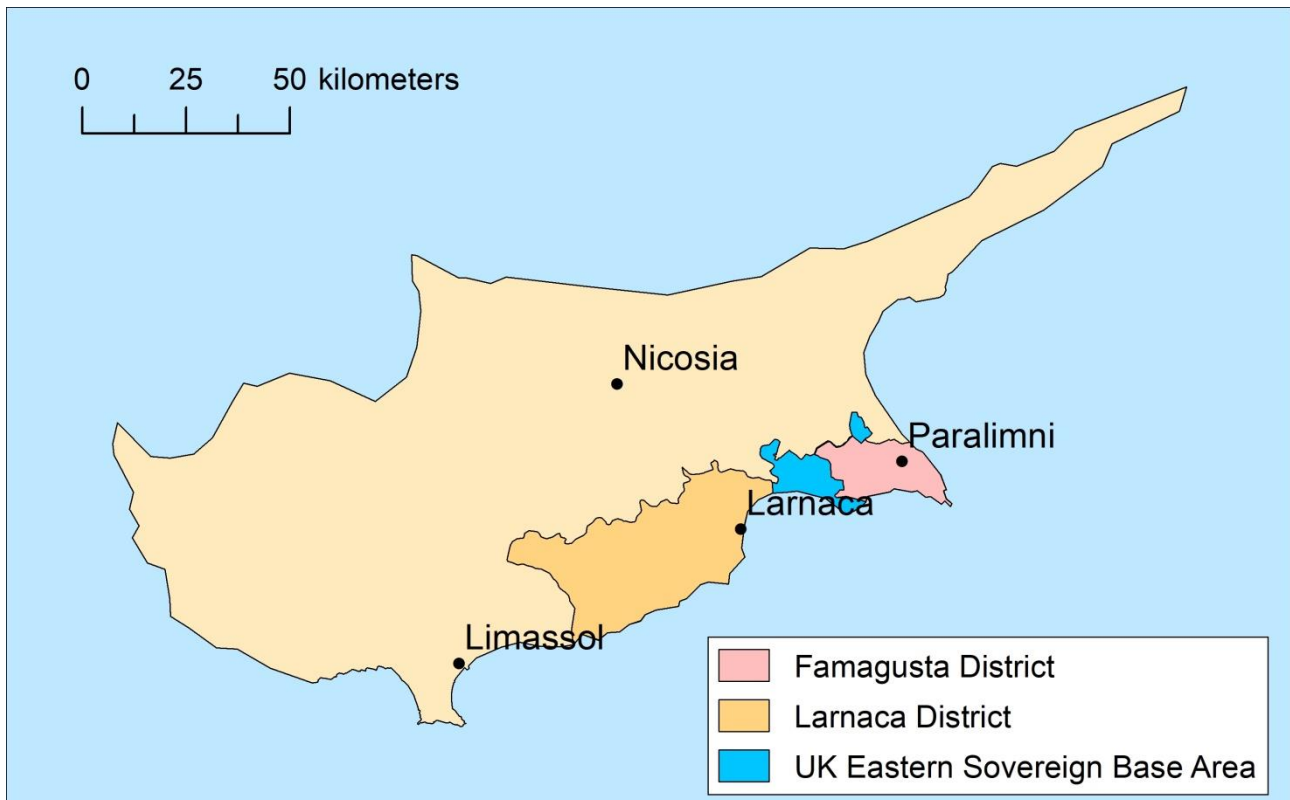


Figure 1: Cyprus and the areas investigated during CABS & SPA Spring 2021 Bird Protection Camp

3 RESULTS OF BIRD TRAPPING FIELD INVESTIGATIONS

3.1 OVERALL RESULTS

Field investigations carried out during CABS & SPA Spring 2021 Bird Protection Camp confirmed 59 cases of bird trapping activity across 43 trapping sites in south-eastern Cyprus (table 1, figure 2).

Table 1: Results of bird trapping field investigations, carried out during CABS & SPA Spring 2021 Bird Protection Camp in Cyprus

Duration of field investigations (days)	36
Total no. of activists conducting field investigations	3
No. of trapping sites checked	202
No. of active trapping sites confirmed	43
No. of cases of trapping activity confirmed on active trapping sites	59

