



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

Stiftung Pro Artenvielfalt®
Foundation Pro Biodiversity®

BIRD TRAPPING IN THE BRITISH EASTERN SOVEREIGN BASE AREA ON CYPRUS: CABS & SPA ANNUAL REPORT 2017



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Cover photo: SBA Police officer and CABS & SPA member rescuing a quail from mist net in the Eastern Sovereign Base Area, October 2017 (Photo: CABS)

CONTENTS

- SUMMARY 3
- 1 INTRODUCTION 4
 - 1.1 British Sovereign Base Areas on Cyprus 4
- 2 WORKING METHODS..... 5
 - 2.1 Field investigations methods 5
 - 2.2. Methods used to estimate number of trapped and killed birds on active trapping sites..... 7
- 3 RESULTS OF CABS & SPA INVESTIGATIONS AND ACTIONS AGAINST BIRD TRAPPING IN THE EASTERN SOVEREIGN BASE AREA IN 2017 8
 - 3.1 Distribution of active trapping sites..... 8
 - 3.2 Trapping trend in the Eastern Sovereign Base Area in the years 2014-2017..... 9
 - 3.3 Comparison of trapping activity in the Eastern Sovereign Base Area and Republic of Cyprus 9
 - 3.4 Activity of trapping sites with previous prosecutions 10
 - 3.5 Seized trapping paraphernalia 10
 - 3.6 Birds found in traps 12
 - 3.7 Estimated total number of trapped birds in year 2017 on trapping sites found to be active by CABS & SPA members..... 13
- 4 RESULTS OF SBA POLICE ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS AGAINST BIRD TRAPPING IN 2017..... 14
 - 4.1 Overall results 14
 - 4.2 Results of SBA Police enforcement actions for trapping cases reported by CABS & SPA members..... 14
 - 4.3 SBA Police enforcement results in the years 2012-2017 16
- 5 CONCLUSIONS..... 16
- REFERENCES..... 18

SUMMARY

In 2017, Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) and Foundation Pro Biodiversity (Stiftung Pro Artenvielfalt (SPA)) carried out extensive field investigations in the British overseas territory on Cyprus - the Eastern Sovereign Base Area (ESBA) to survey and to act against bird trapping. Field investigations covered the three main bird trapping seasons: winter, spring and autumn season and were carried out in all months in 2017 except for June and July.

Investigations revealed 220 active trapping sites within the ESBA. At 164 sites set traps were found and a total of 585 mist nets, 266 limesticks and 106 electronic callers were removed from them by SBA Police officers and CABS & SPA members.

Trapping activity was highest in January and February 2017, when field investigations revealed trapping activity at 125 trapping sites.

Field investigations included investigation of 19 trapping sites where trappers had been arrested for bird trapping in previous years and all 19 of them were found active again, indicating that the received fines are not deterring trappers from repeating offences in spite of successful arrest.

The trapping activity trend for the period 2014-2017 was assessed based on the ratio between total number of active sites found and total number of field investigation days carried out per year. This ratio is 1,4 for year 2017 and it is the lowest in the last 3 years, indicating that trapping activity in the ESBA has decreased since 2015 but still remains high.

The Sovereign Base Area (SBA) Police officers initiated 286 cases of bird trapping in 2017. 92 cases were initiated after being reported by CABS & SPA teams. 14 people were arrested and further 10 people were reported for bird trapping in 2017.

1 INTRODUCTION

This report compiles the results of CABS & SPA field investigations and actions against bird trapping in British territory on Cyprus, the Eastern Sovereign Base Area (ESBA), in 2017. It also presents the results of enforcement actions against trapping made by SBA Police.

