



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

**Stiftung Pro Artenvielfalt®**  
Foundation Pro Biodiversity®

## CABS & SPA AUTUMN 2022 BIRD PROTECTION CAMP IN CYPRUS



**Committee Against Bird Slaughter**

# 1 OVERVIEW

In this report we present data collected during our Autumn 2022 Bird Protection camp. The first section refers to illegal trapping, whereas the second section refers to illegal hunting. In the tables we report the number of cases of wildlife crimes and the number of traps found, followed by an evaluation of the response of the authorities to our reports on the field.

## 2 DURATION, MONITORED AREAS, PARTICIPANTS OF THE CAMP

Every autumn since 2010, CABS & SPA coordinate a 'bird protection camp' in Cyprus to prevent largescale slaughter of birds migrating over Cyprus. In autumn 2022, the camp started on the 4th of September and ended on the 13th of November, running for a total of 71 days and covering most of the autumn poaching season. 17 bird protection activists from 4 different countries (Great Britain, Italy, Slovenia and United States of America) participated to the camp. 10 experienced participants attended previous bird protection camps in Cyprus, while 7 of them participated for the first time. The volunteers monitored the eastern and the southern part of Cyprus: Famagusta and Larnaca District within the Republic of Cyprus, the British Eastern Sovereign Base Areas (SBAs) and part of the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

## 3 TRAPPING IN THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

During CABS & SPA Autumn bird protection camp, 106 active trapping sites were confirmed in the Republic of Cyprus. Out of these sites, 59 had limesticks, 40 had nets and 7 both or an unknown method. The total number of limesticks and nets used in the trapping sites found active is 2,321 limesticks and 96 nets, out of which 1,941 limesticks and 57 nets were seized by the enforcement authorities during the operations or collected when patrols were not available. The rest of trapping paraphernalia could not be dismantled for different reasons.

We would like to stress that the number of limesticks and nets in possession of the poachers at the sites investigated is only a portion of what they have in possession, since game wardens and regular police officers do not perform premises searches, unlike the former Anti-Poaching Squad (APS), who used to find extra traps stored and killed birds in the fridges.

Furthermore, we need to outline that of the 106 active trapping sites detected, 23 (22%) were not previously known, but probably activated only in 2023. In 10 of these, trappers used limesticks and in 13 they used nets. Migratory bird trapping keeps showing vitality.

**Table 1: Trapping activity recorded at CABS & SPA Autumn Bird Protection Camps 2012-2022 in the Republic of Cyprus.**

Autumn Bird Protection Camp	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Active limesticks trapping sites	65	111	80	66	105	90	71	60	65	73	59
Active net sites	33	35	39	50	51	21	33	22	35	42	40
Unknown or both methods sites	10	2	5	6	8	5	3	0	1	7	7
<b>Total active sites</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>Limesticks found</b>	-	-	-	-	-	3298	2560	1893	1916	2371	2321
<b>Nets found</b>	-	-	-	-	-	48	38	25	48	110	96

