



FIELD REPORT:
AUTUMN 2011 BIRD PROTECTION CAMP,
23 September - 2 October 2011



Photo 1:

Volunteers and activists of the Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) and Friends of the Earth (FoE) Cyprus are raising public awareness and undertaking peaceful, non-violent action in order to "Stop Poaching Now!"
Autumn 2010 bird protection camp, National Park of Cape Greco, Famagusta

Bonn, Germany and Limassol, Cyprus: Monday, 20 February 2012

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CABS and FoE Cyprus, *Autumn 2010, Spring 2011 and Autumn 2011 Bird Protection Camps*

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1. Introduction

The *Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS)* has conducted bird protection camps in the poaching hotspots of the Mediterranean region for more than 20 years. Currently, CABS is actively engaged in anti-poaching operations in many member states of the European Union (EU), in particular Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Malta and lately Cyprus. On Cyprus, CABS has been active on a small scale since 2001; but regular bird protection camps began in spring 2008.

Bird protection camps are major field surveys and anti-poaching campaigns organised during the two annual bird migration seasons with two main objectives:

- Collection of data in order to evaluate the true impact of the massive use of non-selective bird trapping and killing methods (hereinafter referred to as bird trapping) – such as limesticks, mist nets and electronic decoys – on wild bird populations;
- Locating and reporting as many as possible illegal bird trapping installations to the responsible law enforcement agencies, in order to arrest poachers red-handed, confiscate trapping paraphernalia and ensure a safe passage on migration for birds.

Bird protection camps are conducted with the full knowledge of and in close cooperation with all responsible public authorities and law enforcement agencies.

Friends of the Earth (FoE) Cyprus has promoted public awareness initiatives and has launched political pressure campaigns against poaching for more than 30 years. Since autumn 2010, the organisation co-operates with CABS in organizing bird protection camps in Cyprus. At the same time, FoE Cyprus and CABS work together with other environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs), both at home and abroad, in order to assist and support the responsible authorities of the Republic of Cyprus in tackling illegal, non-selective and massive bird trapping, killing and trading, through the full implementation of the national legislation, EU directives and international conventions.

Trapping with limesticks, mist nets and electronic decoys on Cyprus is widespread and blatant, which characterises the island as one the major hotspots for songbird trapping, killing and trading in the whole of Europe. Due to its location in the north-east corner of the Mediterranean, Cyprus is a crossroad between three continents and the island hosts millions of migrant birds during spring and autumn migration. Several hundreds of thousands of those birds are harvested annually by trappers using illegal and non-selective traps on a massive scale.



Trapped Common Redstart on limestick,
Paralimni, Famagusta



Trapped Tree Pipit on limestick,
Paralimni, Famagusta

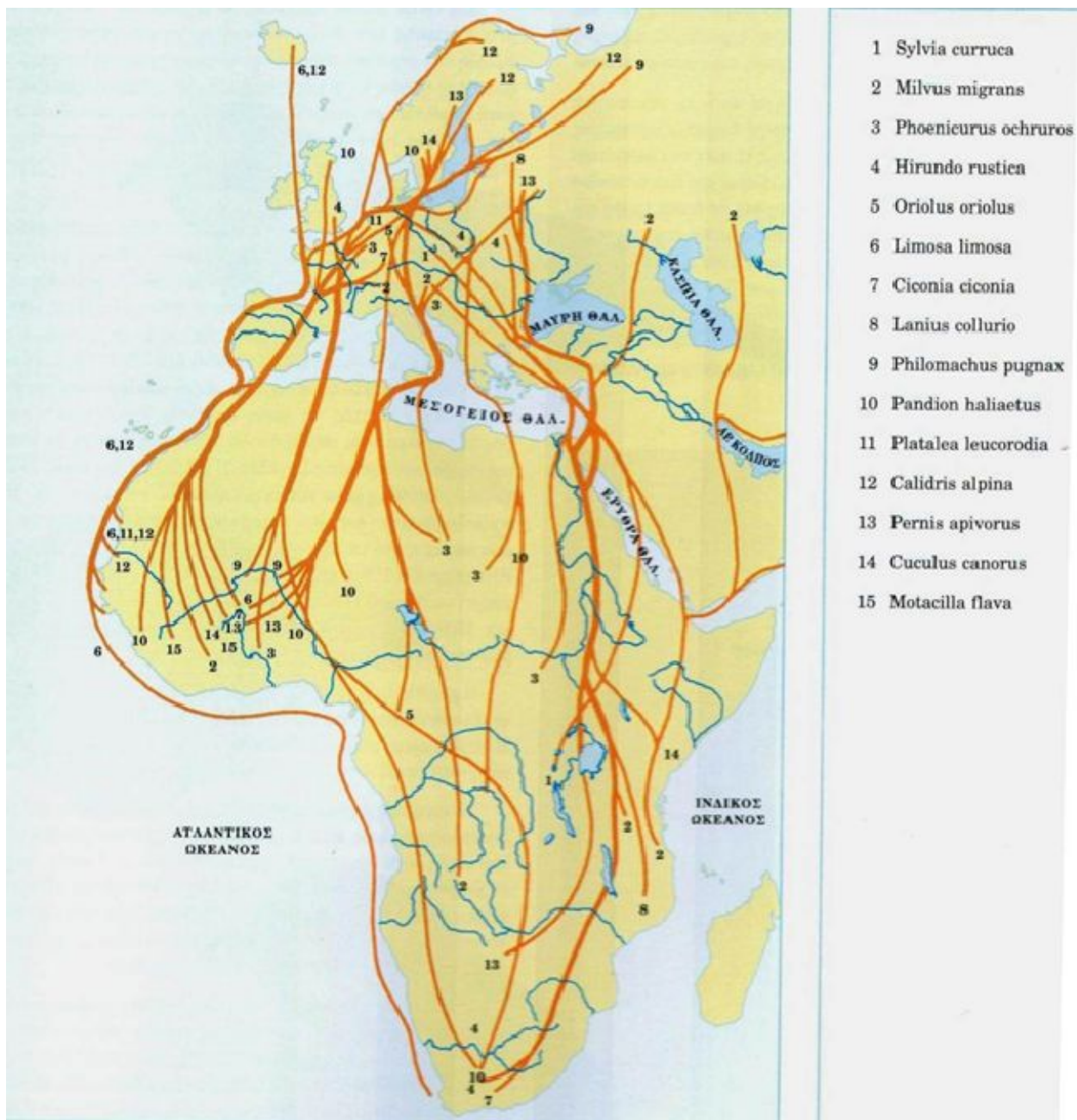


Trapped Red-backed Shrike (juvenile) on limestick,
Paralimni, Famagusta



Dead Kingfisher in mist net,
Ayios Theodoros, Larnaca

Photos 2-5: Trapped and dead birds on limesticks and in mist nets. Autumn 2011 bird protection camp



Map 1: Migratory routes of some wild bird species.

Source: Louis Kourtellarides (1998). *Breeding Birds of Cyprus*. Nicosia: Bank of Cyprus Group.

2. Background

Although Cyprus is considered a “*biodiversity hotspot area*” with a “*particularly rich bird fauna*”, almost one third (122/385) of the bird species found on the island are, to a lesser or greater extent, affected by the massive use of illegal and non-selective trapping and killing methods, such as limesticks, mist nets and electronic decoys. Moreover, the population of more than half of the species affected is in decline to a lesser or greater extent (64/122), while many species also have a non-favourable conservation status (34/64). Apart from birds, trapping with limesticks affects some several reptile species as well, not least three species of lizards and one snake species.

According to both governmental and non-governmental data, there are five major bird trapping hotspots on Cyprus. These are listed in Tab. 1 below:

Table 1: Bird trapping hotspots on Cyprus			
Trapping hotspots	Area	Trapping Seasons	Prevalent trapping methods
1	Famagusta District (Xylophagou, Liopetri, Sotira, Ayia Napa and Cape Greco area, Paralimni and Protaras area, Deryneia, Frenaros, Vrysoules, Dasaki Achnas and Avgorou)	Spring, autumn and winter	Limesticks, mist nets and electronic decoys
2	British Eastern Sovereign Base Area (ESBA) in Dekeleia (Cape Pyla, Xylophagou, Ormideia, Pyla, Achna and Ayios Nikolaos)	Spring, autumn and winter	Mist nets and electronic decoys
3	South-west Larnaca District (Zygi, Maroni, Psematismenos, Kalavastos, Tochni, Choirokita, Kato and Pano Lefkara, Skarinou, Ayios Theodoros, Kofinou, Alaminos, Anafotia and Mazotos)	Spring, autumn and winter	Limesticks, mist nets and electronic decoys
4	South-west Larnaca town (Meneou, Kiti and Pervolia)	Autumn	Limesticks, mist nets and electronic decoys
5	Other isolated areas (Aradipou in Larnaca district, Kakopetria and Lythrodontas in Nicosia district, Polis Chrysochous and Kouklia in Paphos district)	Autumn	Limesticks, mist nets and electronic decoys



Map 2: Bird trapping hotspots (boundaries in white) on Cyprus

With the accession of Cyprus to the EU in 2004, the Cypriot Government pledged its commitment to tackle bird poaching, in order to ensure effective protection of wild birds, in accordance with both existing national legislation [N.51(I)/2003] and the EU Birds Directive [2009/147/EC (codified version of 79/409/ECC)]. Nevertheless, after an initial decline, song bird poaching has subsequently increased continuously and has now reached levels that are comparable to the situation prior to accession. Although the responsible authorities make a considerable effort to combat illegal and non-selective bird trapping and killing, the situation is still largely out of control.

Illegal song bird poaching attracts support from some elements of the population in the trapping hotspot areas, and from a small number of politicians (mainly Mayors and Members of the Parliament from Famagusta and Larnaca districts), as well as representatives of the Cyprus Hunting Federation (again mostly from Famagusta and Larnaca districts). In addition, there is a non-registered and non-recognised "pressure group" that supports the legalisation of non-selective bird trapping and killing methods, in particular limesticks and electronic decoys (the so-called "*Friends of Limesticks*" or "*Group for Reclaiming the Traditional Hunting with*

Limesticks”). This support encourages the trappers, lends them a sense of security, and they therefore do not hesitate to set their traps not only on private property, but also on public land. They maintain that they have a traditional right to trap wild birds and behave very aggressively towards anyone who tries to prevent them doing so. The current level of fines is no real deterrent, because of the huge profits to be made from sale of the birds to restaurants and butchers’ shops. Trappers in some areas (Trapping Hotspots 1, 2 and 3) are now organised on mafia-like lines.



Limestick factory in the National Park of Cape Greco, Famagusta



Set limesticks in a pruned tree in an unfenced orchard in the National Park of Cape Greco, Famagusta



Set limesticks in maquis area in Paralimni, Famagusta



Set limesticks in Acacia Salina in Ayios Theodoros, Larnaca



Dead Bee-eater and Tawny Owl on limestick in Sotira, Famagusta



A pair of trapped Bee-eaters on limesticks in the Cape Greco National Park, Famagusta



Trapped Bee-eater on limestick,
Paralimni, Famagusta



Trapped Blackcap on limestick,
Paralimni, Famagusta



Police officers and volunteers collecting
limesticks in Ayios Theodoros, Larnaca



Volunteers patrolling in the
Cape Greco National Park, Famagusta



Electronic decoys (tape recorder, car battery and sound machine) hidden in boxes in unfenced orchards,
Paralimni, Famagusta



Electronic decoy (MP3) hidden in maquis area,
Paralimni, Famagusta



Electronic decoy (MP3) hidden in Acacia Salina,
Paralimni, Famagusta



Set mist net, placed between two metal poles, Cape Pyla, British ESBA



Trapped Blackcap in mist net, Paralimni, Famagusta



Graveyards of wild birds on public land, Paralimni, Famagusta

Photos 6-23: Exposing bird trapping and killing fields in Cyprus. Autumn 2010 bird protection camp



Dead birds, ready for sale in butchers shops and restaurants, Paralimni, Famagusta



Restaurant advertising bird delicacies, Ayios Theodoros, Larnaca



Restaurant serving bird delicacies, Paralimni, Famagusta

Photos 24-26: Exposing bird trading restaurants in Cyprus. Spring 2011 bird protection camp

3. Bird Trapping in Autumn

According to data collated by both governmental authorities and BirdLife Cyprus, 75% of bird trapping in autumn takes place in the Famagusta District, the British ESBA in Dekeleia and the south-west of Larnaca District (Trapping Hotspots 1, 2 and 3), while 25% takes place in the rest of the island, mostly in the south-west of Larnaca town and a few other isolated areas (Trapping Hotspots 4 and 5).

The season starts in mid-August and reaches its peak between the last week of September and the second week of October, slowly decreasing until the end of October. Targeted species are warblers of the genus "*Sylvia*" (known locally as "*ambelopoulia*"), the preferred target being the Blackcap, as well as flycatchers, redstarts and nightingales. Later, in November and December, mainly thrushes, robins and sparrows are targeted.

4. CABS anti-poaching strategy

CABS, in cooperation with FoE Cyprus, began its regular autumn bird protection camps on Cyprus in September 2010 (previous camps took place only in spring). In 2010, priority was given to cooperation with law enforcement agencies, the operative strategy being aimed at locating trapping installations and reporting them to the local police stations, the Anti-Poaching Squad and / or the Game Fund for their action. This slowed down operations as law enforcement patrols either needed considerable time to react, or on many occasions were unable to attend, particularly at night. Traps were therefore often left standing, as to remove them would have been very dangerous for our volunteers. Trappers frequently guarded their traps, on occasions masked and carrying shotguns, and threatened the volunteers with injury or even death.