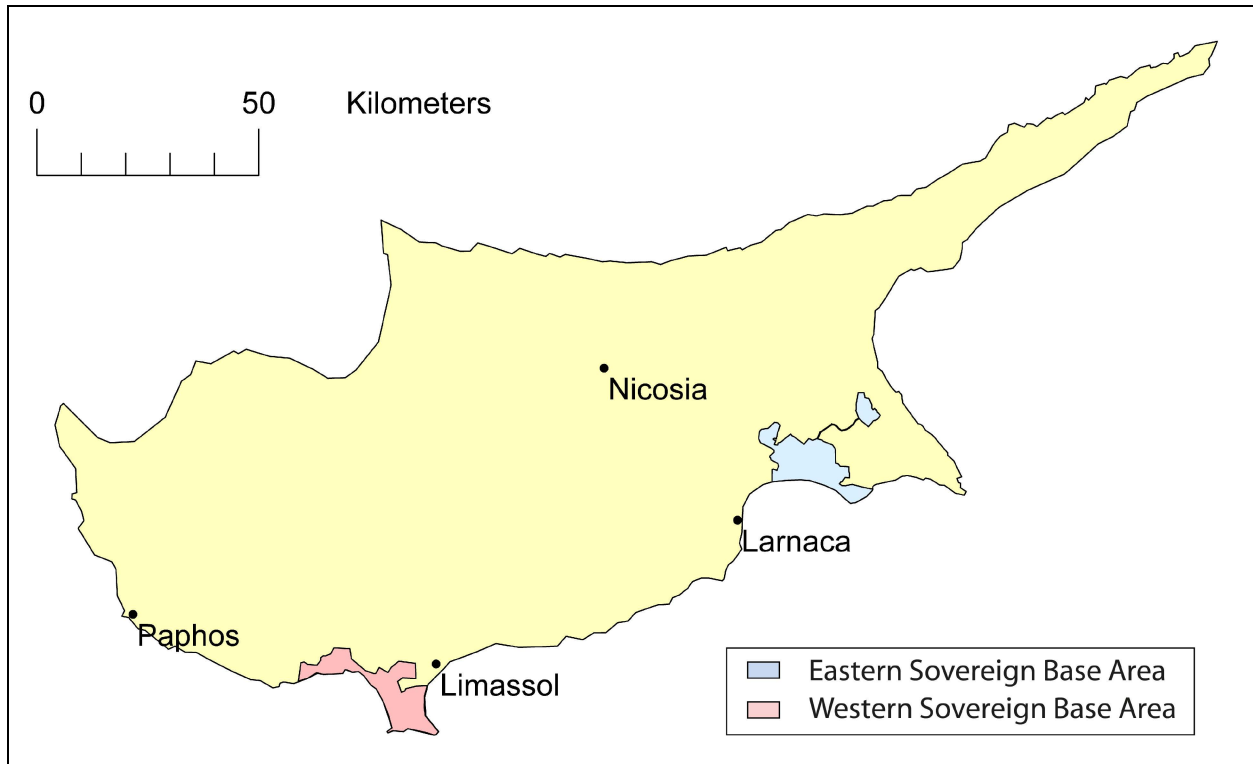
1.1 BRITISH SOVEREIGN BASE AREAS ON CYPRUS

The Eastern Sovereign Base Area, also known as the Sovereign Base Area of Dhekelia, is one of two British Overseas Territories on the island of Cyprus. As the name suggests, it is situated on the eastern side of the island, while the Western Sovereign Base Area, also known as the Sovereign Base Area of Akrotiri, lies in the west (Picture 1). These areas, which include British military bases and installations, as well as other land, were established in 1960 when Cyprus achieved independence from the British Empire.

Although the SBAs boundaries were drawn to exclude civilian population centers, the coup in 1974 and other developments over the years led to an influx of civilians to SBAs and approximately 10,000 Cypriots now live within them. In addition, 3,800 UK residents, mostly military personnel and their families, work or live on the Base Areas (SBA Administration 2018a).

Both SBAs operate as military bases and they report to the British Ministry of Defense in London, rather than the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Nevertheless they are governed as British Overseas Territories and the leader, who is also the commander of the British Forces Cyprus, has executive and legislative powers comparable to those of a governor in a civilian overseas territory. The commander is the Administrator of the SBAs and leads a civilian administration that manages the SBAs.

The combined size of the SBAs is 254 km² and the size of ESBA alone is 131 km². For comparison, this is similar to the size of Edinburgh (264 km²) and around 6 times smaller than London (1,569 km²). 20 percent of the land is owned by the UK Ministry of Defence, 20 percent by the Crown and 60 percent is privately owned and used for intensive farming.



Picture 1: British Sovereign Base Areas on the island of Cyprus

2 WORKING METHODS

2.1 FIELD INVESTIGATIONS METHODS

CABS and SPA carried out four large scale bird trapping investigation and prevention events called Bird Protection Camps in Cyprus in 2017. They were January, February 2017 Bird Protection Camp, Spring 2017 Bird Protection Camp, Autumn 2017 Bird Protection Camp and November, December 2017 Bird Protection Camp.