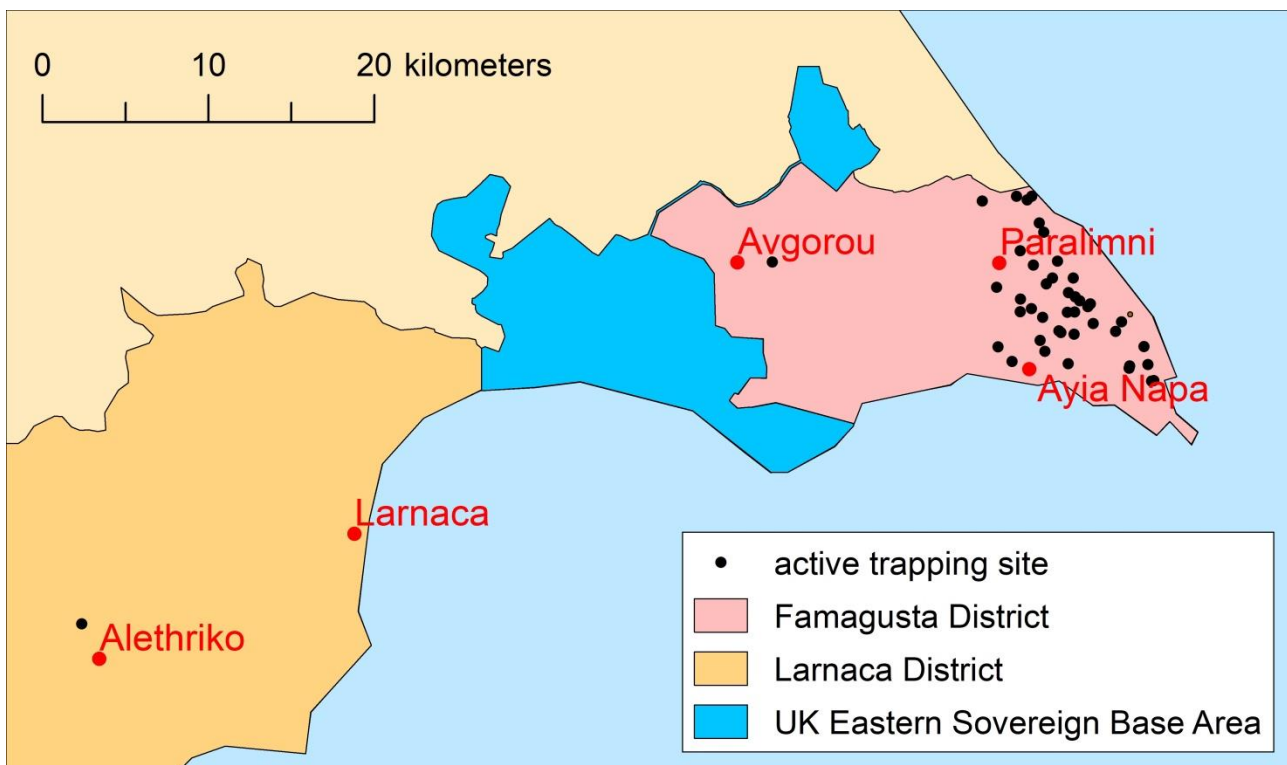


Figure 2: Distribution of the active trapping sites confirmed during CABS & SPA Spring 2021 Bird Protection Camp in Cyprus

All active trapping sites except two, confirmed during the camp, were found in the eastern part of the Famagusta District. This is in contrast with the distribution of active trapping sites, confirmed during CABS & SPA Autumn Bird Protection Camps, as in autumns the active sites are dispersed much more evenly across Famagusta and Larnaca Districts and the ESBA (Debersek 2021).

High concentration of the active trapping sites in the eastern part of Famagusta District is related to the high abundance of the birds in that area during their spring migration. Unlike the autumn migration of birds over Cyprus, which is dispersed over the whole island, spring migration predominately takes place along the eastern part of the island.

Field investigations, carried out during the camp, were limited to the Republic of Cyprus. All except one trapping site, checked during the camp, were located in Famagusta and Larnaca Districts, two of the six districts within the Republic of Cyprus, while the remaining trapping site was checked in the ESBA.

The main reasons for not carrying out more extensive investigations in the ESBA this spring were the low number of participants of the camp and the movement restrictions in the ESBA, imposed to prevent the spread of coronavirus. One of the measures in force this spring in

the ESBA was the night curfew. As most of the fieldwork in the ESBA is carried out in the night to avoid confrontations with the poachers, we were unable to work as usual in the ESBA.

Table 2: Comparison of the results of field investigations, carried out at CABS & SPA Spring Bird Protection Camps 2012-2021

Spring Bird Protection Camp	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*	2021
Duration of field investigations (days)	24	31	37	36	43	44	70	50	/	36
Total no. of activists conducting field investigations	15	13	11	11	17	12	13	8	/	3
No of trapping sites checked	230	264	291	253	384	280	278	175	/	202
No. of active trapping sites confirmed	116	104	96	46	114	60	26	15	/	43

* In 2020, CABS & SPA Spring Bird Protection Camp in Cyprus was not organised

3.2 RESULTS OF BIRD TRAPPING FIELD INVESTIGATIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

Of 202 trapping sites checked during the camp, 201 sites were checked in Famagusta and Larnaca Districts, two of the six districts within the Republic of Cyprus. 43 of sites checked were confirmed as active (table 3, figure 3, figure 4).

Table 3: Results of bird trapping field investigations in Republic of Cyprus during CABS & SPA Spring 2021 Bird Protection Camp

No. of trapping sites checked	201
No. of trapping sites found to be active	43
No. of trapping cases confirmed on the trapping sites found to be active	59
No. of active limestick trapping sites confirmed	43
No. of active netting trapping sites confirmed	0

