
Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS)

ANNUAL REPORT - 2021



Dear Friends and Supporters,

This report is intended to give you a detailed overview of exactly what we were able to achieve during the past 12 months in our actions in Germany and the Mediterranean region for the protection of our birdlife. Despite the ongoing Covid pandemic, with careful logistical planning, we were able to conduct bird protection operations in eight countries with more than 140 volunteers. As usual, the primary focus of our operations was on our large, established protection camps against illegal migratory bird hunting in Malta, Cyprus, Italy and Lebanon. Together with our partners on the ground and the relevant authorities, we were also able to uncover numerous cases of illegal persecution in France, Spain and in Germany and bring those responsible to justice!

From the perspective of an association specialised in fighting wildlife crime, the success of our actions and campaigns can be well illustrated by the numbers of traps found, poachers convicted, or birds freed. However, the most important thing is not reflected by these figures, namely the huge number of migratory birds that get through thanks to our actions and are NOT caught or killed! Such a number is of course difficult to measure, but its magnitude can be indirectly estimated by the decrease in the number of traps we find per season. In Italy, Cyprus and Spain alone, in recent years our activists have dismantled tens of thousands of traps and more than 100 running kilometres of trap nets. The trend: downwards. One of the reasons for this is that many hundreds of hunters and bird trappers convicted as a result of our field investigations have been deterred by criminal proceedings and official sanctions to such an extent that they have given up poaching. Not to forget the countless animals directly freed from nets and traps by our activists and, of course, all the migratory birds that survive because governments, under our pressure, have taken tougher action against poaching or have banned the hunting of certain species altogether - as, for example, France and Spain did this year with the turtle dove.

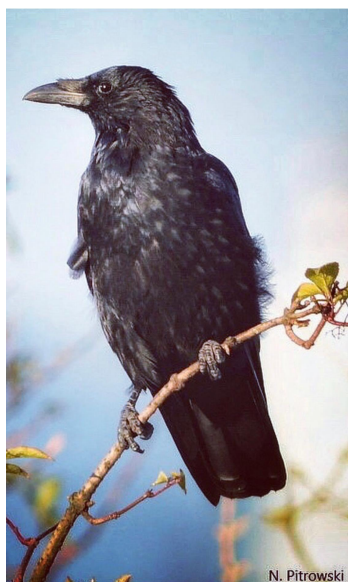
So, you see, our joint efforts to protect migratory birds are paying off. But every single success is hard-won and must be constantly defended against the interests of the hunting lobbies and other "traditionalist groups". To ensure that our international actions and campaigns can continue in the coming year, we would like to take this opportunity to ask for your support again.

The successes and results described in this report would not have been possible without the longstanding and generous help of our supporters, donors and volunteers. Together, we all represent a growing community of direct action for bird protection. On behalf of the CABS board we would like to thank you all very much and hope that you will continue to support CABS and our migratory birds in the coming year.

The CABS Team

January

- In Sardinia and Lombardy, CABS members carried out several operations against the trapping of wintering thrushes. In fields not far from the city of Brescia, a huge illegal net trapping installation was discovered and reported to the authorities. In the owner's house, the police subsequently find more nets, traps and more than 60 live song thrushes and redwing. In Sardinia, four set nets and 55 wire snares are discovered and destroyed.



- CABS filed a complaint against a hunter from Lower Saxony who was operating a flourishing trade in shot crows for the gothic scene on the internet. In total, more than 250 individual sales were identified, including skulls, pairs of wings as well as crow's feet made into jewellery. During an inspection, further evidence in the form of crow wings and claws were found in the accused's house. The authorities initiate criminal proceedings.

- Action against illegal waterfowl hunting in Italy: In the Po Delta (provinces of Rovigo and Padua), CABS staff, together with the police, caught a total of 22 hunters violating protection regulations when hunting waterfowl. During subsequent house searches, 21 firearms,

6,400 rounds of ammunition, 9 electronic decoy callers and five freshly shot birds (3 teals, 1 pintail and 1 gadwall) were confiscated.