In spring 2011, we again attempted to improve our cooperation with the Cyprus Police and the Game Fund, accepting their condition that our teams would not remove trapping paraphernalia, but instead would report all incidents to them for their subsequent action. The immediate results were poor: 85 trapping installations were located and 34 poaching cases were reported. In only nine of them was the illegal bird trapping equipment confiscated and only one trapper caught red-handed.

In autumn 2011, CABS volunteers made the decision to resume collecting limesticks, mist nets and electronic decoys in unfenced orchards or olive groves or on public land, if timely support from the Cyprus Police, the Anti-Poaching Squad or the Game Fund was not forthcoming. This was necessary to at least disrupt the otherwise unhindered trapping activity throughout the Famagusta area and ensure a safer migratory route for several hundreds of thousands of wild birds. In addition, regular contact was made with district police divisions and local police stations, in order to ensure the safety of the volunteers. At the same time, FoE representatives reported all findings to the responsible law enforcement agencies (Anti-Poaching Squad of Cyprus Police and Ministry of Justice and Public Order) on a daily basis.

5. Autumn 2011 Bird Protection Camp results

The autumn 2011 bird protection camp took place from 24 September to 2 October. Eight volunteers from Italy and Germany participated in the operations, accompanied by two freelance cameramen from the USA. The area was primarily that between Paralimni, Ayia Napa and Sotira, with some patrols in the Xylophagou, Deryneia, Liopetri, Frenaros and Ayios Theodoros areas. These are the core areas of the three major trapping hotspots in the island. The day-to-day deployment was as follows:

Table 2: Day-to-day deployment – Autumn 2011 Bird Protection Camp		
Date	Team 1	Team 2
24.09.2011	Ayia Napa	Paralimni
25.09.2011	Paralimni	Paralimni
26.09.2011	Sotira	Liopetri, Frenaros
27.09.2011	Paralimni	Deryneia
28.09.2011	Paralimni	Liopetri
29.09.2011	Xylophagou	Deryneia
30.09.2011	Ayia Napa	Ayios Theodoros
01.10.2011	Sotira	Sotira

Of the 291 known trapping sites, the teams checked 235. Of these, only 44 sites showed no evidence of recent trapping. The remaining 191 sites were prepared (e.g. pruned trees for limesticks, cleared rides for mist nets, etc) and / or had been very recently used (e.g. bird feathers and blood on the ground, old and fresh limesticks in baskets, etc).

Of the 191 sites that were prepared for or showed evidence of recent trapping, 72 were active. In these, 3,817 limesticks, 23 mist nets and 32 electronic decoys were found. Another 23 electronic decoys could not be precisely located, as they were either situated within fenced properties or poachers were present in the area.

The finds represent an average daily total of 477 limesticks, 2.8 mist nets, and 4 located (plus 2.8 not precisely located) electronic decoys. An analysis of these figures arrives at an average of 53 limesticks in each active site, one mist net for every three active sites and roughly one electronic decoy for every 2 active sites.

Tab. 3 below demonstrates the dramatic increase registered by CABS and FoE Cyprus, most notably in limesticks and electronic decoys, during the migratory seasons 2009 to 2011:

Table 3: Findings of bird protection camps: Spring 2009 – Autumn 2011					
Trapping method	Spring 2009	Spring 2010	Autumn 2010	Spring 2011	Autumn 2011
Limesticks	2136	1977	934	3353	3817
Mist nets	33	9	11	15	23
Electronic Decoys	15	12	9	12	32 (+23)

These figures are a record for CABS and FoE monitoring operations on Cyprus, and demonstrate vividly the widespread extent of massive bird trapping that, despite singular successes by the responsible law enforcement agencies, is a long way from being brought under control.

6. Overview of bird trapping on Cyprus

Trapping activity demonstrates different patterns and strategies according to the area, the professionalism of the trapper and the time of day. Trappers set their traps in private orchards and the maquis areas on public land during either the whole day, in the morning only, on particular days, or for only a few hours at a time. It is therefore impossible to predict when a certain area will be used without establishing the habits and strategy of the individual trapper. Nonetheless, it is extremely easy to find traps by random patrolling of the main trapping area.

- i. Electronic decoys: At night, the presence of electronic decoys indicates when and where the largest trapping installations are active. Active decoys not only indicate the overall extent of poaching during the period of observation, but also demonstrate how confident the trappers are that they will not be interfered with (the trapping site can be located from a distance of 1-1.5 km).

Due to the prevailing warm and wet weather on 24 September, the birds remained in the north and trapping activity was at a low level. As a result, our teams located only a few active installations and a few decoys calling at night. Two days later, on Monday 26 September, the trapping season was in full swing with many migrating birds and every garden suddenly full of limesticks or mist nets. It was impossible to pinpoint the location of electronic decoys during the night as they were calling virtually everywhere.

In the area covered by our operations we located 6 major trapping hotspots with electronic decoys. These are listed in Tab. 4 and shown in Map 2:

Table 4: Trapping hotspots with electronic decoys: areas and numbers		
Trapping hotspots	Area	Estimated number of electronic decoys
1	Eastern side of Fanos Hill (towards Protaras)	7
2	Area between Ayios Mamas and Paralimni	8
3	Small valley north-east of Sotira Municipal Forest	5
4	Southern side of Sotira Municipal Forest towards to the west	number unknown, probably a minimum of 25 decoys
5	Cape Pyla in British ESBA	number unknown, probably a minimum of 30 decoys
6	Around Avgorou	number unknown, probably a minimum of 25 decoys



Map 3: Major trapping hotspots (boundaries in red) with electronic decoys in autumn 2011

In the latter three areas, it was impossible to estimate exactly the number of individual trapping sites, as the density and proximity of electronic decoys was too high. In order to pinpoint individual electronic decoys, we would have had to deactivate the remainder.

The relatively low number of electronic decoys located by the teams (32) was therefore not due to the low density of this trapping aid, but rather to the fact that trappers guard them closely. In many cases (at least 23), it was not advisable to determine their exact location in order to avoid giving away our presence.

- ii. Mist nets: Mist nets were widespread from Ayia Napa to the west, mostly in private fenced or unfenced orchards. Trappers appear to prefer trapping with mist nets in the early morning hours and being present themselves in order to safeguard them, as the equipment used for this trapping method is relatively expensive. It is therefore very difficult to locate mist nets without having a confrontation with the trappers.

The low number of mist nets found (23) is due to the fact that the teams either avoided completely checking private fenced properties or even unfenced private properties in the morning, where mist nets were certainly set out, but where the trapper was also present.

- iii. Limesticks: We estimate that in autumn, in the core area between Ayia Napa, Protaras, Paralimni, Deryneia and Liopetri, almost every orchard, patch of green vegetation or maquis is used on average on a few days – or for some hours every day – for trapping with limesticks (mist nets are used less frequently in this area).

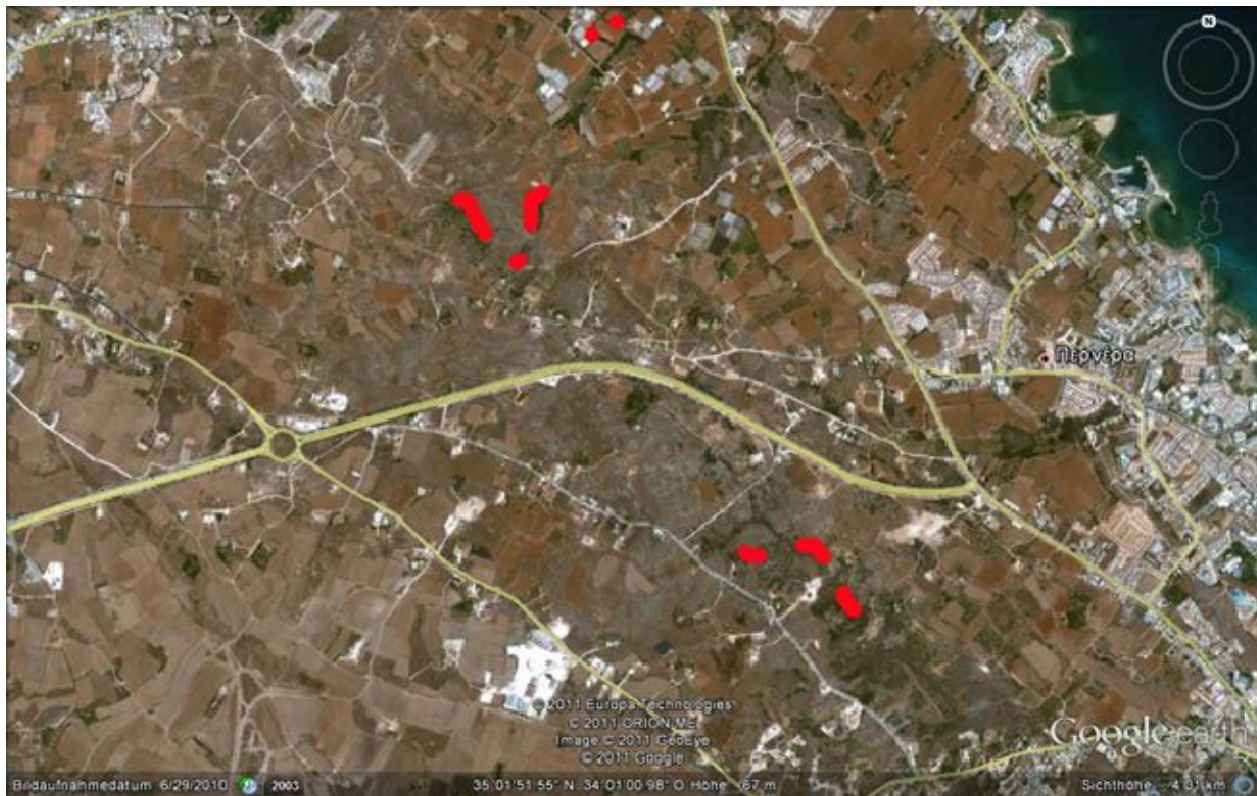
Particularly noteworthy in autumn 2011 was the widespread use made by trappers of areas of public land with remnants of the original Mediterranean maquis. In these areas of high ecological value, where numerous migrating birds congregate, trappers set out limesticks and electronic decoys (in some cases in concrete blocks fixed to the ground or plastic boxes hidden in the bushes) every morning during days of peak migration. These trappers are on site from 06:00 to 09:00 and monitor the area in small groups, until they eventually collect the birds and their traps. The ideal locations, time of day and the use of electronic decoys enable them to catch high numbers of birds every morning.

We calculate that in the four main areas of poaching with limesticks in the maquis habitat, at least 2,200 limesticks are set out every morning as follows:

- Sotira Municipal Forest: 500 limesticks (Map 4);
- Pernera Hill: 300 limesticks (Map 5);
- Ayios Mamas: 650 limesticks (Map 5);
- Fanos Hill: 750 limesticks (Map 6);



Map 4: Morning trapping sites (in red) in Sotira Municipal Forest



Map 5:

Morning trapping sites in Perna Hill (three areas in red below) and Ayios Mamas (five areas in red above)



Map 6: Morning trapping sites (in red) on Fanos Hill

7. Data analysis of the anti-poaching operations by law enforcement agencies

On the basis of the official press releases issued by the Cyprus Police, the Game Fund and British ESBA Police, we have analysed the efforts and strategies employed by the law enforcement agencies to tackle bird trapping in autumn 2011.

The data collated appear to be correct in almost all cases. Some minor mistakes can occur when two different law enforcement agencies (e.g. the Game Fund and the Cyprus Police or British ESBA Police) cooperate on the same case and issue separate press releases. In these cases, we attribute the case to both agencies. In cases where local police stations or district police divisions were only involved in the prosecution of trappers, the cases are attributed to the Game Fund or the Anti-Poaching Squad respectively. Where neither the Anti-Poaching Squad nor the Game Fund was involved the cases are attributed to other Cyprus Police units. A few cases without Game Fund involvement are attributed solely to the British ESBA Police. Some press releases involved a number of offenders or even several cases. In our analysis, each case is considered to be a single incident. The data analysis and our conclusions and comments are presented in Annex A.

The following general observations in relation to the overall efforts of the responsible law enforcement agencies are of interest:

- The Game Fund plays a major role in the overall effort to eradicate bird trapping, both within the territory of the Republic of Cyprus and in the British SBAs. The Game Fund dealt with four to five cases involving both poaching in general and bird trapping in particular. It also has the highest total figures for confiscated material and arrests of poachers. Although this represents a reasonable rate of success, the Game Fund must focus their effort more on the major trapping hotspots of Famagusta District, the British ESBA in Dekeleia and the south-west of Larnaca District, where bird trapping takes place on a massive and industrial scale. The Game Fund can only effectively and permanently combat bird trapping in two districts – which include four of the five major, trapping hotspots on the island – if the personnel of its regional office in Larnaca and Famagusta are substantially reinforced.
- The Anti-Poaching Squad of the Cyprus Police has an extremely limited operational capacity and commitment to anti-trapping operations. With strength of only ten officers it cannot effectively cover the complete territory of the Republic of Cyprus and deal with all hunting and poaching activities, even with the support of the Game Fund. The Anti-Poaching Squad plays a major role in almost all large-scale anti-poaching operations with a small number of individual arrests but a high total of confiscated material. It is however almost completely absent in the field in the major hotspot areas. Its strategy appears to be based on investigations with search warrants, rather than the setting-up of ambushes to catch poachers red-handed. Operations by the Anti-Poaching Squad have resulted in the prosecution of big trappers (Ayios Theodoros, Maroni, Lefkara and Aradipou in Larnaca district, Polis Chrysochous and Kouklia in Paphos district, Xylophagou in Famagusta district) or the sale of song birds in restaurants (Nicosia, Limassol and Larnaca). This strategy is however an insufficient method of dealing with widespread bird trapping on a small and medium scale, which represents the vast majority of trapping activity and is responsible for the greatest impact on bird populations. Big trappers also operate under the cover of the large and widespread

network of small and medium trappers. Without this cover they would be much more vulnerable. In order to strengthen the operational capacity and improve the operational effectiveness of the Anti-Poaching Squad the numbers of officers must be increased by at least 100%.