Results of these Camps are presented in CABS & SPA Winter 2016-2017 Bird Protection Camp Field Report (Debersek & Rutigliano 2017a), CABS & SPA Spring 2017 Bird Protection Camp (Debersek & Rutigliano 2017b), CABS & SPA Autumn 2017 Bird Protection Camp (Debersek & Rutigliano 2017c) and CABS & SPA Winter 2017-2018 Bird Protection Camps Field Report (Debersek & Rutigliano 2018).

A total of 70 people participated at the Camps and they monitored trapping activity for 154 days (Table 1).

Participants of the Camps monitored trapping activity in the south-eastern part of the island, where bird trapping is most intense; in Famagusta and Larnaca Districts within the Republic of Cyprus and in the ESBA. Detected illegal activities were reported immediately to the authorities to ensure that activities were stopped in shortest possible time and that enforcement actions against trappers were taken.

Table 1: Duration and number of people participating at Bird Protection Camps organised by CABS and SPA in Cyprus in 2017

Bird Protection Camp	January, February 2017	Spring 2017	Autumn 2017	November, December 2017	Total 2017
Period of field investigations	12.1.-12.2.	25.3.-7.5.	27.8.-29.10.	30.11.-17.12.	
Duration of field investigations (days)	32	44	60	18	154
No. of participants	27	12	28	3	70

Priority was given to the investigation of locations with the highest probability of finding trapping activity at them. This probability was estimated by consulting data collected in previous years. Trapping sites were visited during the time of day when the traps are most likely to be set and when bird callers are used to attract birds to the trapping sites.

These methods were employed in order to maximise the detection of active trapping sites and to carry out immediate actions to stop detected trapping activity with the help of enforcement agencies.

Active trapping sites are defined as those with set traps, which can either be limesticks or mist nets. Furthermore, trapping sites without set traps but with signs of recent trapping activity are also considered as active: feathers on the ground at trapping locations or remnants of glue on branches indicate that the location was recently active. Also trapping sites with electronic bird callers playing at them, even if there are no traps set out at the time of visiting, are counted as active. These callers are sometimes used solely in the night to attract birds to the trapping site and the trappers set their traps at them in the early morning.

2.2. METHODS USED TO ESTIMATE NUMBER OF TRAPPED AND KILLED BIRDS ON ACTIVE TRAPPING SITES

To calculate number of birds that have been trapped and killed on trapping sites found to be active by CABS & SPA members in ESBA in 2017, following estimations were used:

- length of spring trapping season is 90 days (beginning of March until end of May), length of autumn trapping season is 75 days (middle of August until end of October) and the length of winter trapping season is 120 days (beginning of November until end of February)
- 20 birds are caught per net and 0.5 birds per limestick per day in autumn trapping season. Due to less intensive migration of birds in spring and winter time, we estimate that catch rate in these two seasons is half of the catch rate in autumn season, meaning that estimated 10 birds are caught per net and 0.25 birds per limestick per day
- CABS & SPA field investigations revealed that trapping sites are not active every day in the trapping seasons, even when trapping activity on them is not disturbed by enforcement officers. When actions of enforcements officers (confiscations of traps and trapping paraphernalia, arrests of trappers...) are made at trapping sites, the trapping activity is interrupted, either for short time, longer period or the site is permanently abandoned and not used for trapping anymore. As majority of trapping sites, found to be active in ESBA in 2017, were disturbed by actions of enforcement officers and actions of CABS & SPA members, we have considered the effect of disturbance when estimating the average duration of trapping activity on them. Considering the effect of disturbance, the different lengths and different intensity of trapping activity of each trapping season, the estimated average duration of trapping activity on trapping sites, found to be active in ESBA, was 10 days for spring season, 20 days for autumn season and 20 days for winter trapping season.