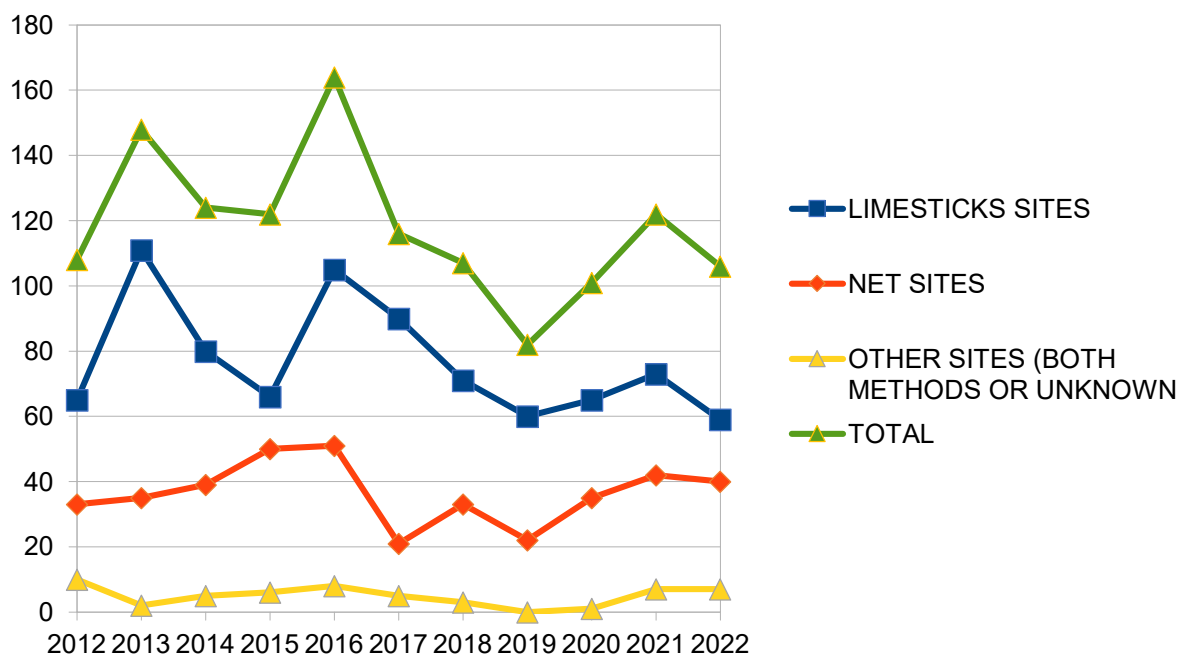


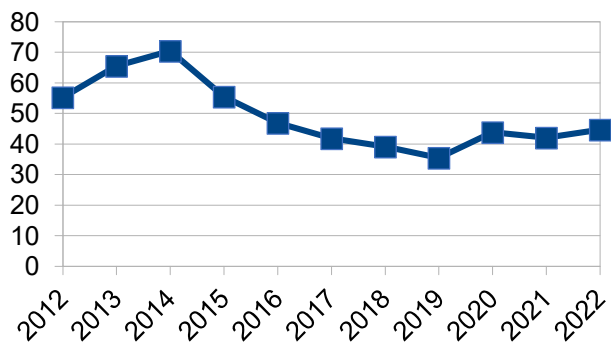
Figure 1: Trapping sites recorded at CABS & SPA Autumn Bird Protection Camps 2012-2022 in the Republic of Cyprus.

For logistical reasons every autumn camp varies in length, number of participants and modus operandi, in an effort to adjust to the available enforcement conditions. Therefore, in order to compare the results of the findings between years, we consider the percentage of the number of sites found active out of those checked.

In 2022, although the total number of trapping sites detected in the Republic is lower than 2021, our figures confirm the trend emerged in 2019 of a slow steady increase.

**Table 2: Ratio between checked and active sites in the period 2012-2022 in the Republic of Cyprus.**

<b>Autumn Bird Protection Camp</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>
Duration of field investigations (days)	17	24	28	40	47	60	75	84	77	70	71
Total no. of activists	13	15	14	22	28	28	29	24	11	14	17
No of trapping sites checked	197	226	176	220	350	277	273	231	230	290	237
No. of trapping sites confirmed as active	109	148	124	122	164	116	107	82	101	122	106
Percentage of active sties	55,3	65,5	70,5	55,5	46,9	41,9	39,2	35,5	43,9	42,1	44,7



**Figure 2: Trapping trend in the Republic of Cyprus based on the comparison between active and checked sites in 2012-2022.**



**Picture 1: Blackcap saved from a net during CABS & SPA Autumn BPC 2022 (Photo: CABS).**

## 4 TRAPPING IN THE BRITISH EASTERN SOVEREIGN BASE AREA

CABS staff and volunteers concentrate field investigations in the Republic of Cyprus but monitor regularly the illegal activity also in the SBAs, mainly in the ESBA, once one of the main trapping hotspots. During CABS & SPA Autumn Bird Protection Camp in 2022 in the British territory, 14 total active trapping sites with 20 nets were detected, out of which 8 were seized by the authorities. It is to be noted that our investigations target professional night trapping with nets, therefore the lack of active trapping sites with limesticks are not meaningful to understand the situation during the day.

To compare the annual figures, unlike in the Republic, it would not be useful to calculate the percentage of the active sties out of the total checked, because of the limited time spent in the ESBA by the teams. In recent years the number of trapping sites found active remains low compared to previous autumn seasons, but has stabilised, showing the importance of a constant presence of ESBA enforcement patrols in the field to act as deterrents.

**Table 3: Trapping activity recorded at CABS & SPA Autumn Bird Protection Camps 2012-2022 in the British Sovereign Base Areas (SBAs) in Cyprus.**

<b>Autumn Bird Protection Camp</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016*</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>
Active limesticks trapping sites	3	0	2	4	7	5	1	2	7	4	0
Active net sites	22	14	6	32	115	59	19	13	8	11	11
Uknown or both methods sites	3	1	1	1	15	5	2	1	0	3	3
<b>Total active sites</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Limesticks found</b>	-	-	-	-	-	134	36	76	71	102	0
<b>Nets found</b>	-	-	-	-	-	90	12	13	2	29	20

\* Only in Autumn 2016 CABS started a serious monitoring of trapping in the ESBA. Data from 2012-2015 are anecdotal and do not mirror the reality on the field.