- The British ESBA Police conduct anti-trapping operations almost exclusively on the south side of Cape Pyla and Xylophagou where the majority of bird trapping takes place in their area of jurisdiction. They rarely operate on the north side of Ayios Nikolaos and Achna thus encouraging the establishment of a 'no-go' area controlled by a well-organized criminal network. These criminals do not hesitate attack both conservationists (as in March 2011 when poachers verbally abused and threatened CABS and FoE Cyprus volunteers) or law enforcement officers (as in October 2011, when poachers attacked and stole equipment from a Game Fund patrol). In comparison with previous years anti-trapping operations by the ESBA Police are on a minor scale. This is difficult to reconcile, particularly as Cape Pyla is still the main mist nets trapping hotspot on the island.

8. Comparison of data and results

This autumn the law enforcement agencies have shown that they have the capacity, albeit limited by a general shortage of suitably trained personnel, to combat bird trapping. A total of almost 200 successful cases represents a good initial effort and demonstrates that they are capable of putting an end to this phenomenon in the long term, if their effort is consistent and effectively targeted.

Nonetheless, there is still cause for concern, the most critical aspects being:

- i. Selection of operational areas: It is well known by the responsible authorities – and the wider public – that the two major bird trapping hotspots in Cyprus are both to the east of Larnaca, in Famagusta District and the British ESBA. The area of the ESBA is under British jurisdiction and anti-trapping operations are conducted here by the British ESBA Police. The Republic of Cyprus authorities are responsible for the area of the non-occupied Famagusta district, but only 28 anti-trapping cases (just 14% of all anti-trapping cases and 9.1% of all anti-poaching operations for the whole island) were recorded for this area. As this area accounts for at least 25% of bird trapping on Cyprus, this scale of effort is simply not enough. If the trapping effort is to be firmly dealt with, as Government representatives pledged at the Council of Europe and the Bern Convention "*European Conference on Illegal Killing of Birds*", held in Larnaca in July 2011, the law enforcement agencies must give anti-trapping operations in the Famagusta district the utmost priority. At present, the political will and operational capacity to do this appears to be lacking.
- ii. Numbers of limesticks seized: In only eight days two teams of CABS volunteers located almost 4,000 limesticks. In comparison, all responsible law enforcement agencies in Cyprus confiscated somewhat less than 6,000 limesticks in five months, and only 691 of these in the Famagusta district. On this basis, it is hard to believe that serious efforts are being made to combat bird trapping with limesticks.

- iii. Ambushes: Although large-scale raids on restaurants selling 'ambelopoulia' are a particularly welcome development and an effective strategy against the trapping of and trade in birds, ambushes are an equally important tactic. When successful they lend law enforcement operations a high profile, regain control of the territory from trappers and prevent the creation of 'no-go' areas. Such operations in the British ESBA with offenders being caught red-handed were successful only in the southern corner of Cape Pyla and Xylophagou, but not on the northern side of Ayios Nikolaos and Achna. On the territory of the Republic of Cyprus, the tactic was infrequently employed by the Anti-Poaching Squad and other units of the Cyprus Police with significantly lower results. Although that the Game Fund employs both strategies, it still needs to improve its efforts in the Famagusta district, where in a five month period only 24 trappers were arrested as a result of ambushes.
- iv. Overall results: A total of 120 successful cases in the peak trapping months of September and October are inadequate if trapping is to be actively combated. In the province of Brescia in Northern Italy, which has the same total area as the Republic of Cyprus and a similar serious problem of bird trapping, three different units are deployed to tackle this phenomenon. Together they solve about 300 cases related to hunting every autumn, and one special unit devotes its operations solely against bird trapping (100 cases in the main one-month season). Thanks to the efforts of this special unit, the situation in Brescia has improved significantly over the past 10 years.

9. Cooperation with law enforcement agencies and their response

Since regular CABS bird protection camps began on Cyprus in 2008, we have identified two main interrelated operational problems. The first is the security of our personnel. The second is the effective cooperation with the responsible law enforcement agencies (Cyprus Police and the Anti-Poaching Squad, the Game Fund and the British ESBA Police). The experience gained by CABS specialist teams over many years in other areas of the Mediterranean – not only in Cyprus – guarantees us a high detection rate of illegal trapping activity. This is enhanced by the proactive patrolling that is carried out almost exclusively on foot, something which enables our volunteers to better locate, visually and aurally, illegal bird trapping and killing activity.

In the other two major areas of CABS operations in the Mediterranean region – in Italy and on Malta – this capability is recognised and commended by the responsible law enforcement authorities, which work effectively with CABS to curb wildlife crime. Police and other units available to combat wildlife crime are always chronically undermanned, so that the division of labour – active reconnaissance by CABS and other NGOs, and subsequent targeted strikes by the police or other responsible agencies – are both effective and personnel-efficient.

In Italy, CABS has developed an extremely close level of cooperation with the State Forest Police (Corpo Forestale dello Stato) in particular, where conservationists act as their eyes and ears to locate illegal bird trapping activity, and guide them to the sites by day or night so that they can catch poachers red-handed and prosecute them. Cooperation and coordination are guaranteed by regular joint planning meetings.

On Malta, where the main problem is killing of protected migrant birds by shooting, CABS teams are accompanied by an embedded police officer, who is able to swiftly summon a police patrol (either from the Anti-Poaching Unit of Malta's Police or local police stations).

This level of cooperation with regard to anti-poaching activity has automatically enhanced the security of CABS teams, at the same time significantly improved the operational capacity of the responsible law enforcement agencies.

In both countries, the presence of European-based NGOs, aiming to ensure compliance with EU bird protection legislation with regard to migrating all-European bird resources, has long been fully accepted by the responsible political authorities and law enforcement agencies. This is still not the case on Cyprus, where cooperation in this respect is still in its infancy.

Before the start of our autumn camp in September there was an exchange of correspondence between CABS / FoE Cyprus and the Cyprus authorities with regard to better cooperation on the ground; specifically, an embedded police officer with our teams (the costs to be paid by CABS) to improve our security and enable a swifter and more effective response by the authorities to incidents of poaching or other related illegal activity. The Minister of Public Order and Justice, Mr Loukas Louka, acknowledged our commitment against illegal trapping and referred us to the police response on cooperation. The police stated that they were unable to comply with our request for an embedded police officer but promised to provide local security at our hotel (which we had not requested and where we did not anticipate a threat) and to deploy a (local) police patrol daily in our area of operations. Both the Minister and the police laid down conditions for cooperation by and support from the police which in summary was to restrict our operations within the bounds of the law, avoid confrontation, inform the police of our daily movements and to leave traps and other trapping paraphernalia in situ and to report all incidents to the police anti-poaching squad for further action by them.

A detailed account of correspondence on this important aspect of our operations is at Annex B.

On arrival on Cyprus our team leader had meetings at the police divisional headquarters in Larnaca and Famagusta where our operational plans were presented and the police provided us with points of contact for security back-up. We informed the police that we could not agree to leave trapping equipment in situ – endangering more birds – if an effective reaction to our reports could not be guaranteed. Our experiences in spring 2011 and on earlier operations had led to a loss of confidence in timely intervention by the authorities leading to prosecution of offenders.

In summary, none of our reasonable requests were met and promises of cooperation were made that did not materialise. Security of our personnel can only be guaranteed by an 'embedded' police liaison officer or by the deployment of a mobile patrol in the area of our daily operations with a response time of 15 minutes or less. As far as apprehension and prosecution of offenders is concerned, the local police show little interest in pursuing such cases, in particular where only limesticks are involved; the only guarantee that poachers will be caught and other deterred is if the Anti-poaching Squad or the Game Fund takes timely and effective action.

In the event, our apprehensions were again justified and in the course of 8 days the two teams of CABS volunteers, without police escort and at great personal risk, located 191 prepared and

72 active trapping sites. In those 72 active trapping sites, 3,817 limesticks, 23 mist nets and 32 electronic decoys were found. Another 23 electronic decoys were not precisely located, because they were either placed within fenced properties or due to the poachers' presence in the area.

The details of our contacts with the responsible law enforcement agencies, during our field survey and anti-poaching campaign, are as follows:

- 27.09.2011 – Paralimni Police Station: On the morning of 27 September, four CABS volunteers found 108 limesticks in a non-fenced olive grove in the area of Moonshine Ranch in Protaras, Paralimni. While the conservationists were counting the limesticks a trapper claiming to be the owner of the grove, with a German Shepherd dog and brandishing a pitchfork, appeared on the scene. The irate man began gathering in collecting and uttering death threats, pushing two of them to the ground and pointing the pitchfork at their throats. He said that he was 'entitled' to trap and had no fear of prosecution. The four conservationists returned immediately to their car in order to avoid any confrontation with the outraged poacher, and called the local police station in Paralimni. The officer in charge promised to send a patrol as soon as possible, but the only available police patrol arrived some 70-80 minutes after the attack, when the attacker had already left the scene. The local patrol officers called on the owner of the property, who was a much older man, but accompanied by the same dog. Following the investigation at the scene and the confiscation of 108 limesticks by the responsible police investigation officers, an official complaint was filed with the Paralimni Police Station, and three photographs of the aggressor and a four-minute video showing the attack were handed over to the officer on duty, who acted in a professional and cooperative manner. Nonetheless, although we cooperated with the Paralimni Police Station for three days on this case, giving personal testimonies and providing identification material, we have not to date been officially informed about the results of the police investigations.
- 28.09.2011 – Paralimni Police Station and Game Fund: On the morning of 28 September, four CABS volunteers located a trapping installation with an active electronic decoy, a set mist net and a number of limesticks in the area between Sotira and Paralimni. While observing the trapping installation from a safe distance, the conservationists noticed a pick-up truck parked within the unfenced orchard and a man sitting in the vehicle. The conservationists immediately called Paralimni police station, which sent a local police patrol and informed the Game Fund regional office in Larnaca and Famagusta districts. The two patrols from the Paralimni Police Station and the Game Fund regional office arrived almost immediately at the scene and confiscated 1 electronic decoy, 1 mist net and 12 limesticks. Nevertheless, the responsible investigation officers of the two law enforcement agencies were unable to prosecute the person present at the scene, because he claimed that he was just working there and denied being the owner of the traps.
- 30.09.2011 – Paralimni Police Station and Game Fund: On the morning of 30 September, four CABS volunteers located an active trapping installation in Paralimni, but were seen by the trappers, who were present at the scene. The poachers started uttering death threats and throwing stones at the conservationists, who left the scene immediately and called Paralimni police station. The officer in charge informed them

that there was no local police patrol available at the time and gave them the mobile phone number of the patrol of the Game Fund regional office. The conservationists called the Game Fund patrol. This was also not available as the patrol was involved with another illegal trapping incident. The CABS team therefore left the area.

- 30.09.2011 – Paralimni Police Station and Game Fund: On the morning of 30 September, four CABS volunteers located another active trapping installation in Paralimni with 75 limesticks set on pruned trees at the perimeter of a fenced-in orchard. The conservationists immediately called Paralimni police station, but once again the officer in charge informed them that there was no local police patrol available. Nevertheless, he passed the information to a Game Fund regional office patrol, the officers of which were present at the Paralimni police station for the prosecution of another trapper that they had arrested some time earlier. The Game Fund regional office patrol visited the trapping installation 30 to 45 minutes later, but the investigation officers were unable to find the limesticks, which the trapper had removed in the meantime.
- 30.09.2011 – Kofinou Police Station: Two teams of CABS volunteers were searching for illegal bird trapping installations in the area of Ayios Theodoros in Larnaca district. One of the eight volunteers remained to guard the vehicles that were parked near a main road. While he was sitting in one of the cars and talking on a walkie-talkie to his companions, a pick-up truck parked near the cars, in such a way that its registration plates could not be seen. The unknown driver got out of the car shouted abuse, kicked against the car and grabs the walkie-talkie through the open car window. He then removed the battery and left the scene. The conservationist informed immediately all the other volunteers to return at their cars and called Kofinou police station. Two local police patrols arrived at the scene within 30 minutes and took a statement from the conservationist. Due to the fact that he was not able to identify the registration plates of the aggressor's car, the man who stole the walkie-talkie battery and damaged the car could not be identified and prosecuted.
- 01.10.2011 – Deryneia and Paralimni Police Stations: On the morning of 1 October, during a joint operation with a volunteers from Migratory Birds Conservation in Cyprus (MBCC) in the Sotira Municipal Forest, where five active professional limestick installations were active, three CABS/MBCC teams (12 persons in all) were surrounded by eight trappers, who asked what they were doing there and then shouted abuse at the volunteers and uttered death threats. The conservationists requested immediate support from both Deryneia and Paralimni police stations as the situation was potentially very dangerous. Two police patrols, one from each station, arrived at the scene within 30 minutes and remained for 40 minutes to observe the vehicles in the area. In this area, public land of the Sotira Municipal Forest, the CABS and MBCC volunteers had located three illegal trapping installations with a total of 360 limesticks, and were attempting to determine the precise location of two active electronic bird decoys. Two weeks before the incident, MBCC (Ms. Edith Loosli) had reported this major trapping hotspot to the Game Fund regional office in Larnaca and asked for intervention by the responsible law enforcement agencies, in order to arrest the trappers red-handed and confiscate their trapping equipment.