- **Illegal sale of "drag game":** A hunting outfitter from the Vechta area (Lower Saxony) was found to be offering his customers dried carcasses of shot woodcock and crows as "training game for dog training". A corresponding offer for sale was submitted to CABS HQ and was forwarded to the responsible hunting authority. The owner of the company faces a fine for violating the Federal Game Protection Ordinance.

February

- **Seven 'birds' with one stone:** In a joint operation between CABS, the LAV (League Against Animal Trapping) and the Forestry Police, seven bird trappers were convicted in Sardinia (Italy) within one-week sting operation - 235 horsehair snares, 47 snap traps, three nets and five wire snares for trapping mammals were seized and dismantled. Our staff had scouted out the poachers' trapping sites beforehand, thus enabling the successful raids.



- **Checks in Northern Italy:** In the Southern Alps, CABS staff took action against the trapping of wintering thrushes. Four trapping sites were discovered and subsequently monitored from covert surveillance points. In cooperation with the Carabinieri Forestale (forest police) and the provincial police, four bird trappers were convicted by the beginning of March. Eight spring traps, 12 bow traps and one large set net were taken out of circulation.



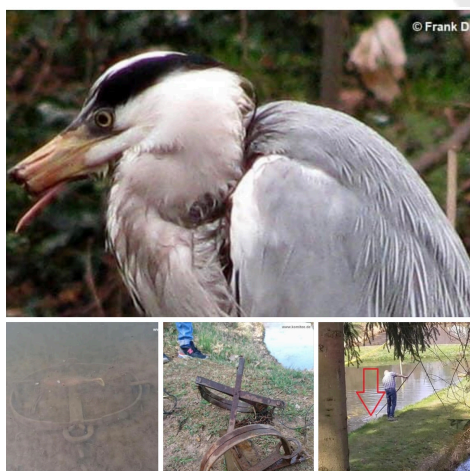
- **Poison alert in Heinsberg:** In and around the nature reserve "Tüschenbroicher Wald" in the district of Heinsberg (NRW), several dead birds of prey and suspected poisoned baits are found again in a notorious hotspot. CABS staff documented the findings and filed a criminal complaint. In order to support the police investigation, a reward of 5,000€ was offered for information leading to the identification of the suspect(s) involved.



- **Charges against migratory bird butchery:** Our investigations against illegal hunting in Veneto lead the forest police to an address in the city of Padua, where a total of 961 shot teals, pintails, whistling ducks, gadwalls, shovelers, mallards and white-fronted geese as well as three professional plucking machines were seized. The birds - almost all endangered throughout Europe - were destined for restaurants in Venice. The owner will have to stand trial for trafficking in protected wild birds.

March

- **Raid on taxidermists:** In Bavaria, authorities searched the homes and offices of three taxidermists following a criminal complaint filed by CABS. More than 150 dead jays, crows, woodcocks, a stuffed eagle owl as well as hard drives and business documents were seized. Criminal proceedings were initiated against the suspects for commercial trade in protected species.
- **In Malta,** the participants of our spring bird protection camp reported a total of 13 cases of illegal bird trapping to the authorities in the second half of March. Six poachers were caught by the police at their trapping sites and a total of 12 large clap-nets were dismantled. Four electronic decoy devices were confiscated by the police and more than 130 linnets, siskins, finches and hawfinches freed from traps and cages.



- **Grey heron underwater traps:** In the district of Hersfeld-Rotenburg (Hesse), a CABS member discovered three illegal traps submerged in a fishpond for killing herons, cormorants and other fish-eating species after receiving a tip-off. The traps were set a few centimetres below the water surface and baited with plastic trout decoys. The police, who were informed by us, seized the three traps and initiated criminal proceedings against the tenant of the facility for wildlife crime.
- **Operation on Sardinia:** On the Italian Mediterranean island, the forestry police caught a total of seven poachers in the act of illegal bird trapping, following concrete intel provided by CABS staff. Their trapping sites, hidden in the forest, had previously been discovered during field investigations conducted by CABS members and the LAV (Italian Animal Protection Association) and reported to the authorities. 235 horsehair snares and 47 snap traps were seized.