3 RESULTS OF CABS & SPA INVESTIGATIONS AND ACTIONS AGAINST BIRD TRAPPING IN THE EASTERN SOVEREIGN BASE AREA IN 2017

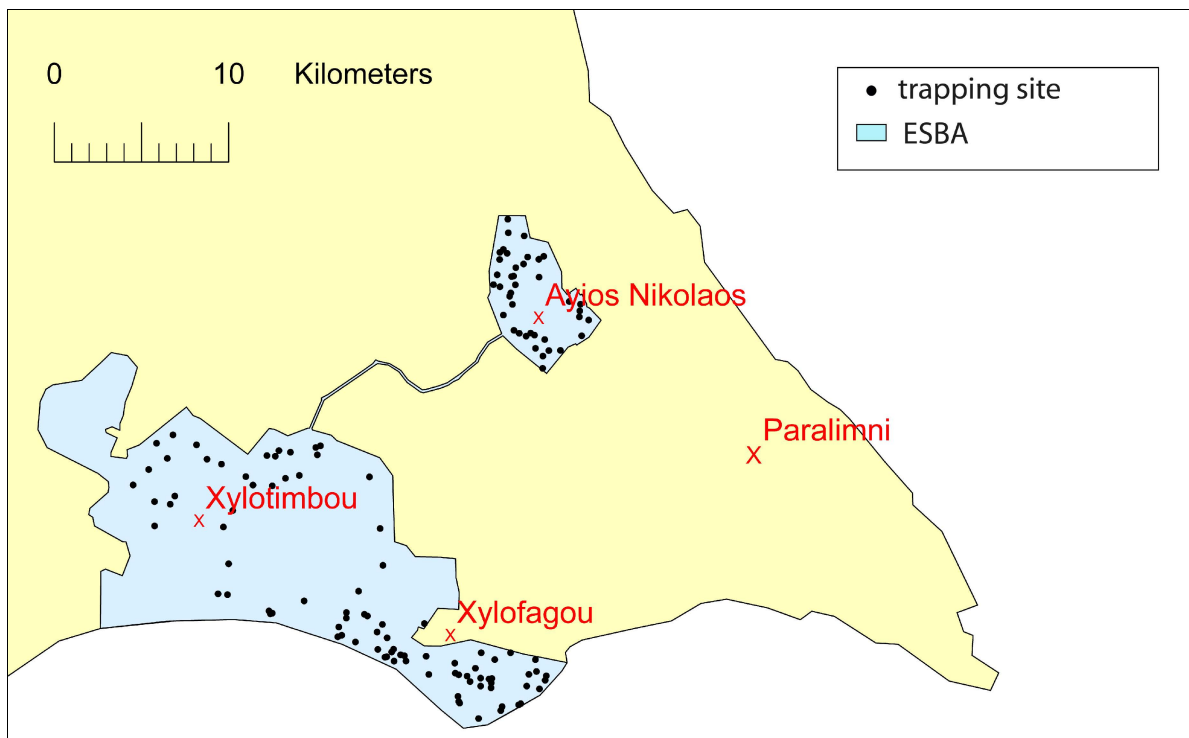
3.1 DISTRIBUTION OF ACTIVE TRAPPING SITES

CABS & SPA members found 220 active trapping sites between 1st January 2017 and 31st December 2017 in the Eastern Sovereign Base Area (ESBA). Trapping activity on the trapping sites, found to be active, was detected 353 times or 1,6 times per trapping site.

139 active sites were found in winter, 4 in spring and 77 in autumn trapping season (Table 2, Picture 2).

Table 2: Distribution of trapping sites, found to be active by CABS & SPA members in the Eastern Sovereign Base Area in year 2017

Bird Protection Camp	January, February 2017	Spring 2017	Autumn 2017	November, December 2017	Total
No. of active sites found	125	4	77	14	220



Picture 2: Distribution of trapping sites, found active in the British Eastern Sovereign Base Area on Cyprus in 2017

3.2 TRAPPING TREND IN THE EASTERN SOVEREIGN BASE AREA IN THE YEARS 2014-2017

To evaluate trapping trend in the ESBA, we have compared number of active trapping sites found by CABS & SPA teams in the last 4 years. As the length of field investigations, carried out by CABS & SPA members in the southeastern Cyprus, increased over the last four years, the ratio between number of sites found to be active and number of field investigation days was used to calculate the trend (Table 3).

Table 3: Results of bird trapping investigations and trapping activity trend in the Eastern Sovereign Base Area between 2014 and 2017

	2014	2015	2016	2017
Total duration of field investigations (days)	77	82	112	154
No. of active sites found	68	122	190	220
Number of sites found to be active per day of investigations	0,9	1,5	1,7	1,4
Trapping activity trend		+66 %	+13,3%	-17,4%

Trapping activity trend, for which the base is set at number of sites found to be active per day of investigations in previous year, is for the first time negative in 2017. 17,4 percent less trapping sites were found active per day of field investigations in 2017 when compared to 2016.