As a result of cooperation with the Cyprus Police (Anti-Poaching Squad, district police divisions and local police stations), during the autumn 2011 bird protection camp:

- 3,817 limesticks were located on public land or in unfenced orchards, 120 of which were confiscated by the responsible law enforcement agencies, 75 were removed by the trappers and the remaining 3,622 were collected and dismantled by CABS volunteers.
- 23 mist nets were located on public land or in unfenced orchards, one of which was confiscated by the responsible law enforcement agencies; the remaining 22 were collected and dismantled by CABS volunteers.
- 32 electronic decoys were located on public land or in unfenced orchards, one of which was confiscated by the responsible law enforcement agencies, two were removed by the trappers and the remaining 29 were collected and dismantled by CABS volunteers.
- 23 electronic decoys were not precisely located, as they were either placed within fenced-in private properties or could not be approached due to the poachers' presence in unfenced orchards, municipal forests or maquis areas where they were located.

The autumn 2011 bird protection camp was closely planned and coordinated with central police headquarters, district police divisions and local police stations. As a result, the support given by the Cyprus Police, in terms of the security of the participants in the field survey, was better than in previous camps with extra police patrols being mounted in the trapping hotspots. Nevertheless, the conservationists again suffered verbal abuse and were the targets of physical attacks, which clearly demonstrate that even closer support in the field by the responsible law enforcement agencies is essential. If this is not forthcoming there is a continuing risk to life and limb of camp participants. That being said, the overall effectiveness of the cooperation with the responsible law enforcement agencies (district police divisions and local police stations, Anti-poaching Squad and the Game Fund) during the bird protection camp was unsatisfactory and inadequate. The lack or absence of appropriate operational support by all law enforcement elements clearly demonstrates that the responsible law enforcement agencies do not have the operational capacity to tackle mass illegal and non-selective bird trapping and killing.

Although we coordinated our daily activities with district police divisions and local police stations, which have more available manpower and are located in and around the hotspots, their assistance was limited to incidents of aggression only. At this level, little or no effort is made to combat poaching even though it is blatant and widespread. It appears that the local police do not consider this task to be their responsibility even when they are called to the scene and the criminal activity is obvious. The regional and local police units' also lack necessary knowledge, experience, training and equipment to investigate cases of bird trapping systematically and effectively. In their defence they do have a myriad of routine and emergency police tasks to deal with. Nonetheless, the impression is gained that they have no real interest in combating illegal trapping practices.

The Anti-Poaching Squad of the Cyprus Police and the Game Fund, the law enforcement agencies responsible for tackling bird trapping in the Republic of Cyprus, are so under-staffed that they are unable to follow-up the large number of bird trapping cases during the peak of spring and autumn migration. Both agencies are thin on the ground as the responsible ministries freely admit. During peak migration the environmental NGOs (CABS and FoE Cyprus, BirdLife Cyprus and MBCC) each report on average three to five poaching incidents a day. This is clearly beyond the combined capacity of the Anti-poaching Squad and the Game Fund, which also have to deal with other wildlife crime and management issues.

Nonetheless, both the Anti-Poaching Squad and the Game Fund are well- trained and equipped for this task. We are aware from first-hand experience that their officers are competent and dedicated, and possess a wealth of knowledge on bird killing methods in general, and bird trapping patterns in particular.

The shortage of professional personnel in both units meant that in the majority of cases reported we were advised to seek assistance from district police divisions and local police stations with the drawbacks described above. This was despite our daily telephone contact with the Anti-Poaching Squad and the Game Fund, to whom we supplied a wealth of up-to-the-minute information on our findings and activities.

Although the responsible law enforcement agencies have serious operational limitations due to shortage of personnel, it is essential that our cooperation with the Anti-Poaching Squad and the Game Fund is maintained, improved and strengthened. This is the only viable solution to the problem of effectively combating illegal trapping and the only way we can ensure a permanent safe passage on migration for wild birds in Cyprus. By becoming the eyes and ears of the responsible law enforcement agencies on the field, and providing them with as much information we can on illegal bird trapping, killing and trading, we can assist them in taking economical in order to confiscate trapping paraphernalia, arrest poachers red-handed and prosecute criminal networks. As a precondition to effective operational cooperation, the operational capacity of both the Anti-Poaching Squad and the Game Fund must be improved by an increase in trained personnel and provision of consistent political support. This requires the necessary decisions and their implementation by the responsible Ministers.

10. Aggression by poachers and criminal networks

Trappers are not only open and vociferous about their activity and their supposed right to trap; they are unpredictable and can become aggressive and violent from one minute to the next. Not only our volunteers, but even Cyprus Police and Game Fund officers have been threatened, attacked, shot, bombed and even killed by criminal networks of poachers in the last few years.

This form of open violence by law-breakers against law-abiding Cypriot and European citizens (not to mention law enforcement officers) is unacceptable and gives the impression that 'no-go' areas are being established by the illegal bird trapping, killing and trading mafia.

In order to avoid serious injury, CABS teams have now been forced to avoid areas, which have been identified as particularly dangerous, such as Cape Pyla, Ayios Nikolaos and Avgorou and have given up taking action in insecure circumstances, for instance at night or when trappers are present. This autumn violent and potentially dangerous incidents occurred on almost a daily basis, both on public land and in unfenced orchards. During the eight days of operations there were seven potentially dangerous situations. These are also described in part or full in Para. 9, under '*Cooperation with law enforcement agencies and their response*':

- 25.09.2011, Ayios Mamas, Paralimni: A CABS team located two installations of 200 and 196 limesticks respectively. A group of trappers gathered at a distance and eventually approached the team, shouting and uttering threats. As the four conservationists withdrew by car from the area, they were stalked by a pick-up truck. To avoid any

confrontation, the team left the paved road and crossed the nearby main road. Some 30 minutes later, the pick-up truck reappeared and again stalked the CABS team. The conservationists decided to remain on one of the main roundabouts in Paralimni to avoid confrontation. Two pick-up trucks with the aggressors then stopped on the main road close to the CABS vehicle and spoke for 20 minutes on their mobile phones. Eventually, a patrol from Paralimni police station arrived, that had been summoned by the aggressors. Before the arrival of the local police patrol, all but one of the aggressors left the scene. When the local police patrol arrived at the spot, the aggressor told the police officers that the bird conservationists were 'illegal immigrants'. The police officers calmed down the aggressor and ordered him to leave the scene. The stalking incident, which was very disquieting for the team, lasted almost an hour.

- 26.09.2011, Sotira Municipal Forest, Sotira: A CABS team located a number of limesticks, but was surprised by the arrival of four young trappers, who bullied them and shoved them away with their pick-up trucks.
- 27.09.2011, Moonshine Ranch Area, Protaras, Paralimni: A four-man CABS team located limesticks in an unfenced olive grove. While counting the limesticks a trapper claiming to be the owner of the grove, accompanied by a German Shepherd dog and brandishing a pitchfork, appeared on the scene. He uttered threats against the team, pushing them to the ground, shouting abuse and pointing the pitchfork at their throats. He said that he was 'entitled' to trap and had no fear of prosecution. The four conservationists returned immediately to their car in order to avoid any confrontation with the outraged poacher and called the local police station in Paralimni. The officer in charge promised to send a patrol as soon as possible, but the only available police patrol arrived some 70-80 minutes after the attack, when the attacker had already left the scene. The local patrol officers called the owner of the property, who was a much older man, but accompanied by the same dog. Following the investigation at the scene and the confiscation of 108 limesticks by the responsible police officers, an official complaint was filed with the Paralimni police station and three photographs of the aggressor and a four-minute video showing the attack were handed over to the officer on duty, who acted in a professional and cooperative way. Nonetheless, although we cooperated with the Paralimni police station for three days on this case, giving personal testimonies and providing identification material, we have not to date officially informed about the results of the police investigations.
- 27.09.2011, Paralimni: Two aggressive poachers approached a small CABS team and began shouting abuse and uttering threats. The aggressors themselves called the Paralimni police station and a short time later a patrol arrived at the scene. The poachers accused the conservationists of searching for limesticks. The police officers informed the aggressors that the conservationists have the right to search for illegal bird trapping installations and report them to the responsible law enforcement agencies and ordered the men to leave the area.
- 30.09.2011, Archangel Gavril Area, Paralimni: A CABS team located several hundreds of limesticks in three orchards, in one of which an electronic decoy was active. Two trappers with a German Shepherd dog arrived on the scene, one carrying a cudgel. They threw stones at the volunteers and shouted abuse and threats for some 10 minutes. The

situation quietened down after one of the trappers had retrieved his decoy machine and left the scene.

- 30.09.2011, Ayios Theodoros, Larnaca: Two teams of CABS volunteers were searching for illegal bird trapping installations in the area of Ayios Theodoros in Larnaca. One of the eight volunteers remained to guard the vehicles that were parked near a main road. While he was sitting in one of the cars and talking on a walkie-talkie to his companions, a pick-up truck parked near the cars, in such a way that its registration plates could not be seen. The unknown driver got out of the car, shouted abuse, kicked against the car and grabbed the walkie-talkie through the open car window. He then removed the battery and left the scene. The conservationist informed immediately all the other volunteers to return at their cars and called Kofinou police station. Two local police patrols arrived at the scene within 30 minutes and took a statement from the conservationist. Due to the fact that he was not able to identify the registration plates of the aggressor's car, the man who stole the walkie-talkie battery and damaged the car could not be identified and prosecuted.
- 01.10.2011, Sotira Municipal Forest, Sotira: On the morning of 1 October, during a joint operation with a volunteers from Migratory Birds Conservation in Cyprus (MBCC) in the Sotira Municipal Forest, where five active professional limestick installations were active, three CABS and MBCC teams (12 persons in all) were surrounded by eight trappers, who asked what they were doing there and then shouted abuse at the volunteers and uttered death threats. The conservationists requested immediate support from both Deryneia and Paralimni police stations as the situation was potentially very dangerous. Two police patrols, one from each police station, arrived at the scene within 30 minutes and remained for 40 minutes to observe the vehicles in the area. In this area, public land of the Sotira Municipal Forest, the CABS and MBCC volunteers had located three illegal trapping installations with a total of 360 limesticks, and were attempting to determine the precise location of two active electronic bird decoys. Two weeks before the incident, MBCC (Ms. Edith Loosli) had reported this major trapping hotspot to the Game Fund regional office in Larnaca and asked for intervention by the responsible law enforcement agencies, in order to arrest the trappers red-handed and confiscate their trapping equipment.

In autumn 2011, bird trappers and poaching supporters used not only verbal threats and physical attacks to defend their illegal and lucrative activities, but also used false accusations and ill-founded arguments to discredit the actions of environmental NGOs and discourage the operations of law enforcement agencies.

In the period early to mid-October, many articles were published in the national press (particularly the newspapers "*O Phileltheros*" and its special issue "*Ola gia to Kinigi*", "*Politis*" and "*Alitheia*"), in which a series of ill-founded and ludicrous accusations were made against the members of CABS and FoE Cyprus by the supporters of illegal and non-selective bird trapping and killing. The general accusations were based on ill-founded and / or false accusations that were not filed officially with the responsible police authorities. These accusations referred specifically to the: "*breaking of cages – mobile installations for the release of partridges and other game species owned by the Game Fund in Paralimni*" · "*invasion and illegal entrance into private properties*" · "*violation of cages and hutches for the liberation of birds, goats and rabbits*" · "*abusive comments, accompanied by ironic grimaces and threatening*

gestures against land and animal farmers" · "damaging fruit and vegetable boxes" · "systematic cutting of water hoses" · "illegal filming of people" · as well as "hanging an elderly person from a tree within his field" and "observation of areas near the buffer zone by Turkish-speaking activists, in order to gather national security information"!

Following the publication of these accusations, FoE Cyprus undertook an initiative and sent two information letters, the first to the Ministry of Justice and Public Order, and the second to the Headquarters of the Cyprus Police. In these letters, date 17 October 2011, FoE Cyprus requested a general investigation of all accusations made against environmentalists and ornithologists. Among other matters, the two letters stated the following: *"Friends of the Earth Cyprus condemns outright any illegal act by any person and the use of any form of violence against any person. Friends of the Earth Cyprus are committed to continue acting within the law, in order to contribute as much as possible to the eradication of the serious environmental crime of poaching, as well as to ensure environmental justice for all, for the benefit of both the society and the environment. Finally, Friends of the Earth Cyprus state their opposition and resistance to any effort designed to legalize illegal and non-selective bird trapping and killing practices in the Republic of Cyprus".*

In a reply on 22 November 2011, the Chief of the Cyprus Police stated: *"We inform you that after the completion of investigations, no official complaint against any environmentalists and / or ornithologists was filed with the police, during autumn, spring or any other seasonal field survey. Only one complaint was filed in Deryneia local police station against persons unknown, in relation to the breaking of a metal cage with cartridges, owned by the Game Fund. After the completion of investigations no evidence was found that could lead to the identification of the offender".*

CABS and Friends of the Earth Cyprus reject out of hand the ill-founded and ludicrous accusations made in respect of the efforts made by conservationists to monitor and report poaching activities by supporters of illegal bird trapping. The reply by the Chief of Police confirms that there is no concrete foundation for these wild accusations.