April

- During field investigations of a suspicious "problem area" in Lower Bavaria, CABS staff discovered an illegal live trap for strictly protected beavers at a watercourse. During the subsequent monitoring of the area by the LBV group Straubing-Bogen (BirdLife Bavaria), the local hunting tenant is caught and reported along with a freshly caught beaver. The man was threatened with legal proceedings and the revocation of his hunting license. The beaver is well and is released near its dam.



- In Malta, our mission to protect migrating birds of prey and turtle doves was launched in mid-April. The main focus is on monitoring and safeguarding roosting sites, where a total of four poachers were filmed shooting protected species. All of the perpetrators were identified beyond doubt based on our footage as well as the licence plates of their vehicles that we captured. All the casefile evidence was handed over to the police.

- Successful sting against mass trapping of songbirds in Lebanon: near the town of Anfeh, members of the Anti-Poaching Unit (APU) trained and financed by CABS discovered a facility for the industrial-scale trapping of songbirds. The huge installation contained more than 400 metres of nets, built in an olive plantation. Under the protection of the military police, all the trapping equipment on the site was dismantled and destroyed.





- At our bird conservation camp in Cyprus, 545 illegal limesticks and 67 nets used for bird trapping were seized in April and May and more than 200 birds, including nightingales, warblers and other songbirds were rescued. Thanks to our cooperation with wardens from the Game and Fauna Service, officials were able to convict 15 poachers as a result of our field work and impose record fines ranging from €8,000 to over €9,000 per person.

May

- On the Italian island of Ischia, CABS investigations lead to the arrest of two notorious poachers by game wardens. During house searches, over 50 illegally shot whinchats, wheatears, nightingales and an oriole were found in a freezer and seized. In addition, three unregistered shotguns and an illegal silencer were found. The two men will be tried for poaching and serious violations of the regional weapons law.
- Migratory bird massacre in "no man's land": During an expedition to the border area between the Republic of Cyprus and the part of the island claimed by Turkey, our teams found the remains of more than 100 freshly shot migratory birds, including bee-eaters, skylarks, pied flycatchers and turtle doves. The case caused a stir throughout Europe, partly because there are hardly any possibilities to take action against the poachers in the restricted zone administered by the UN.



- Turtle dove hunters caught in Italy: On Ponza, a CABS team filmed a man masked with a balaclava illegally hunting in spring. Police officers were called in while we kept the suspect under observation and were able to arrest the man and seize six freshly shot turtle doves. Ponza remains one of the strongholds of poaching in Italy - however, the situation has calmed down considerably in recent years due to our regular bird protection camps.
- Professional hunter falls into camera trap: In Münsterland (North Rhine-Westphalia), CABS filmed a professional hunter with an illegal live trap for birds. When confronted by our staff, the man talked his head off in front of the camera. The public order office confiscated the trap and initiated proceedings which will result in a fine of several thousand euros. A video documenting the case and exposing the lies of the accused was published on YouTube our channel.



June



- Operation "Lord of the Rings" in Italy - CABS staff assisted a special unit of the Forest Police in an operation against bird traffickers who sell wild-caught animals as alleged captive-bred birds. During the operations, more than 400 thrushes, buntings and blackbirds as well as numerous fakes or manipulated breeding rings were seized throughout Italy. The birds illegally stolen from the wild were brought to rescue centres where they could be professionally rehabilitated for release.

- Charges against songbird trappers from Frankfurt: In an allotment garden in the district of Sachsenhausen, a man was identified illegally trapping goldfinches with live traps. Evidence showing an active trap together with a live decoy collected by CABS was handed over to the responsible police. Wild-caught goldfinches are popular cage birds and are traded on the black market for up to 200€ each.