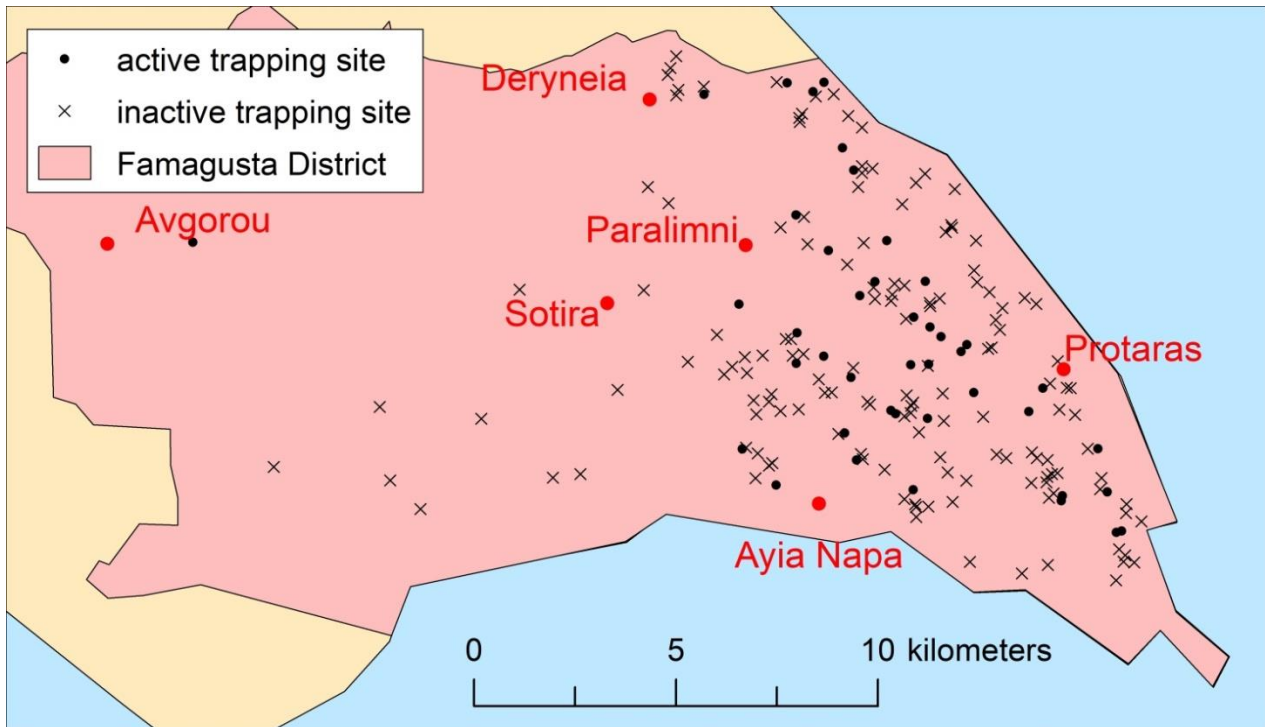


Figure 3: Distribution and activity of the trapping sites checked in Famagusta District of Republic of Cyprus during CABS & SPA Spring 2021 Bird Protection Camp

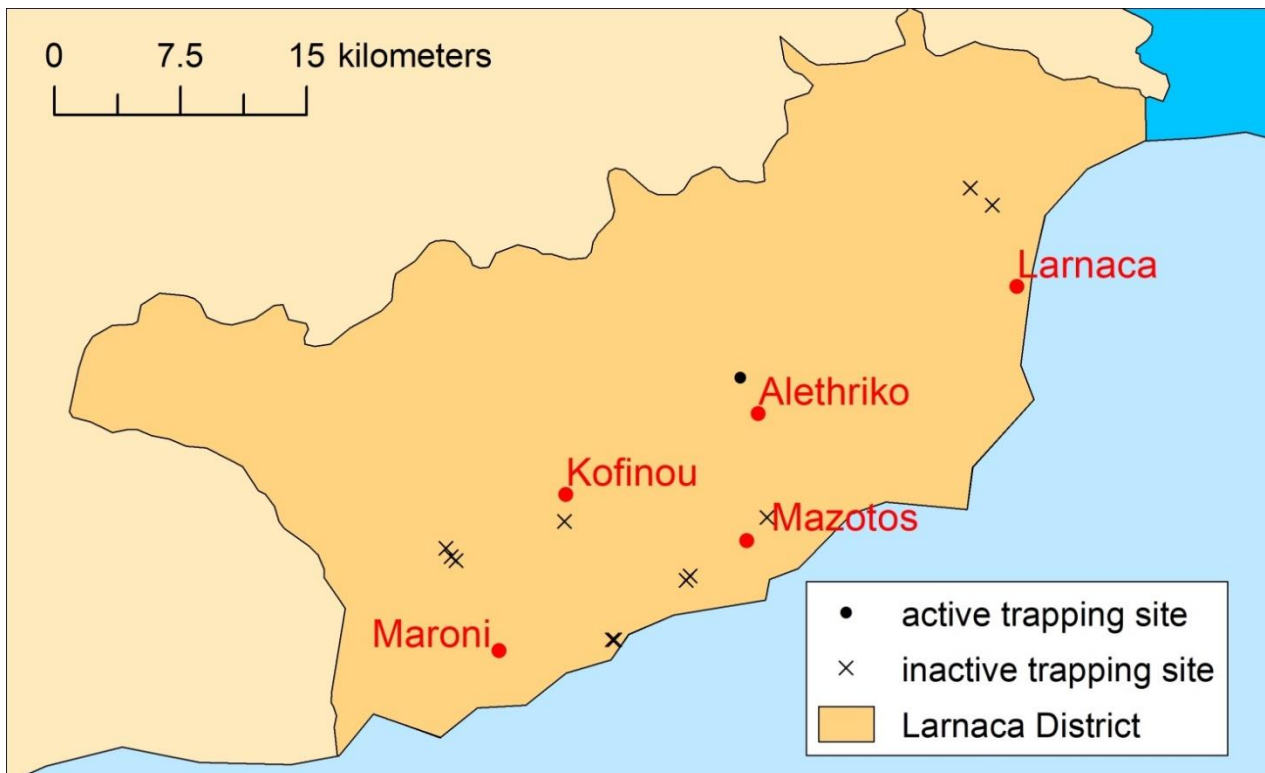


Figure 4: Distribution and activity of the trapping sites checked in Larnaca District of Republic of Cyprus during CABS & SPA Spring 2021 Bird Protection Camp

Majority of active trapping sites, confirmed during the camp, were located in the eastern part of Famagusta District with the highest density of active sites recorded in an area between Paralimni, Ayia Napa and Protaras.

Table 4: Comparison of the results of bird trapping field investigations in Republic of Cyprus, carried out during CABS & SPA Spring BPCs 2012-2021

Spring Bird Protection Camp	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2021
No. of all trapping sites checked	226	246	267	221	362	276	275	174	201
No. of all active trapping sites confirmed	116	100	90	41	108	57	24	15	43
No. of active limestick trapping sites confirmed	106	81	75	32	98	55	23	15	43
No. of active netting trapping sites confirmed	5	15	11	5	5	2	1	0	0
No. of trapping sites with both methods or unknown trapping method used, confirmed	5	4	4	4	5	0	0	0	0
No. of trapping cases confirmed on all active trapping sites	142	122	118	57	182	87	35	21	59

3.2.1 TREND OF SPRING TRAPPING ACTIVITY IN THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS FOR PERIOD 2012-2021

The number of active trapping sites confirmed this spring in the Republic of Cyprus is with 43 highest for the last three spring camps in Cyprus. As spring bird protection camps vary in duration and in number of activists participating, a direct comparison between numbers of confirmed active sites found per camp is not an effective method to determine the overall trend of spring trapping activity in Republic of Cyprus for the period 2012-2021. It is considered more effective to compare the percentage of active trapping sites out of all trapping sites checked during the camp (table 5).