11. Conclusions and recommendations

In 2011, CABS and FoE Cyprus concentrated their efforts on monitoring the real extent of autumn trapping in Cyprus. In 2010, the two organisations had focused more on improving their cooperation with the responsible authorities and recording the deficiencies in law enforcement. They could therefore devote only little time and effort to the monitoring of trapping patterns.

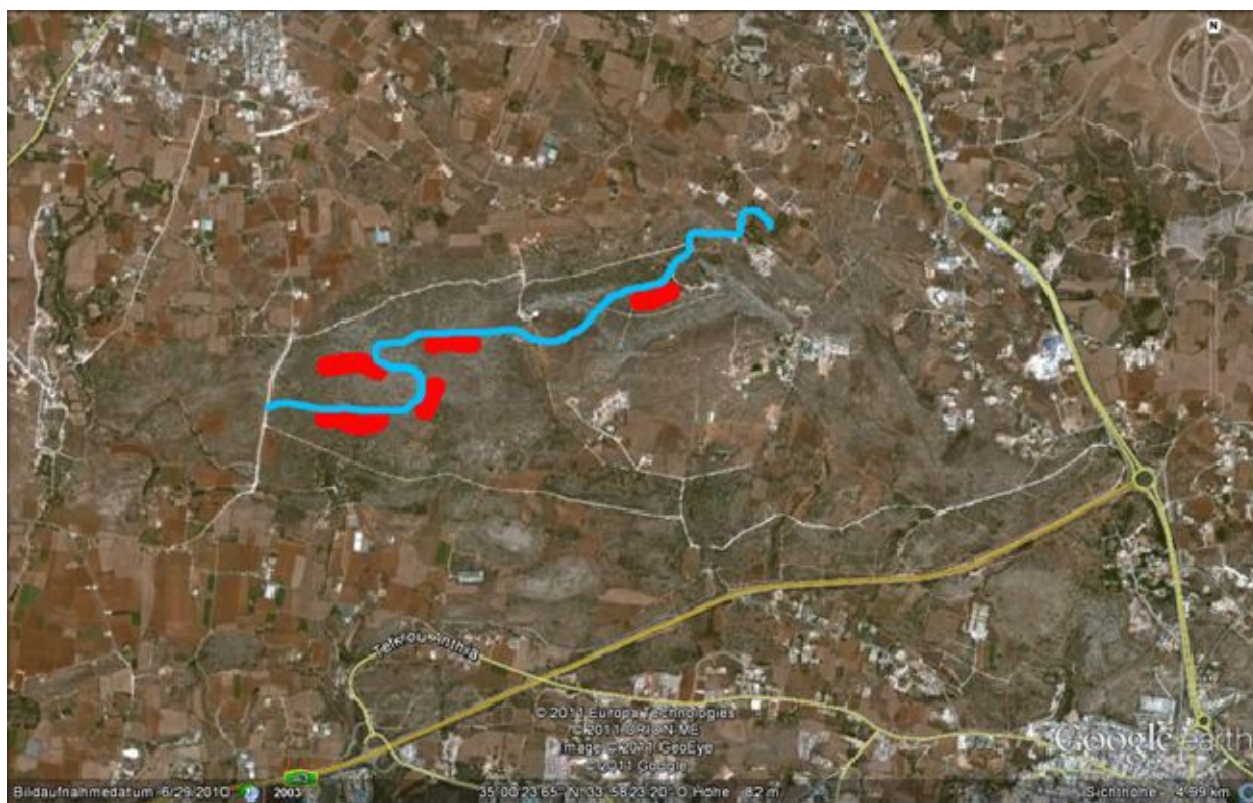
In autumn, trapping in the area around Paralimni is not at first glance significantly different when compared to spring. There is relatively fewer trapping in orchards and plantations (at least limesticks are not left out every day or throughout daylight hours), but on the other hand there are more professional trapping installations on public land and a vast increase in the use of electronic decoys. Trappers can probably catch more birds in a shorter space of time than in spring and therefore traps do not need to be set out for long periods.

The large increase in the use of mist nets in autumn is a particularly serious problem. The areas affected, where cases of trapping with mist nets in spring are few and isolated, are the

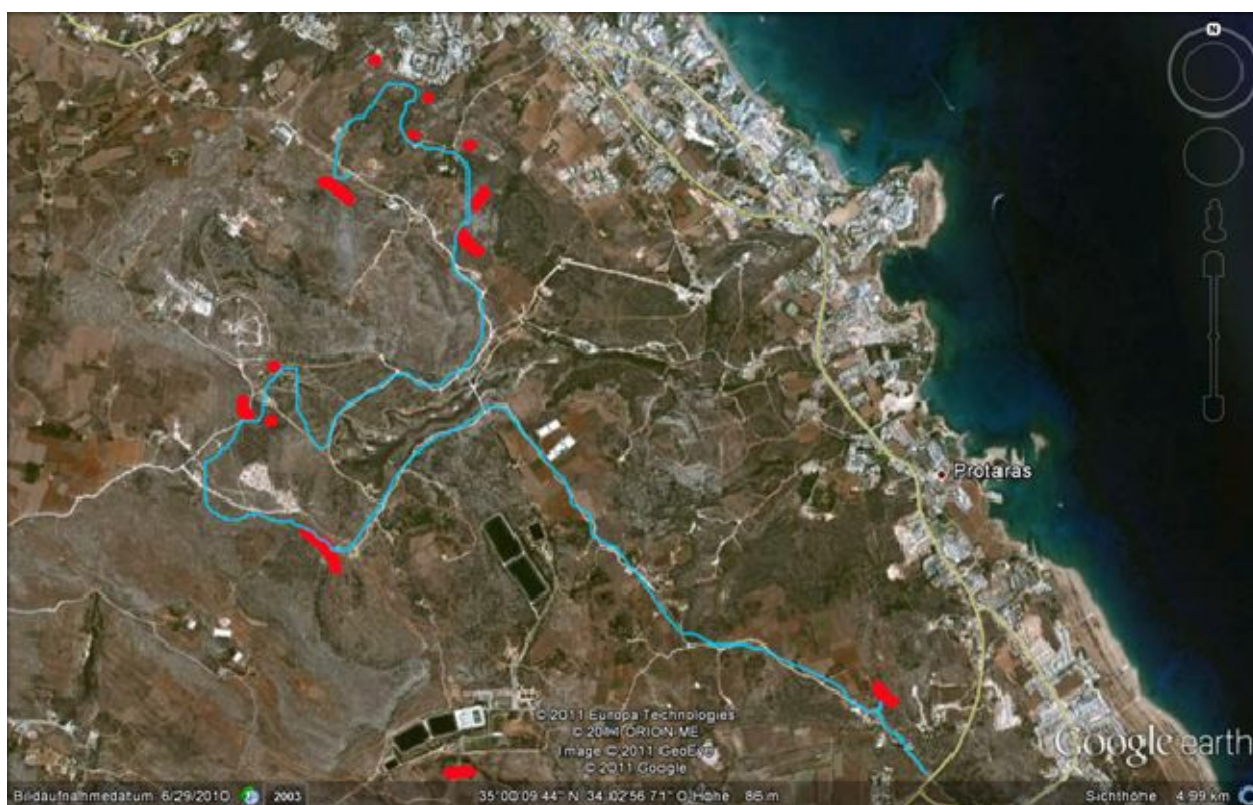
Famagusta District, the British ESBA, the south-west of Larnaca District, the south-west of Larnaca town and a few other isolated areas. Notwithstanding this obvious seasonal pattern, the responsible law enforcement agencies concentrate their anti-poaching operations more in the British ESBA (Trapping Hotspot 2), the south-west Larnaca region (Trapping Hotspots 3 and 4) and a few other isolated areas (Trapping Hotspots 5), rather than the Famagusta district (Trapping Hotspot 1), where bird trapping is considerably more widespread.

We therefore propose a number of measures that we believe will make anti-trapping operations in the Famagusta district more effective in the future. These measures attempt to combine the proactive reconnaissance and intelligence-gathering efforts of the environmental NGOs with the powers and responsibilities of the law enforcement agencies (Cyprus Police and the Game Fund):

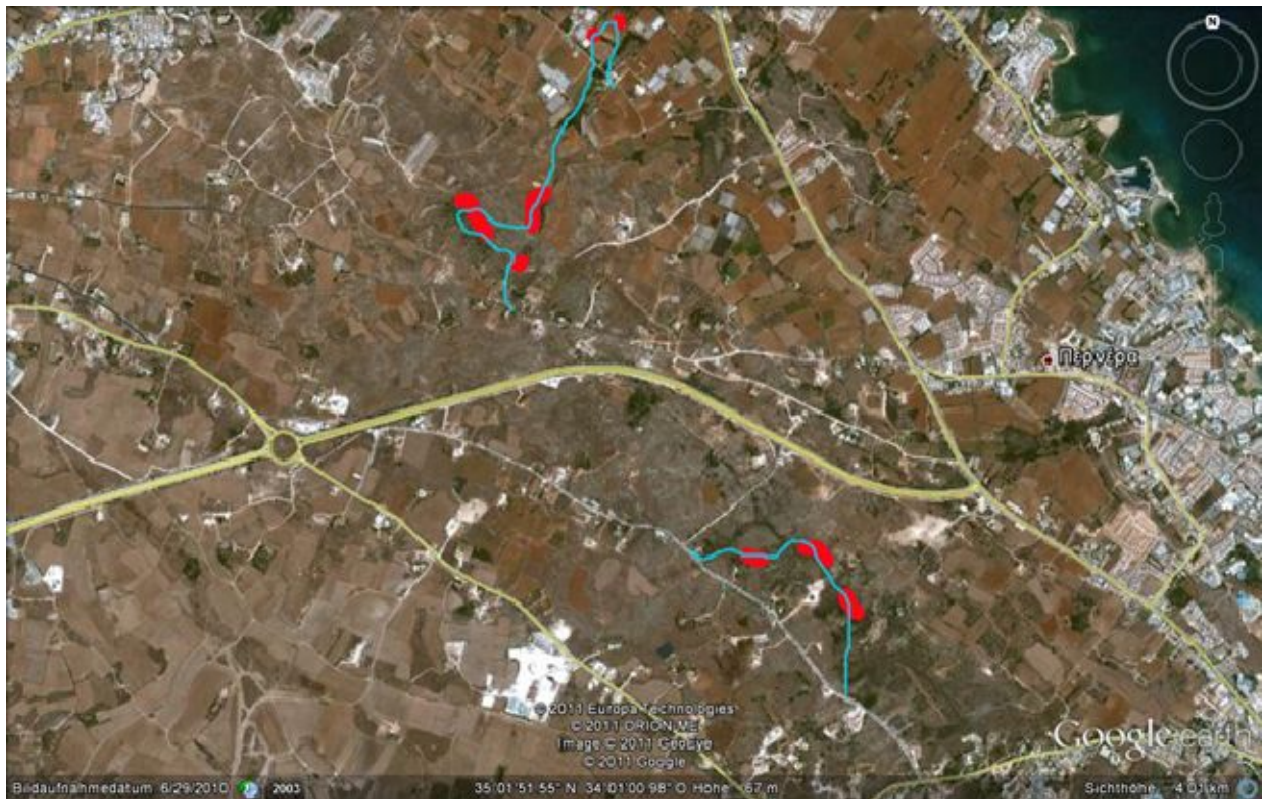
- i. Night versus day: Decoys are usually set out at night in close proximity to each other and their general location is easy to detect. Direct operations at night are however potentially more dangerous and do not result in the arrest of poachers, who are present to harvest their nets in the early morning. A mix of night reconnaissance patrols by bird protection NGOs with early morning operations by the police agencies and the Game Fund at the locations detected is strongly recommended. This will involve close coordination and planning, but will lead to successful results.
- ii. Deterrence patrolling: Some 50% of bird trapping in the Ayia Napa, Paralimni and Sotira areas (an estimated 2,000 limesticks) takes place in the early morning hours in the Fanos Hill maquis area, Sotira Municipal Forest and around the Ayios Mamas area in Paralimni. Regular field surveys and monitoring programmes, organised during the peak season (20 September – 10 October) by environmental NGOs (CABS, FoE Cyprus, BirdLife Cyprus and MBCC), with the close support of the Cyprus Police and Game Fund patrols covering the most important areas (see Figs. 6, 7 and 8) would deter trappers from using these important natural areas with high ecological value, at least in the morning hours, which are the most productive for bird trapping. These areas are on public land and the task of the environmental NGOs would be to act solely as a deterrent to trappers, through their regular presence. Direct intervention is the responsibility of the Cyprus Police and the Game Fund. Here again, joint advance planning and cooperation is necessary for successful results.