- In the Rhineland, CABS staff help to record corn buntings, which are threatened with extinction in NRW, and coordinate the protection of marsh harrier and montagu's harrier nests in grain fields. With the support of the districts of Euskirchen and Rhein-Erft and the biostations, several protection zones for marsh harriers and montagu's harriers were set up and proposals for improving the habitats of corn buntings and other farmland birds in the Zülpicher Börde are being developed.

- At the artificial breeding rafts installed by CABS on the Old Elbe near Jerichow (Saxony-Anhalt) and Lake Pritzerber (Brandenburg), 38 pairs of the Black Tern, which is threatened with extinction in Germany, attempted to breed this year. Unfortunately, many broods were lost due to fluctuating water levels and predation. By the end of the breeding season, however, 16 young birds successfully fledged. Nationwide, the Black Tern population is around 950 breeding pairs.



July

- In the first six months of the year, a total of 55 individual cases of illegal bird of prey persecution in Germany were recorded by our registration and documentation centre for raptor persecution and wildlife crime (EDGAR). In the process, 93 strictly protected birds of prey are killed. Most of the animals, including 21 red kites, are victims of deliberate poisoning. Trapping with live traps or leg-hold traps was confirmed 11 times.



- In Malta, CABS investigations lead the police to a huge facility for the illegal trapping of waders: During the raid, three large clap-nets, a trap and a total of 20 live black-winged stilts, stone curlew, greenshanks, various sandpipers and plovers as well as a black-tailed godwit were confiscated. Experts estimate the black-market value of the "collection" to be more than 5,000€. Because ownership is unclear, the police are investigating unknown persons.



- Campaign against cruel "snake nets" in Cyprus: In Cyprus, a CABS team documented the effects of illegal ground nets to repel snakes on the local fauna: In just a few weeks, inspections revealed 98 victims, including 47 agamas, 29 snakes, 11 hedgehogs, six songbirds, three chameleons and one barn owl. 15 property owners were reported. In the case of the strictly protected barn owl, the offender faces a fine of more than 8,000€.

- Protection for the Bonelli's Eagle: In Sicily, CABS, together with our partner "Gruppo Tutela Rapaci", organised a nest watch scheme of the last nests of the endangered Bonelli's Eagle. A total of 59 breeding pairs were counted - more than ever before - and partly monitored with covert cameras. 41 young eagles fledged! In addition, two chicks were confiscated from animal traders by the police following tips from our experts and taken to a care centre.

August

- Tasteless: Because the well-known TV chef Frank Rosin offers stewed meat of wild woodcock in his restaurant in Dorsten, CABS called in the authorities and the media. The reason: woodcocks are migratory birds and are subject to strict marketing bans in Germany. After the newspaper Bild-Zeitung, among others, reported on the case, Frank Rosin's manager contacted us and assured us: The whole thing was a regrettable mistake, and the dish has been removed from the menu.



- Near Lake Garda (Northern Italy) the police caught two poachers shooting and trapping protected pied flycatchers following our "preliminary intel work". In one case, 15 snap traps, a decoy caller and 22 freshly killed flycatchers, redstarts and tree pipits were seized from a hunter. Another bird trapper is surprised in the mountains west of the lake while setting up eight snap traps.
- In France, CABS members documented the hunting of rare waterbirds on the Atlantic coast in August and September. More than 2,500 shooting huts are mapped, and the shooting of golden plovers, knots and endangered duck species was verified. The data collected will serve as a basis for future actions in north-west France, one of the strongholds of migratory bird hunting in Europe.



- Following a criminal complaint by CABS, the public prosecutor's office in Nuremberg is investigating a taxidermist for offering trophies of protected species for sale nationwide. In addition to huntable jays and woodcocks, the accused also trades in allegedly "legal" taxidermy of strictly protected birds of prey, owls, night herons and bitterns. CABS asked the authorities to confirm the origin of the animals on offer and the legality of the sales.