Table 5: Comparison of the percentages of trapping sites, confirmed as active during CABS & SPA Spring Bird Protection Camps 2012-2021 in Republic of Cyprus

Spring Camp	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2021
ALL TRAPPING SITES									
No. of all trapping sites checked	230	264	291	253	384	280	278	175	202
No. of trapping sites confirmed as active	116	104	96	46	114	60	26	15	43
Percentage of all checked trapping sites confirmed as active	50.4	39.4	33.0	18.2	29.7	21.4	9.4	8.6	21.3
LIMESTICK TRAPPING SITES									
No. of limestick trapping sites checked	188	192	215	189	294	244	239	163	188
No. of limestick trapping sites confirmed as active	105	79	76	34	98	55	23	15	43
Percentage of checked limestick trapping sites confirmed as active	55.9	41.1	35.3	18.0	33.3	22.5	9.6	9.2	22.9
NETTING TRAPPING SITES									
No. of netting trapping sites checked	19	40	42	27	53	24	27	6	9
No. of netting sites confirmed as active	5	15	11	5	5	2	1	0	0
Percentage of checked netting trapping sites confirmed as active	26.3	37.5	26.2	18.5	9.4	8.3	3.7	0.0	0.0

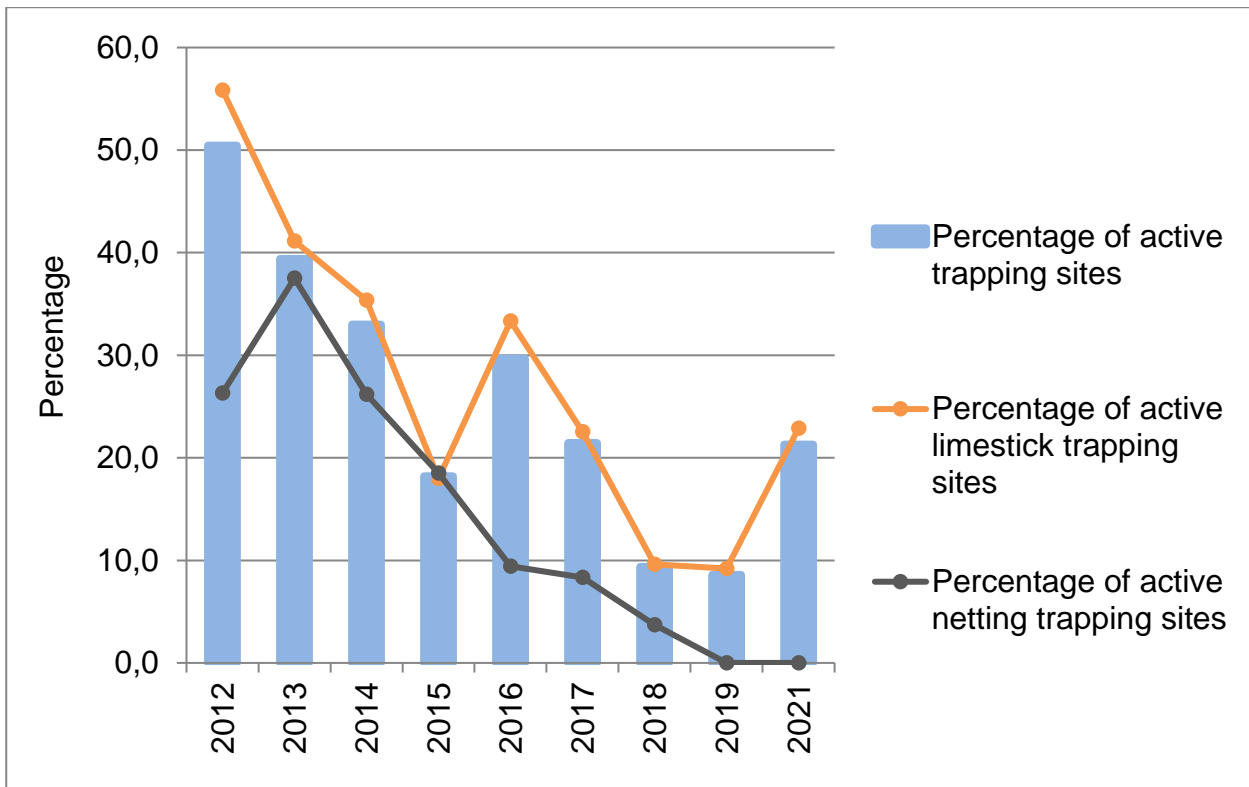


Figure 5: Percentages of checked trapping sites that were confirmed as active during CABS & SPA Spring Bird Protection Camps 2012-2021 in the Republic of Cyprus

Spring trapping with mist-nets has been gradually decreasing in Famagusta and Larnaca Districts of the Republic of Cyprus since 2013 until it has completely disappeared from the area, investigated during spring camps in 2019 as not a single active netting site was recorded during the spring camp in 2019 and also not this spring.

Spring trapping with limesticks in Famagusta and Larnaca Districts of the Republic of Cyprus has followed the similar trend as trapping with mist-nets in the period 2012-2019 as it has been gradually decreasing. In contrast with the netting trapping trend, the liming trapping trend has made a significant turn this spring. It has changed from a decreasing to an increasing trend as the percentage of checked limestick trapping sites, that were confirmed as active, jumped from 9,2 %, recorded during spring camp 2019 to 22,9 %, recorded this spring.

The unexpected increase in the use limesticks, recorded this spring in Republic of Cyprus is most likely linked to the strict restrictions of movement imposed in Cyprus due to the coronavirus outbreak. This spring, people in Cyprus were allowed to go out of their homes only twice per day and only for a short time to make the necessary chores. With the restrictions in force, trappers expected less field inspections of the trapping activity and the given situation probably encouraged them to trap more than usual.

3.3 TRAPPING METHODS USED IN THE TRAPPING CASES CONFIRMED DURING THE CAMP

Table 6: Characteristics of the trapping methods used in the trapping cases confirmed during CABS & SPA Spring 2021 Bird Protection Camp

No. of all confirmed trapping cases	59
No. of confirmed trapping cases with limesticks used for trapping	59
No. of confirmed trapping cases with mist-nets used for trapping	0
No. of trapping cases with only limesticks in use	55
No. of trapping cases with limesticks and electronic caller in use	4
Average no. of limesticks used in confirmed limestick trapping cases	21

Use of limesticks without the use of electronic caller was the predominant method of trapping used in trapping cases confirmed during the camp.