Map 7: Transect against bird-trapping in Sotira Municipal Forest



Map 8: Transect against bird-trapping in Fanos Hill



Map 9: Transect against bird-trapping in Perna Hill and Ayios Mamas

- iii. Security and successful joint operations: In order to attain the best level of security for our teams, and ensure prompt and selective successful intervention by the responsible law enforcement agencies, our preference is for an embedded Cyprus Police officer or Game Fund warden, or alternatively a joint patrol, to accompany our teams in spring and autumn. A second-best solution would be the planned and coordinated presence of a Cyprus Police and / or Game Fund patrol on days when our operations take place in potentially very dangerous areas (e.g. Kokkines area in Ayia Napa, Ayios Mamas area in Paralimni, Avgorou area at night, Sotira Municipal Forest in Sotira). It is also important to show a joint presence on occasions in order to demonstrate to trappers that environmental NGOs and the law enforcement agencies work together. This has been achieved in the past and should continue to be a blueprint for the future.
- iv. Strengthening and reinforcement of law enforcement agencies: Despite the increasing efforts made by the responsible law enforcement agencies, especially during the migratory season of autumn 2011, CABS and FoE Cyprus repeat their appeal to the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Justice and Public Order to improve the effectiveness of the responsible law enforcement agencies by increasing their operational capacity and providing them with consistent and high-profile political support for their anti-poaching operations. The Cyprus Police Anti-Poaching Squad has only 10 officers and is responsible for the whole territory of the Republic of Cyprus, while the Game Fund has some 70 officers in all 4 of its regional offices (Nicosia / Limassol / Paphos / Larnaca & Famagusta). These officers are responsible for handling all hunting and poaching activities, from the protection of habitats and the management of wildlife to the illegal killing of and trade in of game and protected wildlife species. According to the core recommendations of the *"European Conference on Illegal Killing of Birds"*, which were submitted and adopted during the *"31st Meeting of the Standing*

Committee to the Bern Convention" that was held in Strasburg from 29 November – 2 December 2011, a zero tolerance policy towards illegal and non-selective bird trapping and killing includes, inter alia: "i) *The need to strengthen enforcement at each stage of the bird crime chain through appropriate targeting, scientific and technical support and cooperation; ii) The need to recognize the significance of the illegal taking and trade of birds as a risk to the achievement and maintenance of favourable status of bird populations and a damage to the conservations actions undertaken by the Parties with adverse impacts on the conservation, legal hunting, agriculture and tourism sectors; and iii) The need to develop, finance and support national communication strategies promoting dialogue between relevant stakeholders and the wider public*".

- v. An increase in penalties imposed for bird trapping: CABS and FoE Cyprus urge the judicial authorities to critically review the scale of penalties imposed for poaching and to implement more rigidly existing national legislation, to assist in stamping out this serious environmental criminal activity and ensure that environmental justice is meted out. This could be promoted through training seminars for judges, co-organised by the Ornithological Committee of the DG Environment of the European Commission (EC), the European Institute of Public Administration (EIPA) and the European Centre for Judges and Lawyers (ECJL), in cooperation with the Law Office of the Republic of Cyprus, the Ministry of Justice and Public Order, and the Ministry of Interior. According to the "*Law on the Protection and Management of Wild Birds and Game Species of 2003*", offences related to the illegal trapping, killing, possessing and / or trading of wild birds can be punished with very strict penalties of up to 17,000 Euros fine and / or 3 years imprisonment (see Tab. 5 below). Nevertheless, according to data gathered and presented recently by the Game Fund, during the "*European Conference on Illegal Killing of Birds*", the average fines imposed by the courts in the Republic of Cyprus do not exceed 100-600 Euros for a single offence and the penalty of imprisonment, particularly in relation to big professional trappers with criminal records, is never imposed. In line with the recommendations of the responsible law enforcement agencies and other environmental NGOs, CABS and FoE Cyprus also recommend that the responsible judicial authorities ensure that the Cypriot courts significantly increase the penalties imposed for bird trapping in order to effectively and permanently eradicate the serious environmental crime of illegal and non-selective bird trapping and killing on the island.

Typical trapping / poaching case			
The legislation is very strict (Probably the stricter in Europe).			
		Legislation	Fine
1st Accusation	Pursuing of wildlife	Up to 17,000	100 - 600
2nd Accusation	Trapping / killing	Up to 17,000	100 - 600
3rd Accusation	Possession	Up to 17,000	100 - 600
4th Accusation	Use of Illegal methods	Up to 17,000	100 - 600
5th Accusation	Use of sound-device	Up to 17,000	100 - 600
6th Accusation	Protected Species	Up to 17,000	100 - 600
7th Accusation	Game reserve area	Up to 17,000	100 - 600
		119,000 euros and / or 3 years of prison	

Table 5: *Typical Trapping / Poaching Case: Legislation and Fines.*
Source: Game Fund (July 2011). *Illegal Killing of Birds in Cyprus: A National Perspective.*
Larnaca: Presentation at the "*European Conference on Illegal Killing of Birds*"

Annex A.

Detailed law enforcement anti-poaching data

1. Cases recorded by type and month

In the time-frame 1 August and 30 December, the law enforcement agencies involved in anti-poaching operations on Cyprus (Game Fund, Anti-Poaching Squad of the Cyprus Police, other Cyprus Police units and the British SBA Police) successfully solved 328 cases:

- 129 (39.3%) cases were related to illegal shooting, possessing and / or trading of game species (e.g. birds, Brown Hare);
- 70 (21.4%) cases were related to illegal shooting of both game and protected species of birds with the use of electronic decoys;
- 129 (39.3%) cases were related to illegal and non-selective bird trapping and killing (with the use of limesticks, mist nets, electronic decoys, snares, snap traps and other trapping methods), as well as possessing and / or trading of protected species of birds (e.g. '*ambelopoulia*' and / or birds of prey) and other wildlife (e.g. Brown Hare and / or Cyprus Mouflon).

Comment: These findings demonstrate an equal distribution of cases between the three main categories of poaching and directly contradict the main argument deployed by representatives of the Cyprus Hunting Federation, who claim that the responsible law enforcement agencies focus almost exclusively on tackling bird trapping because of political pressure from the European Union and environmental NGOs. The Cyprus Hunting Federation believe that the law enforcement agencies do not adequately protect "hunting interests and game species". The official published data cited above demonstrates clearly that this argument is ill-founded, and is aimed at counterbalancing the institutional and public pressure to eradicate illegal, non-selective and massive bird trapping, killing and trade on the island.

A total of 199 (60.7%) cases are related either to illegal shooting with the aid of electronic decoys, or illegal and non-selective bird trapping and killing, as well as possession of and/or trade in protected species of birds and other wildlife. The numbers of cases per month for the period under review were:

- August: 10 (5.1%),
- September: 59 (29.6%),
- October: 61 (30.6%),
- November: 51 (25.6%),
- December: 18 (9.1%).

Comment: This pattern demonstrates the increase in anti-poaching operations during the peak bird migration season in autumn. Despite this increased activity by the law enforcement agencies the CABS figures tell a different story. In a period of only ten days (23 September – 2 October) eight CABS conservationists located and reported 72 bird trapping installations. It can therefore be confidently argued that closer cooperation between CABS / FoE Cyprus and the responsible law enforcement agencies could potentially double the effectiveness of anti-poaching operations during the peak bird migration season in autumn, both in terms of the seizure of poaching equipment and the arrest and subsequent prosecution of poachers caught red-handed. It should also be noted that only a small effort is made to proactively monitor and

control song bird poaching from mid-August to early September, the start of the main autumn trapping season.

2. Cases recorded by law enforcement agency

The commitment of the law enforcement agencies to anti-trapping operations (number of cases) is summarised as follows:

- The Game Fund: 159 (79.8%),
- The Anti-Poaching Squad: 18 (9%),
- Other Cyprus Police units: 14 (7%),
- The British ESBA Police: 36 (18%),
- The British WSBA Police: 2 (1%),
- British Army resources in Dekeleia: 1 (0.5%).

Comment: These findings demonstrate the major role of the Game Fund in the overall effort to eradicate bird trapping on the island, both within the territory of the Republic of Cyprus and the British SBAs. More importantly, they show the extremely limited operational capacity and effectiveness of the Anti-Poaching Squad in particular and the Cyprus Police in general. At the same time, the commitment of the British SBA authorities is low when compared to the actual extent of bird trapping in their area of jurisdiction (less than 20% of the total anti-trapping operations compared with the estimated figure of 25-30% of total bird trapping in the Eastern and Western SBAs combined).

3. Trapping hotspots and operational effort

The major bird trapping hotspots in Cyprus in order of significance (see also 'Section 2: Background', in particular Tab. 1 and Map 2) are:

1. Famagusta District (Xylophagou, Liopetri, Sotira, Ayia Napa and the Cape Greco area, Paralimni and Protaras areas, Deryneia, Frenaros, Vrysoules, Dasaki Achnas and Avgorou),
2. British ESBA (Cape Pyla, Xylophagou, Ormideia, Pyla, Achna and Ayios Nikolaos),
3. South-west of Larnaca District (Zygi, Maroni, Psematismenos, Kalavassos, Tochni, Choirokitia, Kato and Pano Lefkara, Skarinou, Ayios Theodoros, Kofinou, Alaminos, Anafotia and Mazotos),
4. South-west of Larnaca town (Meneou, Kiti and Pervolia),
5. Other isolated areas (Aradipou in Larnaca district, Kakopetria and Lythrodontas in Nicosia district, Polis Chrysochous and Kouklia in Paphos district).

Comment: CABS and FoE Cyprus agree with the responsible authorities and BirdLife Cyprus that the three major trapping hotspots in Cyprus (Famagusta District, British ESBA and the south-west Larnaca District) host around 75% of the bird trapping that takes place on the island. It is therefore of interest to analyse where in fact successful anti-poaching operations were conducted. These are listed below in order of importance:

- Famagusta district (Trapping Hotspot 1): 28 (14%),
- British ESBA (Trapping Hotspot 2): 38 (19.1%),
- South-west of Larnaca District (Trapping Hotspot 3): 31 (15.6%),
- South-west of Larnaca town (Trapping Hotspot 4): 15 (7.5%),

- Other isolated areas (Trapping Hotspot 5): 29 (14.6%) of which:
 - Aradipou in Larnaca District: 9 cases (4.5%),
 - Lythrodontas in Nicosia District: 4 cases (2%),
 - Kakopetria in Nicosia District: 5 cases (2.5%),
 - Polis Chrysochous in Paphos District: 3 cases (1.5%),
 - Kouklia in Paphos District: 8 cases (4%),
- The rest of the island: 58 cases (29.1%).

Comment: These findings demonstrate that only 97 (48.7%) of 199 anti-trapping operations took place in the three major trapping hotspots (Famagusta District, British ESBA and the south-west of Larnaca District). If it is assumed that at least 25% of bird trapping on the island takes place in each of these three areas, the perceived deficit in operational activity is 11% in Famagusta District, almost 10% in the south-west of Larnaca District and 6% in the British ESBA. The figures for the south-west of Larnaca town and other isolated areas are neutral, but operational activity in the rest of the island is over-proportional and accounts for the deficiency of effort in the three major trapping hotspots. This bias or lack of commitment in operational planning and implementation must be corrected urgently if the bird trapping that takes place on a massive and industrial scale in the three major identified hotspots is to be effectively countered.

4. Bird trapping and other criminal activities

According to the official data of the responsible law enforcement agencies, bird trapping in Cyprus is closely related to other serious aspects of wildlife crime, as well as other forms of organized crime. In particular these are:

- Cases related to bird trapping with limesticks, mist nets and electronic decoys only: 102 (51.2%),
- Cases related to illegal shooting of game and protected bird species using electronic decoys: 70 (21.4%),
- Cases related to other offences of illegal hunting, possession of and/or trade in of game species: 10 (5%),
- Cases related to illegal bird trade in restaurants and butchers' shops: 9 (4.5%),
- Cases related to other criminal offences (such as possession of drugs and weapons, theft and robbery, illegal possession of large sums of money, unauthorised use of electrified fences and keeping of non-registered hunting dogs etc): 7 (3.5%),
- Cases related to the manufacture of and trade in limesticks: 5 (2.5%),
- Cases related to illegal hunting of Cyprus Mouflon: 4 (2%),
- Cases related to illegal trapping of and trade in birds of prey: 3 (1.5%),
- Cases related to the import of and trade in electronic decoys: 3 (1.5%).

Comment: As stated by the Minister of Justice and Public Order in his letter of 29 September 2011 to CABS and FoE Cyprus (see Annex B), official data reveal that bird trapping has attracted the interest of organised crime, as the monetary rewards are very high. In just two cases for instance, large sums of cash – 15,320 Euros (€), 6,545 UK pounds (£) and 2,400 US dollars (\$) – were discovered in the course of police searches of poachers' properties. All serious cases of wildlife crime (especially the illegal hunting of Cyprus Mouflon and illegal trade in birds of prey) are also connected to illegal bird trapping and killing, as are several cases of illegal hunting and/or possession of game species.

5. Trapping equipment and paraphernalia seized

The responsible law enforcement agencies seized a large amount of bird trapping equipment and other poaching paraphernalia in 199 anti-trapping operations, between August and December 2011:

- 5,887 limesticks and 135 sticks without glue,
- 367 mist nets,
- 135 electronic decoys,
- 68 bird snares,
- 333 snap traps for birds,
- 1 steel trap for Mouflon,
- 28 steel traps for Brown Hare,
- 84 hunting rifles,
- 1,557 shotgun cartridges and 129 illegally manufactured or manipulated cartridges.

Comment: These data also show the disproportionate concern with mist nets and electronic decoys compared with numbers of limesticks seized. This shows that the responsible law enforcement agencies focus more on bird trapping with mist nets and electronic decoys and less on limesticks, a trapping method which is often considered a "long term tradition" on Cyprus. This is particularly evident when the figures of limesticks confiscated / removed by official agencies and NGOs are compared. In a five month period the responsible law enforcement agencies confiscated almost 6,000 limesticks. CABS volunteers located and collected almost 4,000 limesticks in Famagusta District alone within just 10 days.

6. Protected birds and other wildlife seized

The responsible law enforcement agencies recorded the following figures during their anti-trapping operations:

- Protected birds found dead: 4,795 / Protected birds released from traps: 425,
- Game birds found dead: 64 / Game birds released from captivity: 25,
- Protected birds of prey released from captivity: 9,
- Brown Hares were found dead: 19 / Brown Hares released from captivity: 24
- Finds of Cyprus Mouflon meat: 3 / Finds of Cyprus Mouflon skulls: 3.