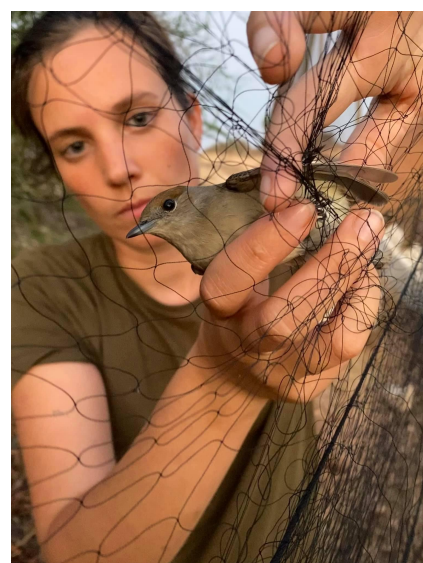
September

- **Illegal waterfowl hunting in Italy:** In the Po Delta (Veneto), a CABS team together with the carabinieri (police) convicted three waterfowl poachers. The men were caught using prohibited electronic decoy devices to attract ducks and other waterfowl. Three decoy machines and six freshly shot snipe were confiscated and fines were imposed on the hunters.



- **In Lebanon,** a ten-member team from CABS and our local partners from the Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL) and the Anti-Poaching Unit carry out controls in the strongholds of illegal bird trapping. In the districts of Akkar, West-Bekaa and Chouf, 34 set nets for songbirds and two installations for falcon trapping were dismantled together with the Internal Security Forces. In addition, around 30 birds shot by hunters, including several honey buzzards, short-toed eagles, marsh harriers and a white stork, are recovered or freed from illegal keeping.

- **Autumn bird protection camp in Cyprus:** From the beginning of September to mid-October, 1,215 limesticks, 61 nets and 46 electronic decoy callers were dismantled in joint operations by the CABS and the authorities. 26 criminal proceedings were initiated against poachers (19 for trapping and 7 for illegal shooting). 952 birds - mainly blackcaps, nightingales, reed warblers and other warbler species - were set free back into the wild.



- Success for the protection of the Turtle Dove: France and Spain announce to establish a year-round closed season for Turtle Doves. Until now, each year hundreds of thousands of the endangered birds shot on migration in both countries every autumn. CABS had filed environmental complaints with the EU Commission because of this. Reason: Hunting declining species cannot be sustainable and is a serious violation of the Birds Directive.



October



- In the south of Lebanon, CABS activists and our Lebanese partners from the Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL) and MESHC Anti-Poaching Unit rescue three globally endangered Egyptian Vultures from a private zoo in southern Lebanon. Under the protection of numerous security agents, the birds were confiscated and taken to a veterinarian in Beirut. Because they can hardly fly due to old gunshot wounds, the vultures are to be brought to Europe and integrated into an EU-funded breeding project to preserve their species.

- Large-scale anti-poaching operation in northern Italy: As part of our annual bird protection camp, more than 45 volunteers spent five weeks searching for illegal bird traps in the province of Brescia. In cooperation with a special unit of the forest police, 34 poachers were caught in the act and brought to justice. In addition, 303 traps, 20 set nets and 240 dead songbirds, including numerous protected bramblings and woodlarks, were recovered.



- **Raid in Hesse:** In the district of Fulda, police and veterinarians confiscated numerous bird traps and about 60 live bullfinches, goldfinches, siskins and other native songbirds during an inspection of a bird keeper. Prior to the search, CABS experts had provided the authorities with extensive evidence of the man's illegal activities. This included photos and videos showing the man setting and activating bird traps. Criminal proceedings are being initiated against the suspect.



- In September and October in Malta and the neighbouring island of Gozo, police shut down 60 illegal trapping sites for finches and quail following reports from our teams stationed on the islands. 25 bird trappers were identified and will soon be brought to justice. During the operations, trapping equipment with a total value of several thousand euros was also confiscated. 211 live linnets, goldfinches, siskins and hawfinches were freed from nets or illegal keeping and were reintroduced into the wild.