Electronic callers for trapping were used in 4 out of 59 trapping cases confirmed during the camp. The main reason why electronic callers are not commonly used for trapping in spring is the availability of the alternative way to attract birds in spring. Trappers commonly set their traps on the trees that are attracting migrating birds with their fruits. Especially the fruits of mulberry tree (*Morus* sp.) and loquat tree (*Eriobotrya japonica*) are very attractive for birds and that makes them the two most popular trees for spring trapping in Cyprus.



Picture 1: Blackcap caught on a limestick set out on a mulberry tree. Trapping site was found during CABS & SPA Spring 2021 Bird Protection Camp (Photo: CABS)

Table 7: Comparison of trapping methods used in the trapping cases confirmed during CABS & SPA Spring Bird Protection Camps 2012-2021

Spring Bird Protection Camp	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2021
No. of all confirmed trapping cases	142	122	118	57	182	87	35	21	59
No. of confirmed trapping cases with limesticks used for trapping	128	101	99	41	161	84	34	21	59
No. of confirmed trapping cases with mist-nets used for trapping	5	17	15	10	10	3	1	0	0
No. of trapping cases with only limesticks in use	112	73	79	25	144	75	32	20	55
No. of trapping cases with limesticks and el. caller in use	11	11	5	6	7	6	1	1	4
Average no. of limesticks used in confirmed limestick trapping cases	35.4	40.7	22.2	37.9	16.9	24.2	26.7	10.6	21.7

3.4 ACTIVITY OF THE TRAPPING SITES WITH KNOWN PREVIOUS PROSECUTIONS

Activity of the trapping sites, where trappers have been caught and prosecuted in the past, is a good measure to evaluate the efficiency of the enforcement sanctions to deter bird trapping activity.

In spring 2021, the activists checked 53 trapping sites with previous prosecutions for trapping known to CABS & SPA and at 6 of them trapping activity was confirmed (table 8).

Table 8: Activity of the trapping sites with previous prosecutions for trapping, checked during CABS & SPA Spring 2021 Bird Protection Camp

No. of sites with previous prosecutions for trapping checked	53
No. of sites with previous prosecutions confirmed as active (reactivated prosecuted site)	6
Percentage of reactivated prosecuted sites	11.3

Table 9: Comparison of the activity of trapping sites with known previous prosecutions for trapping at CABS & SPA Spring Bird Protection Camps 2013-2020

Spring Bird Protection Camp	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2021
No. of previously prosecuted sites checked	16	25	34	63	41	53	33	53
No. of previously prosecuted sites confirmed as active	3	10	6	15	9	8	2	6
Percentage of reactivated prosecuted sites	18.8	40.0	17.6	23.8	22.0	15.1	6.1	11.3

The percentage of checked trapping sites, which have been previously prosecuted and were confirmed as active during the camp was with 11.3 % the second lowest for spring camps.

Nevertheless, the percentage of reactivated prosecuted sites was higher as it was during the previous spring camp, indicating, along with the trapping trends, an increase of overall trapping activity.

The increase in the percentage of reactivated prosecuted sites is surprising as Republic of Cyprus introduced high fixed penalties in 2017 for poaching offences, committed outside the

hunting season, which start in mid-August and ends at the end of February. According to 'The law on protection and management of wild birds and game species' (152(I)/2003), capturing and killing birds outside the hunting season is punished with the fine of 8000 €.

The increase in the number of reactivated prosecuted sites and in the number of active trapping sites in general, recorded this spring, despite the risk for offenders of being caught and being punished with a fine of at least 8000 €, can only be explained with the assumption of offenders, that there was zero or minimal chance for them to be caught and to receive a big fine for trapping this spring.

4 RESULTS OF ACTIONS TAKEN AGAINST THE TRAPPING CASES CONFIRMED DURING THE CAMP

4.1 OVERALL RESULTS

During the camp, 59 cases of trapping activity were confirmed across 43 individual trapping sites. Altogether, 586 limesticks and 4 electronic callers were found and seized from the active trapping sites during the camp. For 17 trapping cases, reported by CABS & SPA activists, individuals involved in trapping were caught and they were issued fixed penalty notices for their offences (table 9).

Table 9: Overall results of actions taken against trapping cases confirmed during CABS & SPA Spring 2021 Bird Protection Camp

No. of trapping cases confirmed	59
No. of trapping cases with actions taken by the activists (cases reported to the enforcement officers plus cases with actions directly taken by the activists)	31
No. of trapping cases with actions taken directly by CABS & SPA activists	6
No. of trapping cases reported to the enforcement officers	25
No. of trapping cases with actions taken by enforcement officers	25
Total no. of seized limesticks	586
Total no. of seized electronic callers	4
No. of cases ending with fixed penalties for trapping issued by enforcement officers	17

Table 10: Comparison of the results of actions taken against the trapping cases confirmed during CABS & SPA Spring Bird Protection Camps 2012-2021

Spring Bird Protection Camp	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2021
No. of trapping cases confirmed	142	122	118	57	182	87	35	21	59
Total no. of seized limesticks	5461	3371	2256	1470	1828	1835	448	286	586
Total no. of seized mist nets	20	32	27	25	50	19	10	0	0
Total no. of seized el. callers	17	16	10	10	13	9	5	1	4
No. of cases with prosecution made / fixed penalty notices issued*	14	16	15	16	15	6	4	5	17

*since 2017, all poaching offences in Republic of Cyprus are punishable with fixed penalty notices issued by relevant enforcement officers