3.3 COMPARISON OF TRAPPING ACTIVITY IN THE EASTERN SOVEREIGN BASE AREA AND REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

In 2017, CABS & SPA members found 220 active trapping sites in the ESBA and 253 active trapping sites in the southeastern part of Republic of Cyprus, in Famagusta and Larnaca Districts. To directly compare trapping activity in both investigated regions, we have to consider their size, as the investigated area in the Republic of Cyprus is more than eight times bigger as the size of ESBA (Table 4).

Table 4: Comparison of trapping activity detected by CABS and SPA members in Republic of Cyprus and Eastern Sovereign Base Area in 2017. (RoC=Republic of Cyprus, ESBA=Eastern Sovereign Base Area)

	ESBA	RoC
No. of active trapping sites found	220	253
Size of the area (km ²)	131	1044,2
Density of active trapping sites (sites per km ²)	1,68	0,24

Density of active trapping sites found per square kilometer was 7 times higher in the ESBA as in the Republic of Cyprus in 2017.

3.4 ACTIVITY OF TRAPPING SITES WITH PREVIOUS PROSECUTIONS

During field investigations in 2017, CABS & SPA members checked 19 trapping sites in the ESBA, where trappers were caught and arrested in previous years. All sites with previous arrests were found active again in 2017 (Table 5).

Table 5: Reactivation of trapping sites with previous prosecutions in the Eastern Sovereign Base Area in 2017

Bird protection Camp	January, February 2017	Spring 2017	Autumn 2017	November, December 2017	Year 2017
No. of sites with previous prosecutions checked	11	0	7	1	19
No. of active sites with previous prosecutions	11	0	7	1	19

The fact, that all checked sites with previous prosecutions have been found active, shows that SBA Police and SBA Court actions and penalties against people prosecuted for bird trapping at reactivated sites were inadequate and have not deterred them from continuing trapping. Illegal trapping proves to be a highly profitable activity, hence trappers persistently continue trapping at the same sites where they were previously caught and prosecuted.

3.5 SEIZED TRAPPING PARAPHERNALIA

At 164 out of 220 trapping sites, found to be active by CABS & SPA members in the ESBA in 2017, set traps were found during field investigations. In total, 585 mist nets,

266 limesticks and 106 electronic callers were removed from them by enforcement officers and CABS & SPA members (Table 6). At the remaining 56 sites the number of set traps was not possible to be determined for various reasons. Either we couldn't approach the sites because of safety reasons, electronic bird callers were playing on them but the traps were not set out at the time of investigation or only signs of recent trapping, like feathers on the ground, were detected.

Table 6: Trapping paraphernalia seized from trapping sites found active by CABS & SPA members in the Eastern Sovereign Base Area in year 2017

No. of trapping sites with set traps found	164
No. of trapping sites with set limesticks found	3
No. of trapping sites with set mist nets found	158
No. of trapping sites with set limesticks and set nets found	3
No. of trapping sites with electronic callers used on them	161
No. of limesticks seized	266
No. of mist nets seized	585
No. of electronic callers seized	106

The combined use of mist nets and electronic callers is by far the most common method of bird trapping in the ESBA. Out of 164 sites with set traps found in 2017, combination of mist nest and callers was observed at 161 sites. Limesticks were observed only at 6 sites.

Particularly large quantity of traps was seized in two successive nights in January, the nights on 13th and 14th January. On these two nights, CABS & SPA members organised an operation called Long Night Raid to record and to expose massive level of winter trapping in the ESBA to the media. In just two nights, 18 CABS & SPA members located 114 active trapping sites within ESBA and seized 274 mist nets from them (Picture 3). 384 birds were rescued from seized traps.



Picture 3: CABS & SPA members with nets seized in the operation Long Night Raid (Photo: CABS)

3.6 BIRDS FOUND IN TRAPS

In total, 1054 birds were rescued from traps, found by CABS & SPA members, in the ESBA in year 2017 (Table 7). 90 birds were found dead in traps.