November

- **Arrests in Spain:** In Valencia, authorities crack down on illegal migratory bird hunting following reports by our CABS teams. At one location, a poacher was arrested with more than a dozen freshly shot collared doves. In another case, a songbird trapper was convicted with a collapsible net and 12 live decoy birds - 9 linnets and 3 goldfinches - and later charged. The birds are released back into the wild after a short stay in a sanctuary.

- Illegal raptor persecution in Germany: In cooperation with authorities, witnesses and local conservation groups, CABS continues to document numerous cases of raptor persecution in the second half of the year, including the poisoning of several red kites in Bavaria and NRW and of two peregrine falcons in Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria. In addition, three cases of illegal shooting and two cases of goshawks found with mortal injuries from leg-hold traps are recorded and reported to the authorities.



- In our bird sanctuary "Raisdorfer Teichlandschaft" in the district of Plön (Schleswig-Holstein), hundreds of cranes, gadwalls, red-breasted mergansers, teals and lots of other water birds are wintering again this year. The white-tailed eagle also regularly hunts in our biotope network of about 25 hectares, the regular maintenance and development of which is carried out by the Schwentinental nature conservation group under the leadership of CABS.



- In the French Ardennes, CABS staff together with the French Ligue pour la Protection Oiseaux (LPO) document the capture of songbirds with horsehair snares. The data and photos collected prove that the traps do not catch birds "selectively and humanely", as claimed by the trappers, but that birds of all species are tortured to death in the most brutal way. A complaint to the French Council of State is planned for next year.

December

- Frogland Project: With funding from the state government, CABS has created 38 new ponds, pools and small water bodies in Schleswig-Holstein. In addition to amphibians, numerous insects and birds such as reed warblers, kingfishers and snipe benefit from the measures. Since the project was founded in 2010, "Froschland" has created a

total of 446 new ponds and pools with the help of excavators and other heavy equipment.



- CABS published an extensive study on bird migration and illegal bird hunting in Lebanon. In addition to the data collected by us in the field over the last few years, 570 ring finds from bird observatories in 28 countries were also analysed. The study appears in the journal "Sandgrouse", published by the Ornithological Society of the Middle East (OSME). The report is also available for download on our website.
- Successful outreach: Once again this year, CABS has been able to greatly expand our reach on social media. First and foremost are our mission reports on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, with which we now reach several hundred thousand people per month. In addition, there are numerous articles in international magazines - such as National Geographic and the Guardian newspaper - as well as hundreds of daily articles and reports in radios and daily newspapers in Malta, Cyprus, Italy and Germany.
- Care balance: In the wild animal sanctuary Centro Fauna Selvatica in Modena, which was set up and financially supported by CABS, more than 4,000 injured or confiscated wild birds were rescued and rehabilitated again this year. Among them are almost 850 chicks found helpless and several hundred finches and thrushes seized by the authorities during controls of bird markets and hunters.



SUPPORT US in 2022:

In 2021 - Despite the global COVID-19 pandemic, Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) managed to coordinate anti-poaching operations with more than **132** volunteers from 13 countries across Europe and the Middle East, participated in one or more of **26** bird protection camps in **7** countries in the poaching hotspots of the Mediterranean basin. **6151** traps, **255** nets, **244** electronic decoys were collected, **268** poachers were convicted and over **2400** birds were liberated from illegal traps. A countless number of other birds had their fate changed for the better by our presence and field work.

All of our operations are funded entirely by supporter donations and cost around **€400,000** per year. Given the set backs we've had this year and the free reign migratory bird poachers have been given it's more important than ever that we ramp up our efforts even more in 2022. Please help us to continue and expand our work with a donation - every cent and penny is used to put boots on the ground and deliver direct action to protect migratory birds from illegal poaching.

visit: www.komitee.de/donations

Or

Komitee gegen den Vogelmord e.V. / Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS)

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