## 5 EVALUATION OF THE ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS IN THE REPUBLIC

### 5. 1 THE GAME AND FAUNA SERVICE

Game Wardens of the Game and Fauna Service are the main statutory authority that intervene at the illegal trapping sites as they are responsible for responding to poaching reports. The cooperation with the game wardens has been growing since 2019, when the APS was dismantled, and the good results of the joint operations are visible, with 31 successful prosecutions in the autumn 2022. Nevertheless, the service is poorly staffed, underequipped and rarely pro-active.

Again this year, we noticed that the patrols have a working schedule that is inadequate to deal with the amount of trapping.

- 1) often there is no patrol in one or both districts.
- 2) in the night there is never a patrol available.

In almost 20% of the cases reported (14 out of 73) the patrol was not available. All the cases referred happened in the Larnaca and Famagusta districts, the trapping/hunting blackspot of the island.



Picture 2: GFS officer with limesticks and caller seized from trapping site found active during the camp (Photo: CABS).

Table 4: Quality of the response by the Game and Fauna Service.

	Positive response	Negative response/operation
Prosecution	31	
Patrol not available		14
Inappropriate response*		7
Operation failed**		8
Only confiscation***		13
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>42</b>

\* cases of late arrival to the site, not appropriate search of the trapper's equipment resulting in no evidence gathered, short ambushes, poorly performed ambushes, no action taken against offender...

\*\* cases where the ambush fails for no clear reason nor responsibility

\*\*\*No attempt done to perform any action aimed at identifying the offender, but only traps are dismantled

## 5.2 THE CYPRUS POLICE

In the absence of the game wardens patrol, CABS may refer to the local police, especially in those cases where there is enough evidence for the identification of the culprit and in particularly dangerous situations. 5 out of the 10 cases reported ended with a successful prosecution.

**Table 5: Quality of the response by the Cyprus Police.**

	<b>Positive response</b>	<b>Negative response</b>
Prosecution	5	
Patrol not available/no action		2
Operation failed		0
Only confiscation		3
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>

## 5.3 ESBA POLICE

CABS teams report cases of illegal trapping and hunting to the special unit of police CAT, and when the patrol is not available to the local police stations. The cooperation with SBA police is constructive and good. In Autumn 2022, 4 out of the 14 cases reported ended with prosecution. In 5 cases the patrol was not available, in 3 cases nothing was found and in 2 cases the patrol confiscated the illegal traps and decoys. Nevertheless, given the limited number of cases, it is not possible to evaluate the responses based on the percentages.

**Table 6: Quality of the response by the ESBA Police.**

	<b>Positive response</b>	<b>Negative response</b>
Prosecution	4	
Patrol non available		5
Operation failed/nothing found		3
Only confiscation		2
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>



**Picture 3: Scops owl rescued from a net found in the ESBA (Photo: SBA Police).**

## 6 ILLEGAL HUNTING

In recent years, CABS and SPA started monitoring and reporting illegal hunting in the south east of Cyprus as the problematic is widespread and is estimated to have a massif impact on wildlife. During the Autumn 2022 campaign, 110 specific cases of illegal hunting were identified, 92 in the Republic and 18 within the ESBA. The main illegalities consist in the killing of protected species (first and foremost blackcaps but commonly also bee-eaters, warblers, swallows, shrikes, pipits, birds of prey...) and in the use of electronic decoys, illegal tools that allow to dramatically increase the catch.

The investigation led to the prosecution of 16 illegal hunters, 13 in the republic and 3 in the ESBA.

During CABS monitoring priority is given to illegal trapping and only residual time is used to investigate illegal hunting. Therefore, the figures do not reflect the magnitude of the problem, which is **rampant, is the rule and it is totally untackled by the authorities in the Republic (unless CABS triggers an action)**.