Table 7: Rescued birds and birds, found dead in traps, located during Bird Protection Camps in 2017 in the ESBA

Bird Protection Camp	January, February 2017	Spring 2017	Autumn 2017	November, December 2017	Total 2017
No. of rescued birds from traps	526	38	355	135	1054
No. of dead birds found in traps	64	1	25	0	90
No. of identified bird species	16	0	14	5	24

3.7 ESTIMATED TOTAL NUMBER OF TRAPPED BIRDS IN YEAR 2017 ON TRAPPING SITES FOUND TO BE ACTIVE BY CABS & SPA MEMBERS

Considering results of field investigations (columns A,B,C,D,E,F and G in Table 8) and trapping activity estimations used to calculate number of trapped birds (columns H,I and J in Table 8), we estimate that approximately 129 000 birds were trapped and killed in the ESBA in 2017 on trapping sites found to be active by CABS & SPA members.

Table 8: Trapping activity field results, trapping activity estimations and estimated total number of trapped birds on trapping sites, found to be active by CABS & SPA members, in year 2017 in the ESBA

	Bird Protection Camp	January, February 2017	Spring 2017	Autumn 2017	November, December 2017	Total 2017
A	No. of active sites found	125	4	77	14	220
B	No. of active trapping sites with limesticks used on them	1	0	9	0	10
C	No. of active trapping sites with mist nets used on them	124	4	68	14	210
D	Average number of limesticks used per trapping site	41	0	45	0	
E	Average number of mist nets used per trapping site	4	4,3	2,5	4,1	
F	Total number of limesticks used on all active sites (F=B*D)	41	0	405	0	446
G	Total number of nets used on active sites (G=C*E)	496	17	170	57	740
H	Estimated duration of trapping activity on active sites (days)	10	10	20	10	50
I	Estimated number of birds killed per limestick per day	0,25	0,25	0,5	0,25	
J	Estimated number of birds killed per mist net per day	10	10	20	10	
K	Estimated no. of trapped birds on active trapping sites (K = F*H*I+G*H*J)	49703	1700	72050	5700	129153

4 RESULTS OF SBA POLICE ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS AGAINST BIRD TRAPPING IN 2017

4.1 OVERALL RESULTS

The competent authority responsible for enforcement against illegal bird trapping in the British Sovereign Base Areas on Cyprus is the Sovereign Base Areas (SBA) Police. They have a special unit dedicated to counter bird trapping and illegal killing of wild birds and other animals: the Crime Action Team (CAT). Police officers that are on duty at Dhekelia and Ayios Nikolaos police stations also investigate and act against trapping, when trapping cases are reported to them.

SBA police officers initiated 286 cases of bird trapping in 2017 and as a result, 14 persons were arrested for trapping and further 10 persons were reported for trapping (Table 9).

Table 9: Results of SBA Police enforcement actions against bird trapping in 2017 (SBA Administration 2018b)

	January 2017	February 2017	March 2017	April 2017	May 2017	June 2017	July 2017	August 2017	September 2017	October 2017	November 2017	December 2017	Total 2017
No. of all initiated cases (trapping)	57	30		4	3	0	0	8	68	71	27	18	286
Arrested (trapping)	5	1		0	0	0	0	1	2	3	0	2	14
Reported (trapping)	0	1		0	0	0	0	2	3	3	0	1	10
Seized limesticks	0	94		0	28	0	0	2	220	37	44	0	425
Seized mist nets	203	71		17	1	0	0	14	63	77	71	59	576

4.2 RESULTS OF SBA POLICE ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS FOR TRAPPING CASES REPORTED BY CABS & SPA MEMBERS

CABS & SPA reported 150 active trapping sites to the SBA Police in 2017. For 92 of reported sites SBA Police initiated an investigation to find individuals responsible for

trapping. Further 2 cases were initiated after being reported by RSPB Investigation Team (Table 10).

Table 10: Overall results of SBA Police enforcement actions and results of SBA Police actions for trapping cases reported by CABS & SPA in 2017 (SBA Administration 2018b, Debersek & Rutigliano 2017a, Debersek & Rutigliano 2017b, Debersek & Rutigliano 2017c, Debersek & Rutigliano 2018)

	January 2017	February 2017	March 2017	April 2017	May 2017	June 2017	July 2017	August 2017	September 2017	October 2017	November 2017	December 2017	Total 2017
No. of all trapping cases reported by CABS & SPA	8	7		4	0	0	0	9	55	52	2	13	150
No. of all initiated trapping cases	57	30		4	3	0	0	8	68	71	27	18	286
Cases initiated after reported by CABS & SPA	7	5		4	0	0	0	5	21	36	2	12	92
Cases initiated after reported by RSPB	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
All seized limesticks	0	94		0	28	0	0	2	220	37	44	0	425
Seized limesticks (CABS & SPA cases)	0	41		0	0	0	0	0	72	6	0	0	119
All seized mist nets	203	71		17	1	0	0	14	63	77	71	59	576
Seized mist nets (CABS & SPA cases)	50	18		17	0	0	0	8	25	54	4	52	228