Comment: Apart from demonstrating once again the scale of bird trapping in relation other forms of poaching, these data show the large-scale and non-selective nature of bird trapping in comparison with the small scale and selective nature of bird shooting. Bird trapping with both limesticks and mist nets is responsible for the annual slaughter of hundreds of thousands of birds and dozens of species, the populations of which are in decline to a lesser or greater extent, and with a non-favourable conservation status.

7. Estimate of birds saved by seizure of trapping equipment

From 1 August to 30 December, the responsible law enforcement agencies confiscated almost 6,000 limesticks and 370 mist nets.

Comment:

- A conservative estimate assumes a catch of 0.5 bird / limestick / day and 10 birds per day / 10 m of mist net / day and a trapping season of 60 days (between August, September and October for blackcaps, flycatchers, redstarts and nightingales) and 40 days for winter (between November, December and January for thrushes, robins and sparrows). This gives the following estimated totals of birds saved:
 - From limesticks: 300,000 (6,000 limesticks x 0.5 bird x 100 days),
 - From mist nets: 370,000 (370 mist nets x 10 birds x 100 days),
 - Total limesticks and mist nets in autumn + winter 2011: 670,000.
- A more radical estimate assumes that 1.0 birds are caught per limestick and 20 birds are caught per 10 meters mist net per day over the same 100 day period. This gives the following estimate:
 - From limesticks: 600,000 (6,000 limesticks x 1.0 birds x 100 days),
 - From mist nets: 740,000 (370 mist nets x 20 birds x 100 days),
 - Total limesticks and mist nets in autumn + winter 2011: 1,340,000.
- An average of these two estimates gives the number of birds saved from both limesticks and mist nets in autumn + winter 2011: 1,005,000.

8. Methods of operation and results

The 199 cases are related to either illegal shooting using and bird trapping and killing, as well as possession and / or trade in protected species of birds and other wildlife are broken down as follows:

- Poachers arrested red-handed: 144 (72.3%),
- Poachers arrested with search warrants: 44 (22.1%), of which
 - Warrants issued for restaurants and taverns: 9 (4.5%),
 - Warrants issued for houses and other properties: 35 (17.6%),
- Poachers arrested red-handed and search warrants additionally issued for houses and other properties: 7 (3.5%),
- Poachers not arrested but trapping equipment confiscated: 4 (2%).

A more detailed analysis is arrived at, if all 70 cases related to illegal shooting with the use of electronic decoys in which poachers were arrested red-handed are excluded. The following statistics include only those cases directly related to illegal and non-selective bird trapping and killing, as well as possession of and / or trade in protected species of birds and other wildlife:

- Poachers arrested red-handed: 74 (57.3%) out of 129,
- Poachers arrested with search warrants: 44 (34.1%) of which
 - Warrants issued for restaurants and taverns: 9 (6.8%),
 - Warrants issued for houses and other properties: 35 (27.1%),
- Poachers arrested red-handed and search warrants also issued for houses and other properties: 7 (5.4%),
- Poachers were not arrested but trapping equipment seized: 4 (3.1%).

Comment: In 50% of cases dealt with by the Game Fund poachers were caught red-handed and in the remaining 50% of cases search warrants were issued. In contrast, almost all cases dealt with by the Anti-Poaching Squad and other Cyprus Police units' search warrants were issued. In almost all cases dealt with by the British SBA Police poachers were caught red-handed. The Game Fund is evidently pursuing a successful strategy, by combining the tactics of field

ambushes with the issue of search warrants. In this way they are better able to control every stage of the bird crime chain, from the small and medium trappers to big trappers and restaurant owners. The Anti-Poaching Squad and other Cyprus Police units' operations are mostly based on the issue of search warrants in order to prosecute big trappers and restaurant owners, but this tactic leaves the majority of small and medium trappers unaffected. British ESBA Police operations are based primarily on field ambushes to catch and prosecute medium and big trappers. This tactic is not always successful without the issue of search warrants for houses and other properties.

9. Trapper demography

The official data of the responsible law enforcement agencies provides interesting statistics on the profile of bird trappers in Cyprus. In total, 391 poachers were arrested in 238 anti-poaching operations of which 220 trappers were arrested in 199 anti-trapping operations. These statistics, in particular those from the Cyprus Police, allows us to determine the age of 45 of 391 poachers and 34 of 220 trappers:

- 10 (29.4%) are between 18 and 29 years old,
- 7 (20.6%) are between 30 and 39 years old,
- 6 (17.7%) are between 40 and 49 years old,
- 8 (23.5%) are between 50 and 59 years old,
- 1 (2.9%) is between 60 and 69 years old,
- 2 (5.9%) are between 70 and 79 years old.

Comment: Although that this sample of 34 out of 220 trappers (15.4%) is hardly representative, it nevertheless appears to indicate that the older generation of trappers between 50-79 years of age has been initially replaced by the generation of middle-age trappers between 30-49 years of age and finally by a younger generation of trappers between 18-29 years of age. These findings show that the lack of national communication strategies, particularly the lack of environmental education projects and public awareness initiatives, is another major hurdle in the effort to combat the serious social and ecological problem of massive illegal and non-selective bird trapping and killing on Cyprus.

10. Analysis of efforts and strategies to combat bird trapping in Famagusta District

As discussed earlier, Famagusta District can be considered to be the major trapping hotspot on the island and is therefore the main area monitored during our bird protection camps. For this reason, the efforts and strategies employed by the Game Fund and the Cyprus Police to combat trapping in this area deserves special attention.

Of all 328 anti-poaching by the Cyprus Police and the Game Fund only 30 (9.1%) took place in Famagusta District. For the 199 anti-trapping operations the figure is 28 (14%). As at least 25% of the all bird trapping and killing takes place in this area, these figures are extremely low and unrepresentative of the overall efforts by the law enforcement agencies. They are shown to be completely inadequate when the figures reported by the CABS teams – 200 prepared sites and 70 active trapping sites during peak migration – are considered. In our opinion a figure of 75-100 successful cases of prosecution in Famagusta District area would represent the minimum level of effective enforcement.

Of the total 30 anti-poaching operations conducted by the responsible law enforcement agencies in Famagusta District 28 (93.3%) were related either to illegal shooting with the use of electronic decoys, or illegal and non-selective bird trapping and killing. This demonstrates the real extent of the problem of song bird poaching in the major trapping hotspot on the island. Of these 30 anti-poaching operations, nine took place in September (15 – 30), 16 in October (1 – 22), two in November and three in December. The majority of anti-poaching operations in the Famagusta District took place therefore at the peak of the autumn bird migration season, from 15 September to 22 October. The remainder, in November and December, were related either to illegal shooting of game species with the use of electronic decoys, or bird trapping with both mist nets and electronic decoys during the winter trapping period.

Comment: Although the majority of operations were conducted during the peak of the bird migration season, they took place on only 18 days of the autumn trapping period of 60 days. Additionally, no proactive measures are taken to monitor and control song bird poaching from the beginning of the main autumn trapping season (late August to early September). This gives the trappers a sense of security and they therefore do not hesitate to set their traps on public land as well as on private property.

11. Commitment of the law enforcement agencies in Famagusta District

The statistics of the level of commitment by the individual agencies in the 30 anti-poaching operations and 28 anti-trapping operations was as follows:

- Game Fund: 26 (92.85%) of 28 anti-trapping operations and 27 (90%) of 30 anti-poaching operations;
- The Anti-Poaching Squad of the Cyprus Police: two (7.1%) anti-trapping operations and two (6.6%) anti-poaching operations;
- Other Cyprus Police units: two (7.1%) anti-trapping operations and three (10%) anti-poaching operations.

Comment: Apart from the commitment of the Game Fund to anti-poaching and anti-trapping operations in the Famagusta district, there is no consistent effort to combat song bird poaching in the island's major trapping hotspot. The Game Fund was committed in 9 out of 10 anti-poaching and anti-trapping operations in the Famagusta district. The Game Fund regional office for Larnaca and Famagusta Districts is responsible for conducting anti-trapping operations in almost all of the major trapping hotspots on Cyprus where some 75-80% of all bird trapping, killing and trade takes place. This gives them, with a total strength of 10 to 15 officers, the responsibility of handling 3/4 to 4/5 of all anti-trapping cases. Under extremely challenging conditions they have already reached the limits of their operational capability. Reinforcement of the Game Fund, particularly Larnaca and Famagusta Districts, is urgently necessary.

It is notable that the Anti-Poaching Squad of the Cyprus Police is almost completely inactive in the major trapping hotspot on Cyprus with a commitment in less than 1 out of 10 anti-poaching and anti-trapping operations in Famagusta district. Although this unit has a total strength of only 10 officers to deal with a variety of hunting violations and poaching offences across the complete territory of the Republic of Cyprus, this fact alone does not explain their absence from this area. Nonetheless, the shortage of personnel is a major factor and their numbers need to be increased by at least 100%. Without their regular commitment to operations in Famagusta

District there is little hope that bird trapping on a massive scale in this will ever be effectively tackled and eventually eradicated.

As far as other Cyprus Police units, in particular Famagusta police division and local police stations are concerned, these officers are only specifically committed to anti-poaching and anti-trapping operations that are related to other criminal offences (e.g. possession of drugs and weapons). Dealing with wildlife crime per se is neither considered to be part of their duties and responsibilities, nor do they possess the necessary knowledge and experience, or the appropriate training and equipment, to engage in large-scale anti-poaching and anti-trapping operations and campaigns. This reinforces the need for the Anti-Poaching Squad to be adequately reinforced so that a regular and consistent presence in the Famagusta District can be guaranteed. Local police officers should not however be completely absolved from deal in with blatant incidents of illegal bird trapping, even though local sensibilities and contacts appear to make this difficult. At the very least they should be recruited in to the reporting chain as, with their local knowledge and presence on the ground, they can provide vital and up-to-date information for the specialist agencies.

12. Geographical distribution of operations within Famagusta District

The geographical distribution of the 30 anti-poaching and anti-trapping operations in the Famagusta district was as follows:

- Xylophagou police station (responsible for the communities of Xylophagou and Liopetri: 14 (46.65%);
- Deryneia police station (responsible for the municipalities of Deryneia and Sotira and the communities of Frenaros and Aheritou): 8 (26.65%);
- Paralimni police station (responsible for the municipality of Paralimni and the area of Protaras): 4 (13.35%);
- Ayia Napa police station (responsible for the municipality of Ayia Napa and the area of Cape Greco): 4 (13.35%).

The figures for the geographical distribution in the Famagusta District of all 199 anti-trapping operations conducted on the territory of the Republic of Cyprus are as follows:

- The communities of Xylophagou and Liopetri: 14 (7%),
- The municipalities of Deryneia and Sotira and the communities of Frenaros and Aheritou 8 (4%),
- The municipality of Paralimni and the area of Protaras: 4 (2%),
- The municipality of Ayia Napa and the area of Cape Greco: 4 (2%).

Comment: These figures show clearly that anti-trapping operations are more often conducted on the periphery (Xylophagou, Liopetri, Deryneia, Sotira, Frenaros and Aheritou) of Famagusta District rather than in its core areas (Paralimni and Protaras, Ayia Napa and Cape Greco, Avgorou) where only 8 (4%) out of 199 anti-trapping operations took place. It serves to explain why this stronghold area of the major trapping hotspot on Cyprus is considered a 'no-go' area for law enforcement by trappers and poachers, as well as the criminal network that supports their illegal activities.

13. Relationship of bird trapping offences to other cases of wildlife crime

The official data of the responsible law enforcement agencies reveals that bird trapping in the Famagusta district is closely related to other wildlife and criminal offences. On the basis of the 30 cases the breakdown is as follows:

- 21 (70%) cases are related solely to bird trapping with limesticks, mist nets and electronic decoys;
- 5 (16.6%) of cases are related to illegal shooting of both game and protected species of birds using electronic decoys;
- 2 (6.6%) cases are related to other offences of illegal hunting of game species;
- 2 (6.6%) cases are related to other criminal offences (i.e. the possession of drugs and weapons).

14. Seizure of trapping equipment and other poaching paraphernalia in Famagusta District

There is no record by the law enforcement agencies of any case related to the manufacture and trade of limesticks in Famagusta District, although trapping with limesticks is more prevalent here than anywhere else on the island. In the period August to December, the responsible law enforcement agencies have arrested at least one manufacturer of limesticks was however arrested in every other district (Larnaca, Nicosia, Limassol and Paphos).

There were also no arrests of importers of or traders in electronic decoys (though arrests for this offence were made in the districts of Nicosia and Larnaca).

More importantly, although some restaurants and taverns were searched in Famagusta District, no dead birds were confiscated on such premises and there were no prosecutions of restaurant owners for serving ambelopoulia. In from the period August to December at least one restaurant owner was prosecuted in every other district (Larnaca, Nicosia, Limassol and Paphos).

It is of interest to note that the official data of the responsible law enforcement agencies reveals that bird trappers in Famagusta District sometimes carry lethal weapons such as knives and brass knuckles. This implies that these criminals are aggressive and are prepared to use violence to defend their criminal profit-making activities.

Only a very small amount of bird trapping equipment and other poaching paraphernalia was confiscated in Famagusta District in comparison with other areas:

- 691 (11.7%) out of 5,887 limesticks;
- 47 (12.8%) out of 367 mist nets;
- 17 (12.6%) out of 135 electronic decoys;
- 136 (40.8%) out of 333 snap traps for birds;
- 8 (3.8%) out of 208 hunting rifles;
- 10,135 (68.7%) out of 14,747 filled cartridges.