**Table 7: Cases of illegal hunting dealt with by CABS volunteers.**

	REPUBLIC	ESBA	TOTAL
Hunting with electronic caller emitting recorded quail calls	48	4	52



Hunting of protected bird species with electronic caller emitting recorded blackcap call	15	1	16
Hunting of protected bird species without electronic caller	8	0	8
Hunting with electronic caller emitting recorded song thrush calls	12	1	13
Hunting with electronic caller emitting recorded skylark calls	8	11	19
Hunting in a protected area	1	1	2
<b>TOTAL CASES</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>NUMBER OF PROSECUTIONS</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>16</b>

## 8 CABS & SPA PARTICIPATION IN THE OVERALL ENFORCEMENT RESULTS AGAINST BIRD TRAPPING

According to data published by BirdLife Cyprus<sup>1</sup>, the Game and Fauna Service and SBA Police secured a total of 58 prosecutions in Famagusta and Larnaca Districts of Republic of Cyprus and in the British ESBA for bird trapping offences committed during the period August – October 2022. In 45 out of 58 prosecutions, the cases were reported by CABS & SPA. The activists located illegal trapping sites, reported them to the officers on duty and in most of the cases also secured the evidence which allowed officers to identify the culprit.

**Table 8: CABS & SPA participation in securing prosecutions for bird trapping offences in south-eastern Cyprus - August - October 2022.**

	ROC	ESBA	All
No. of all secured prosecutions	48	10	58
No. of prosecutions secured without assistance of CABS & SPA activists	9	1	10
No. of prosecutions secured with assistance of CABS & SPA activists	36	9	45
Percentage of prosecutions secured with assistance of CABS & SPA activists (out of all prosecutions) (%)	75.0	90.0	77.6

1. [https://birdlifecyprus.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2023/02/BirdLife-Cyprus\\_Autumn\\_2022\\_Trapping\\_report-FINAL-for-Publication.pdf](https://birdlifecyprus.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2023/02/BirdLife-Cyprus_Autumn_2022_Trapping_report-FINAL-for-Publication.pdf)

CABS & SPA contribution to the overall results of the authorities regarding the number of offenders, caught and prosecuted for bird trapping offences this autumn in SE Cyprus, was very significant. The activists assisted enforcement officers in securing majority (77.6 %) of prosecutions in August, September and October 2022.

## 8 DISCUSSION

Data collected during our field work and presented in this report show a substantial stability of the phenomenon of illegal bird trapping. In the ESBA, it has stabilised on low levels, but in the Republic it remains widespread. We acknowledge that no exponential increase has been observed, but neither a decrease. However, it remains questionable whether this deterrence has to be thanked to the authorities of the Republic or rather to CABS fieldwork, considering that most of the enforcement in the hotspots of the Republic is linked with CABS investigation work: CABS finds the sites, gathers the evidence (number plates, videos of offenders) and provides strong cases to the authorities. Often our volunteers have to face directly trappers to gather the evidence, with risks for personal security. Despite our meetings with the Ministers of Justice and Interior in 2022 and our requests for a more proactive approach of the police and GFS, which would allow CABS to step back from the frontline and for more suitable night schedules for the GFS, nothing has changed at all. It is clear to us that authorities of the Republic are happy that CABS shoulder the burden, and they limit their activities to the minimum necessary police work.

Even the promises of a proper tackling of 'Akas', the professional trapper located in Maroni, made to us from the police, have not been fulfilled: the single operation in October with the seizure of one net resembles from very close the staged operations made by the enforcement bodies, in order to save the face and not touch the untouchables. We are still appalled that a single criminal group can kill 4-500 protected birds a day in a valley full of nets, visible and hearable from everywhere around and no one is able to do anything or seems interested in stopping the slaughter of 25,000 European birds, all species included!



**Picture 4: Egyptian fruit bat rescued from a mist net during the camp (Photo: CABS)**

Once again, we would like to list our recommendations to the authorities in Cyprus:

- 1) In the ESBA trappers are still keen on trapping and regularly raise their heads to spot any sign of decrease in enforcement. It is crucial that the CAT team is maintained during the main trapping season to act as a deterrent.
- 2) In the Republic, a lot needs to be changed in the Game and Fauna Service: the agents should be more motivated and dedicated, many should be better trained in field work and the schedule should include full night shifts (when the wildlife crimes are being committed).
- 3) In the Republic the Anti-Poaching Squad (the Oulamòs) of the Cyprus police should be reinstated to work at least on professional trappers.
- 4) A special dedication should be addressed to 'Akas' with a daily presence in his trapping site and multiple prosecutions.
- 5) Illegal hunting is still unchallenged in the Republic and causes the loss of millions of protected birds. Having one single GFS team in charge of deterring trapping and hundreds of illegal hunters at the same time is clearly a breach of any provision of reasonable enforcement levels. Plus disturbing a hunter, even if he is illegally hunting, it is still considered a tabu in Cyprus. Without a change in the political arena, there will be no improvement in Cyprus and the Bird Directive will be never implemented in the field.