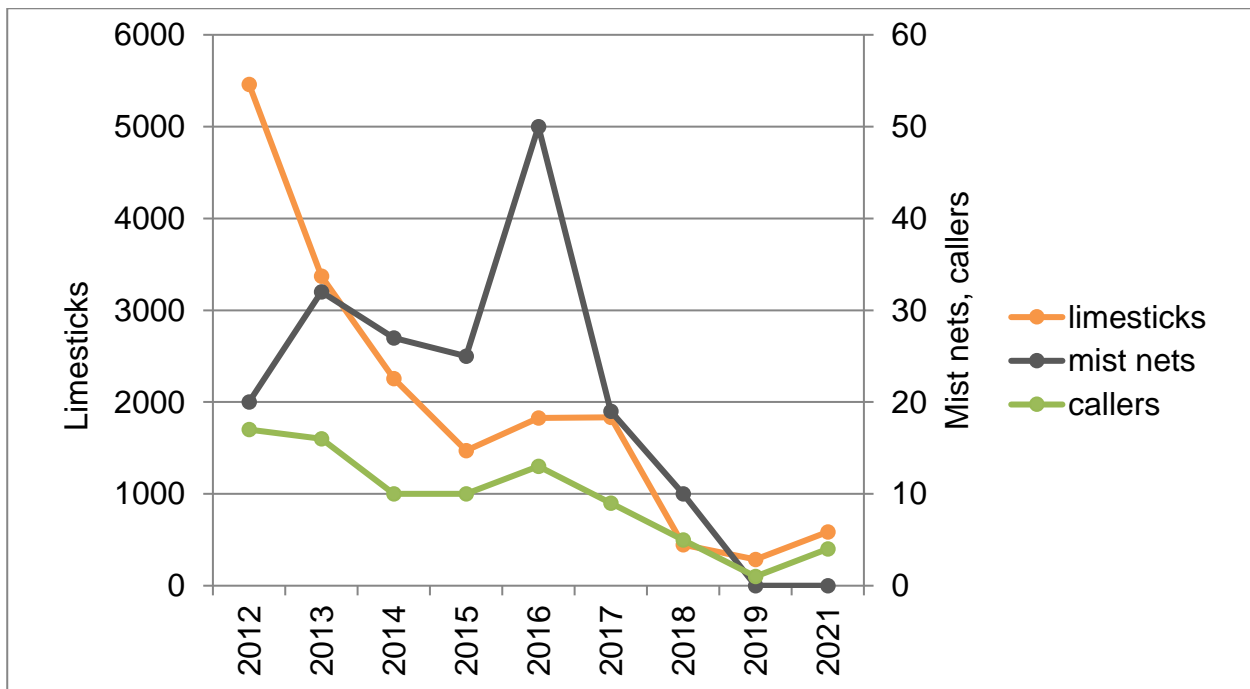


Figure 6: Total numbers of limesticks, nets and electronic callers seized during the investigations of trapping cases confirmed at CABS & SPA Spring Bird Protection Camps 2012-2021

The increase in the trapping with limesticks, recorded this spring, is reflected in the total number of limesticks, seized during the camp, which is the highest for the last three spring camps.

Number of trapping cases, confirmed during spring camps and for which the suspects were caught and were issued fixed penalties for trapping, is with 17, achieved this spring, an all-time record for CABS & SPA Spring Bird Protection Camps. It is a great result, especially if we consider that the trapping activity, recorded this spring was significantly lower as during the first few spring camps and therefore there were fewer chances to catch the offenders this spring as there were during the first spring camps.



Picture 2: Seized limesticks, electronic caller and rescued blackcap. Results of the investigations carried out by Game and Fauna Service officers at one of the active trapping sites reported during the camp (Photo: CABS)

4.2 RESULTS OF ACTIONS TAKEN BY ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES FOR THE TRAPPING CASES REPORTED BY CABS & SPA ACTIVISTS

All trapping cases, confirmed during the camp, were reported to the enforcement agency. As all cases were located in the Republic of Cyprus, the activists reported them to the enforcement agency, responsible with regulation and enforcement against illegal bird killing in Republic of Cyprus: the Game and Fauna Service.

25 out of 59 trapping cases were reported immediately to the enforcement officers on duty over phone as the trapping activity was in progress for these cases with traps being set out to catch birds. To prevent the on-going trapping activity and to catch the suspects involved in it, quick intervention by the enforcement officers was crucial. The officers on duty responded well and investigated all 25 reported cases immediately or shortly after they have been reported. Investigations for 17 reported cases resulted in the apprehension of offenders, which were issued fixed penalty notices for bird trapping (table 11).

Table 11: Results of actions taken by the Game & Fauna Service officers for the trapping cases reported by the activists during CABS & SPA Spring 2021 Bird Protection Camp

No. of all trapping cases confirmed by CABS & SPA activists	59
No. of trapping cases reported to the Game and Fauna Service officers on duty	25
No. of reported trapping cases investigated by officers	25
No. of investigated cases ending with apprehension of offenders and fixed penalty notices issued for trapping	17
No. of investigated cases resulting in confiscation of trapping paraphernalia	5
No. of investigated cases ending without enforcement actions (no trapping activity was recorded at the time of investigation)	3

The remaining 26 trapping cases, confirmed during the camp, that were not reported immediately after being discovered, were mostly the cases with recent signs of trapping found by the activists but the traps were not set out during the investigation of these cases. The details about these cases were reported to the office of Game and Fauna Service in

Larnaca to ensure monitoring of these locations until the end of the spring trapping season as they could be reactivated.

Table 12: Comparison of the results of actions, taken by enforcement agencies for trapping cases reported by the activists during CABS & SPA Spring Bird Protection Camps 2016-2021

Spring Bird Protection Camp	2016	2017	2018	2019	2021
No. of trapping cases confirmed	182	87	35	21	59
No. of trapping cases reported to the enforcement officers on duty	37	24	22	9	25
INVESTIGATIONS					
No. of reported cases investigated by enforcement officers	23	14	15	8	25
Percentage of investigated sites (for all reported sites)	62.2	58.3	68.2	88.9	100.0
No. of cases investigated by Cyprus Police Anti-Poaching Squad (APS)	16	5	1	1	/*
No. of cases investigated by Cyprus Police officers	4	4	0	1	0
No. of cases investigated by Game and Fauna Service officers	0	1	9	6	25
No. of cases investigated by SBA Police officers	3	4	5	0	0
PROSECUTIONS / FIXED PENALTY NOTICES					
No. of prosecutions made / fixed penalty notices issued at reported sites	15	6	4	5	17
Percentage of prosecutions / fixed penalty notices (for all reported sites)	40.5	25.0	18.2	55.6	68.0
No. of prosecutions made / fixed penalty notices issued by Cyprus Police APS officers	10	4	1	1	/*
No. of prosecutions made / fixed penalty notices issued by Cyprus Police officers	2	0	0	0	0
No. of prosecutions made / fixed penalty notices issued by Game and Fauna Service	0	1	3	4	17
No. of prosecutions made / fixed penalty notices issued by SBA Police	3	1	0	0	0