CABS & SPA members have significantly contributed to the results of enforcement actions made by SBA Police in 2017. 92 out of 286 bird trapping cases (that is almost one third), investigated by SBA Police in 2017, were initiated after being reported by CABS & SPA. 228 out of 576 mist nets and 119 out of 425 limesticks, seized by SBA Police in 2017, were seized at the sites reported by CABS & SPA members.

4.3 SBA POLICE ENFORCEMENT RESULTS IN THE YEARS 2012-2017

Table 11: Results of the SBA Police enforcement actions against trapping for years 2012-2017 (SBA Administration 2018b, SBA Intelligence Analyst, written communication)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
No. of initiated cases	244	235	289	188	357	286
Arrested (trapping)	28	28	40	24	35	14
Reported (trapping)	3	3	1	1	25	10
Arrested (poaching)	9	4	8	2	12	4
Reported (poaching)	3	5	3	1	0	3
No. of seized mist nets	645	682	634	416	951	576

In 2017, 14 arrests were made for bird trapping (Table 11). That is lowest in the last 5 years. Considering that 286 cases of bird trapping were investigated in 2017, only 5 % of these cases ended with arrest of trappers.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The ESBA continues to be the main hotspot of illegal bird trapping on Cyprus also in 2017. Field investigations, while limited by a small number of investigators, duration of only for 154 days and being carried out only in night time, nonetheless revealed 220 active trapping sites on this small British overseas territory on Cyprus. The density of active trapping sites per square kilometer in ESBA was 7 times higher as the density in the other two main trapping areas on Cyprus, Famagusta and Larnaca Districts of the Republic of Cyprus.

Beside being massive, bird trapping in the ESBA also stands for its audacity and for being done in an open manner. At 98 percent of all trapping sites, found by CABS & SPA members in 2017, combination of huge nets and loud electronic callers was used for trapping. Electronic callers were easily and clearly heard every night from main roads during the main trapping seasons. Unlike, for example, in northern Italy, where trappers set their traps covertly and in the places difficult to approach in order to avoid detection, most trapping sites in the ESBA were easy to detect and easy to access.

The combined use of nets and electronic callers allows highest catch rates for trappers and results in huge number of killed birds. Only on trapping sites, found to be active by

CABS & SPA members in the ESBA, estimated 129 000 birds were trapped and killed in 2017. As the field investigations were limited by the duration and number of people involved, we estimate that approximately twice as much trapping sites were active in the whole ESBA in 2017 and estimated 258 000 birds were trapped and killed on them.

As a direct result of CABS & SPA field investigations, 585 mist nets were seized at the trapping sites found active by CABS & SPA members.

SBA Police investigated 286 cases of bird trapping in 2017 and as a result, 14 persons were arrested. 14 arrests is poor result as it indicates that only 5 % of investigated trapping cases ended with arrest of trappers.

Similar as in previous years, SBA Police continues with the practice of only confiscating trapping paraphernalia at the investigated sites. At majority of the sites, reported by CABS & SPA members in 2017, SBA Police officers confiscated set traps and left the sites without making any other actions to catch people responsible for trapping. Until more efforts are made to catch and arrest trappers, ESBA will remain to stand out as main hotspot of illegal trapping in Cyprus.

Despite poor results regarding number of arrests, we have seen some promising improvements in the work of SBA Police. Among others, they have increased their presence in Cape Pyla in autumn trapping season and consequently, trapping activity in autumn 2017 was much lower as in the previous autumns. They also started using drone to record and catch trappers with success.

The cooperation between CABS & SPA and SBA Police in 2017 was the best so far. CABS & SPA members reported a record high number of active trapping sites to the SBA Police in 2017 and in almost all cases, SBA Police officers immediately responded and made investigations and actions against trapping at the reported sites.

Combination of increased extent of fieldwork made by CABS & SPA members, good cooperation between CABS & SPA and SBA Police and improved independent anti-trapping activities of SBA Police, resulted in the decline of trapping activity in the ESBA in 2017 when compared to 2016.

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