*APS unit was dismantled in November 2019

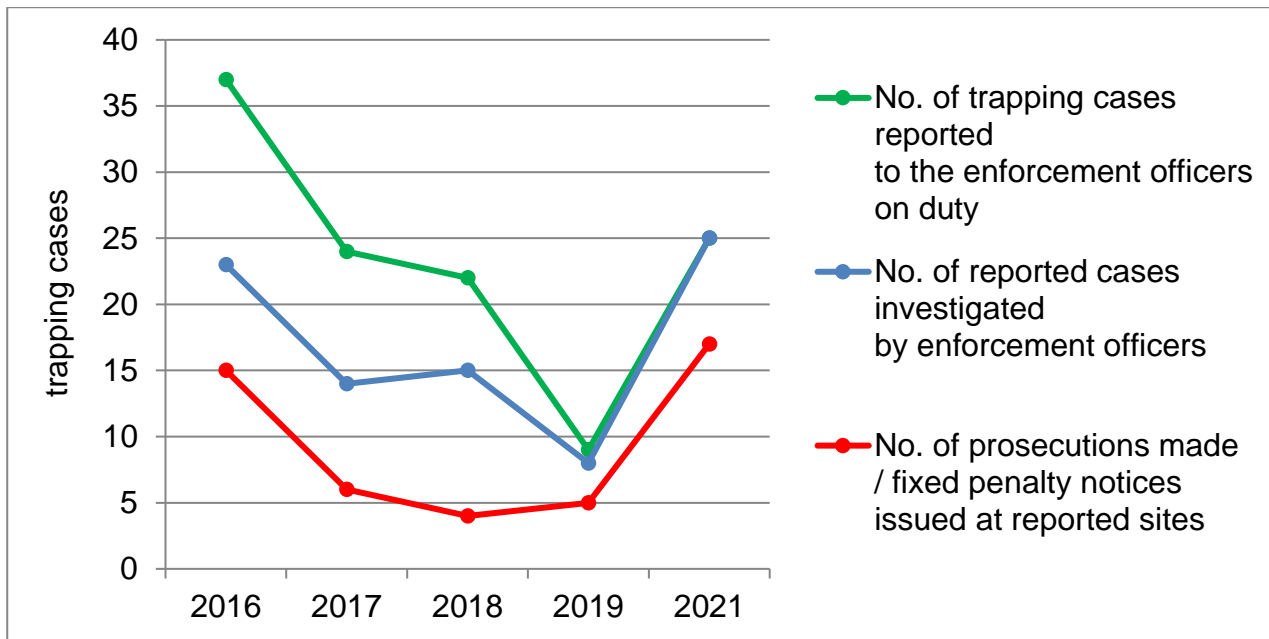


Figure 7: Comparison of the results of enforcement agencies for the cases reported by the activists during CABS & SPA Spring Bird Protection Camps 2016-2021

Results of cooperation between CABS & SPA activists and enforcement agencies during the camp are standing out from the results of cooperation achieved during the previous spring camps. Although number of all trapping cases, confirmed this spring was third lowest for the spring camps since 2016, the activists reported the highest number of trapping cases to the enforcement officers. The officers investigated all reported cases, which happened for the first time at spring camps since 2016.

Number of investigated cases ending with the apprehensions of offenders and with fines being issued to them is with 17 the highest for all CABS & SPA Spring Bird Protection Camps.

Outstanding results of the cooperation between the activists and the enforcement officers, achieved this spring, didn't happen by a chance, they are the result of long and systematic improvements in the fieldwork of activists and in the cooperation between the activists and the enforcement officers.

The high percentage of reported trapping cases where offenders were caught is, among others, result of some modifications in the work of CABS & SPA activists which were made with the intention to assist the enforcement officers with the apprehension and prosecution of trappers. To achieve this objective, the activists made a more concerted effort than in previous years to carry out their investigations covertly and to gather intelligence about the

trapping cases, they have confirmed. The intelligence gathered was forwarded to the enforcement officers while reporting confirmed trapping cases.

Outstanding enforcement results would not be possible without the good response of the enforcement officers to whom the activists reported the trapping cases. Game and Fauna Service officers investigated all the reported cases, their response was quick and they took the appropriate actions required to apprehend the trappers.



Picture 3: Game and Fauna Service officer collecting limesticks at the site reported during CABS & SPA Spring 2021 Bird Protection Camp (Photo: CABS)

4.3 RESCUED BIRDS AND BIRDS FOUND DEAD IN TRAPS

In total, 80 protected wild birds, belonging to 9 different species were rescued from traps, found by CABS & SPA activists during the camp (table 13). Birds were rescued either directly by the activists or by the enforcement officers during the investigations of the trapping cases, reported by the activists. Rescued birds were released immediately or were released following a short rehabilitation period.

Unfortunately, the activists and the enforcement officers were too late for 22 birds, which were found dead during the investigations of the trapping sites.

Table 13: Rescued birds and birds found dead in traps or in the possession of trappers during CABS & SPA Autumn 2020 Bird Protection Camp (SPEC – Species of European Conservation Concern)

		No. of birds rescued from traps	No. of dead trapped birds found	SPEC status
1	Blackcap (<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>)	63	5	3
2	Lesser whitethroat (<i>Sylvia curruca</i>)	6	4	
3	House sparrow (<i>Passer domesticus</i>)	4	3	
4	Great tit (<i>Parus major</i>)	2	0	
5	Common nightingale (<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>)	1	0	
6	Common redstart (<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>)	1	0	
7	Eastern Bonelli's warbler (<i>Phylloscopus orientalis</i>)	1	0	
8	Eastern Olivaceous warbler (<i>Iduna palida</i>)	1	0	
9	Goldfinch (<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>)	1	0	
10	Wryneck (<i>Jynx torquilla</i>)	0	1	3
11	Spanish sparrow (<i>Passer domesticus</i>)	0	1	
	Unidentified	0	8	
	Total	80	22	

Among the bird species, whose specimens were found trapped during the camp, are also two species with unfavourable conservation status in Europe, termed as Species of European Conservation Concern (SPECs) (BirdLife International 2017). These species are House sparrow and Wryneck.



Picture 4: Common redstart rescued from a limestick during the camp (Photo: CABS)



Picture 5: Lesser whitethroat rescued from a limestick during the camp (Photo: CABS)

5 RESULTS OF ILLEGAL BIRD HUNTING FIELD INVESTIGATIONS

Bird hunting incidents during the spring migration of birds, when hunting is forbidden in Cyprus, are rarely recorded during CABS & SPA Spring Bird Protection Camps, but it has to be noted that the fieldwork at the spring camps is carried out with the intention to investigate and to take actions against bird trapping. Bird hunting activity is investigated, if it is detected during the investigation of trapping activity.

This spring the activists confirmed two cases of illegal hunting, both were discovered by chance, while the activists were checking known bird trapping locations. First case involved hunter shooting blackcaps with a flobert rifle. The case was reported to Game and Fauna Service officers but they didn't manage to find the hunter. One shot blackcap was found at the site.

In second case of illegal hunting, the activists found the remains of more than one hundred killed birds scattered around big agricultural field situated in the United Nations buffer zone close to town of Paralimni. The inspection of the remains of the birds revealed that they were most probably killed this spring with the use of gun. Among the killed birds were the Bee-eaters, Skylarks, Turtle Doves, Wood pigeons, Common Cuckoo, Collared Dove, Chukar, Black Francolin, Common quail, Pied Flycatcher and several others that activists were unable to identify (picture 6). The activists monitored the location until the end of the camp without detecting another case of illegal hunting activity at the site.



Picture 6: The remains of the birds, found scattered across the agricultural field in the buffer zone during the camp (Photo: CABS)

6 CONCLUSIONS

After the cancellation of CABS & SPA Spring 2020 Bird Protection Camp in Cyprus due to travel restrictions in place to stop the spread of coronavirus, which have prevented bird protection activists to enter Cyprus during the previous spring, we were happy to be able to organise the camp this spring.

As the Covid-19 pandemic was not over yet this spring, the organisation of the camp was affected by the restrictions that were in place in Cyprus to slow down the spread of the coronavirus. Travel restrictions have discouraged our volunteers to join the camp in Cyprus, resulting in only three CABS employees participating at the camp. With only 3 activists participating, the camp was much smaller as in previous years. Fieldwork was further impacted by the night curfew, which prohibited outdoor activities from 23:00 to 5:00 in the morning.

Because of the restrictions and the small number of participants, the extent of the fieldwork carried out during the camp was less than in the previous years.

Considering the gradual decrease of spring trapping activity over the last few years, CABS & SPA were expecting to find low trapping activity this spring and they have believed that even with the smaller extent of fieldwork as in previous years, they would be able locate and prevent a large part of the trapping activity in the monitored area.

We were unpleasantly surprised as we discovered 43 active trapping sites, which is much more than during the previous two spring camps. Puzzled by the sudden increase of trapping activity, especially as it was gradually decreasing until 2019, we have searched for the reasons of the sudden change. As the fines for spring trapping are very high, starting at 8000 € for the offence of trapping and killing birds outside hunting season and as the competent enforcement agency for protection of wild birds, the Game and Fauna Service was working normally this spring, we were expecting much lower trapping activity as we have recorded.

After we had a chance to speak to the Game and Fauna Service officers, to whom we reported trapping cases confirmed during the camp, we have come to the conclusion that the two main reasons for the sudden increase of trapping activity were:

a) bird trappers were not expecting extensive field investigations of trapping activity this spring, especially not the investigations, carried out by CABS & SPA teams and other NGOs because of the restrictions of entering Cyprus and the restrictions of outdoor movement in Cyprus, that were in place this spring

b) bird trappers were not expecting to receive a fine of 8000 € in case they would be caught for trapping

Even if only 3 activists participated at the camp this spring, they took the advantage of trappers being less cautious this spring by finding and reporting a high number of trapping cases with on-going trapping activity (traps were set to catch birds) to Game and Fauna Service officers on duty.

Good cooperation between CABS & SPA activists and Game and Fauna Service officers on duty resulted in the highest number of reported cases ending with apprehension of trappers at CABS & SPA Spring Bird Protection Camps.

Another important results achieved during the camp was the clarification regarding the size of the fines for trapping offences committed during spring. Until the camp we were lead to believe by the authorities that the size of the fine depends on the possession of trapped birds.

If during the investigation of trapping cases, trapped birds were found caught in traps or in possession of the offender, the offender would receive a fine of 8000 € for breaching the article 48 of The law on protection and management of wild birds and game species (152(I)/2003) for capturing and killing birds outside the hunting season.

On the other hand, if offender was caught with set traps but there were no birds found caught in traps and also no birds were found in the possession of the offender, the offender would be issued only a fixed penalty for the possession and the use of limesticks without being issued the fine of 8000 € for trapping birds outside the hunting season. This fine was significantly lower as the fine issued to the offender by whom the enforcement officers found birds trapped on limesticks even if the offence of both offenders (catching birds with limesticks) was the same.

As the trappers set out limesticks with the intention of killing wild birds in spring, we believe that the offender should receive a high fine regardless if birds are caught on set limesticks or not during the investigation of the case. We have raised this issue on the meeting with Game and Fauna Service and our assumption proved to be right as we were informed by Game and Fauna Service official that every offender, which will be caught with limesticks set out to catch birds, will be issued a fine of 8000 € for the offence of capturing and killing birds outside the hunting season.

Until the end of the camp, Game and Fauna Service officers caught 18 offenders in the cases reported by CABS & SPA activists and 17 of them have been issued a fine of 8000 € for capturing birds outside the hunting season which takes from mid-August until end of February in Cyprus.

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