Comment: These figures show that the responsible law enforcement agencies focus more on bird trapping with mist nets and electronic decoys and less on limesticks, although this trapping method is by far the most widespread in the Famagusta District. This is highlighted by the fact that in a five month period law enforcement agencies confiscated only 691 limesticks in

Famagusta district, compared to almost 4,000 limesticks located and collected by CABS conservationists in just 10 days.

Even the number of mist nets and electronic decoys confiscated in the Famagusta district are low and do not reflect the actual extent of bird trapping and killing that takes place here. In contrast, the figures of protected birds found dead or released from traps in anti-trapping operations in this area reveal the real extent of trapping activity:

- 1,736 (36.2%) out of a total of 4,795 protected birds found dead in anti-poaching operations across the island;
- 83 (19.5%) out of 425 protected birds released from traps in anti-poaching operations across the island.

15. Arrests made in the course of 30 operations conducted in Famagusta District

- Poachers arrested red-handed: 22 (73.3%),
- Poachers arrested with search warrants related to houses and other properties (and excluding restaurants and taverns): Six (20%),
- Poachers arrested red-handed and search warrants additionally issued for houses and other properties: Two (6.6%) cases.

Comment: All cases in which poachers were arrested red-handed were dealt with by the Game Fund. In contrast, all cases in which search warrants were issued were dealt with by the Anti-Poaching Squad and other Cyprus Police units, in cooperation with the Game Fund. This again confirms that the Game Fund is following a successful strategy, by combining the tactics of field ambushes and search warrants. Operations by the Anti-Poaching Squad and other Cyprus Police units are based exclusively on the issue of search warrants for the prosecution of big trappers. The majority, the small and medium trappers, remain unaffected by this policy although, as a whole, their activities have a greater impact on bird populations. The Anti-Poaching Squad and other Cyprus Police units are totally absent in the field and this contributes to the creation of 'no-go' areas, which explains why trapping is still so blatant and widespread in the wider area of Famagusta.

Annex B.

Correspondence with the Responsible Ministries and Law Enforcement Agencies

General

In March 2011, before the start of the spring camp, CABS and FoE Cyprus representatives [¹] met the responsible officers of the Cyprus Police Headquarters and the Anti-Poaching Squad, the Game Fund and the British ESBA Police, as well as the Environment Department of the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment. Our outline operational plans for the spring camp were presented and explained, while points of contact were established at both operational and local-district staff level. A degree of support was also promised by the authorities of the Republic of Cyprus that regrettably, on the day, rarely materialised.

The same representatives of the two organisations were also delegates to the *“European Conference on Illegal Killing of Birds”*, which took place in Larnaca, in July 2011. Here the hosts – the responsible authorities of the Republic of Cyprus – pledged more effective measures against the widespread illegal trapping of migrant song birds. During the conference, CABS and FoE Cyprus representatives once again had the chance to discuss these issues with the responsible officers of law enforcement agencies [²] and all agreed that a more systematic and consistent, proactive and zero-tolerance approach must be adopted in order to tackle effectively and permanently illegal and non-selective bird trapping and killing on a massive scale. In addition, the representatives of our organisations and the responsible officers of the law enforcement agencies agreed that an even closer cooperation, built on a relationship of trust and understanding, is required in order to achieve the aforementioned aim.

To this end, before the start of our Autumn 2011 bird protection camp, we again corresponded with the Ministry of Interior and the Game Fund Headquarters, as well as the Ministry of Justice and Public Order and Cyprus Police Headquarters, requesting better cooperation on the ground.

Minister of Interior and the Game Fund

FoE Cyprus sent a letter to the Minister of Interior and the Head of the Game Fund on 25 August 2011, congratulating them on the official adoption of a zero tolerance policy against bird poaching during the *“European Conference on Illegal Killing of Birds”* and asking for the continuance of the cooperation between the Game Fund and our organisations during the imminent bird protection camps, as well as the strengthening of the responsible law enforcement agencies by increasing the operational capacity of the Game Fund and by the provision of consistent and high-profile political support to anti-poaching operations.

The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Interior replied to our letter on 12 December 2011, almost four months later and two months after the Autumn 2011 bird protection camp, stating that anti-poaching operations and efforts by the Game Fund to tackle illegal and non-selective

1 Mr David Conlin, Board Member for International Affairs, CABS, and Mr. Klitos Papastylianou, Campaigns Coordinator, FoE Cyprus.

2 Cyprus Police Anti-Poaching Squad, Game Fund staff and officers, British ESBA Administration and Police.

bird trapping and killing are continuous and systematic, with the aim of harmonizing national legislation with EU directives and international conventions. In addition, the Permanent Secretary stated that the Minister was aware of the operational limitations of the Game Fund, especially in Larnaca and Famagusta districts, and that a constant effort was being made to attempt to increase the operational capacity and effectiveness of Game Fund in a number of ways. He further stated that the Game Fund was always willing to continue its constructive cooperation with our organisations, subject to the condition that this cooperation remained within the bounds of the law and in compliance with the rules of high-principled governance.

Due to the belated response of the Ministry of Interior, there was little or no official and practical cooperation in the field with the Game Fund during the Autumn 2011 bird protection camp. Nevertheless, at the start of our field survey and anti-poaching campaign, CABS and FoE Cyprus representatives informed the responsible Game Fund officers at central and regional level of our operational plans. In addition, shortly after the end of the Autumn 2011 bird protection camp, CABS and FoE Cyprus submitted all their findings – in the form of a comprehensive list and a detailed map – to the responsible Game Fund officers for further investigation and action.

Subsequent to the Autumn 2011 bird protection camp, on 31 October 2011, FoE Cyprus sent a second letter to the Minister of Interior and the Head of the Game Fund, congratulating them on the daily, systematic and persistent anti-poaching operations that had been conducted by the Game Fund between August and October of 2011. FoE Cyprus also repeated their request for the continuance of our cooperation with the Game Fund and especially for the provision of operational support during the field surveys and anti-poaching campaigns organised and conducted every spring and autumn. FoE Cyprus also asked the responsible ministry to increase the operational capacity of the Game Fund and provide consistent and high-profile political support to anti-poaching operations, especially in the major trapping hotspot areas of Famagusta and Larnaca districts.

The Minister of Interior replied to our letter three weeks later, on 22 November 2011, acknowledging that illegal and non-selective bird trapping and killing on a massive scale had not yet been eradicated, despite the significant and persistent efforts of the Game Fund. The Minister therefore pledged that anti-poaching operations would continue until the prevalence of this serious wildlife crime had significant decrease. Lastly, the Minister of Interior confirmed the full provision of political support to the Game Fund, but without referring to our request for continuing and improving our cooperation with the Ministry of Interior and the Game Fund.

Ministry of Justice and Public Order and the Cyprus Police

FoE Cyprus and CABS sent two letters on 12 September 2011. The first letter was addressed to the Minister and the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order, and the second was sent to the Assistant Chief of Operations, the Assistant Chief of Support and the Head of the Anti-Poaching Squad of the Cyprus Police. In these two letters, our organisations stated that they would like to build on and further develop their close working relationship with the Anti-Poaching Squad. We also requested that an embedded police liaison officer accompany the field teams in order to improve security and enable a swifter and more effective response by the responsible authorities to incidents of poaching or other related illegal activity. We offered to pay the additional personnel and associated costs if necessary.

Additionally, on 20 September 2011, CABS and FoE Cyprus sent a reminder by email to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order, once again requesting operational support from the Cyprus Police during the Autumn 2011 bird protection camp.

As we received no official response to our request, and the start of our autumn camp was imminent, the Cyprus Conservation Foundation Terra Cypria – a Cyprus-based environmental NGO that works together with FoE Cyprus and CABS on the matter of illegal and non-selective bird trapping and killing – sent a further letter on 23 September 2011 to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order. In this letter, Terra Cypria emphasised that the responsible authorities of the Republic of Cyprus had agreed to adopt a zero-tolerance policy to illegal and non-selective bird trapping and killing, and that this commitment embraced the improvement and strengthening at all levels of the cooperation between law enforcement agencies and environmental NGOs – in this instance CABS and FoE Cyprus.

On 23 September 2011, the Assistant Chief of Support of the Cyprus Police replied to the first letter from CABS and FoE Cyprus, stating that the Cyprus Police realised the necessity of eradicating poaching and therefore seeks to cooperate with associations and organizations that also aim to protect wild fauna and flora as well. He went on to point out that the participants to the field survey should:

- Not enter private property,
- Avoid confrontation with the owners of private property and / or the residents of the area,
- Inform immediately the Head of the Anti-Poaching Squad of the Cyprus Police or the responsible officer of the District Police Divisions when they locate any illegal bird trapping equipment for further investigation and action by the police. In addition they should keep the District Police inform about their daily operational schedules.

Finally, the Assistant Chief of Support of Cyprus Police stated that the Commanders of the district police divisions of Larnaca and Famagusta would be informed accordingly by the Cyprus Police Headquarters, so that a meeting with the coordinators of the field survey and the provision of local police patrol at our place of residence to guarantee the safety of the camp participants could be arranged. [³]

On September 29, the Minister of Justice and Public Order replied to the second letter of CABS and FoE Cyprus, by acknowledging the fact that, unfortunately, the despicable crime of illegal and non-selective bird trapping and killing has attracted the interest of organized crime, as the monetary rewards are very high. The Minister also mentions that our efforts, as well as the efforts of all other NGOs that operate in Cyprus, are greatly appreciated, but all stakeholders are urged to keep all of their actions within the bounds of the law. According to the Minister of Justice and Public Order, all of us who are dedicated to fighting this crime, Government and NGOs alike, must always abide by the law and operate within its parameters, as well as to take into serious consideration the fact that the Cyprus Police and the Game Fund are the only legitimate authorities on the island to conduct operations against this crime. The Minister also stated that the Cyprus Police has already formulated its operations program on this issue and it is determined to implement the provisions of the law. Lastly, with regards to our request for embedded police officers during our autumn 2011 bird protection camp on Cyprus, the

3 The latter security measure was neither required nor requested by us as our accommodation was located unobtrusively in the middle of a tourist area where we would not attract attention.

Minister of Justice and Public Order referred us to the response of Cyprus Police Headquarters on operational cooperation. [4]

On 29 September 2011, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order replied to Terra Cypria, stating that the Ministry could not agree to provide embedded police officers, not because they did not consider this aspect important, but that shortage of personnel did not permit such a measure. The Permanent Secretary stated that it is well-known that the members of the Anti-poaching Squad of Cyprus Police are short-staffed and therefore unable to cover the complete territory of the Republic of Cyprus and all wildlife crime cases. Moreover, the local police stations are responsible not only for dealing with traffic issues, but all other police issues as well. [5] Nevertheless, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order mentioned that arrangements had been made with the responsible district police divisions to provide local police patrol at the teams' accommodation to ensure the safety of the participants in the Autumn 2011 bird protection camp. [6] Finally, he acknowledges the important contribution of all environmental NGOs to the effort by the government to protect wildlife and especially wild birds in Cyprus, but underlined the fact that all NGOs are urged to restrict their actions to within the bounds of the law and operate within its parameters.

Conclusion

In compliance with the above conditions conveyed to us by the responsible law enforcement agencies, CABS and FoE Cyprus representatives had meetings with the responsible officers of the district police divisions in Larnaca and Famagusta at the start of the Autumn 2011 bird protection camp on 26 September, where our operational plans were presented and explained. The district police divisions provided us with points of contact for security back-up at the local level, in particular with the Paralimni police station in Famagusta District and the Kofinou Police Station for the south-west area in Larnaca District. Our organisations agreed to comply strictly with the instructions given by the Cyprus Police Headquarters, but at the same time we stressed that – although an embedded officer in the field had not been authorised – we expected the responsible law enforcement agencies (Anti-Poaching Squad, district police divisions and local police stations) to investigate immediately our findings and complaints. This agreement was made on the basis that we could not agree to leave trapping equipment in situ – endangering more birds – if an effective reaction to our reports could not be guaranteed and anti-poaching legislation was not be fully implemented. Our experiences in spring 2011 and on earlier operations had led to a loss of confidence in timely intervention by the responsible law enforcement agencies leading to the confiscation of traps and prosecution of offenders. [7]

4 That neither addressed nor satisfactorily answered our request.

5 In our experience however the local police are not only reluctant to deal with such cases; but are not trained in this aspect of crime prevention and are not issued with consistent guidelines or instructions in respect of illegal bird trapping and killing.

6 See footnote 4.

7 In the event, our apprehensions were again justified and in the course of eight days the two teams of CABS volunteers, without police escort and at great personal risk, located 191 prepared and 72 active trapping sites. In the 72 active trapping sites, 3,817 limesticks, 23 mist nets and 32 electronic decoys were found. Another 23 electronic decoys were not precisely located, because they were either placed within fenced properties or due to the poachers' presence in the area.



**Committee Against
Bird Slaughter**

The Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) is an activist and operational bird protection society, based in Bonn in the Federal Republic of Germany. The society was founded in 1975 in Berlin and since then intervenes in particular where bird trappers, poachers and animal traders commit offences against current nature protection legislation in the European Union. The society is always concerned to harmonize closely its activities with the responsible police, forest or customs authorities. In addition, through initiatives at the parliamentary or judicial level, CABS attempt to achieve improvements in the policy and legal guidelines for wildlife, nature and species protection. Currently, the society has 485 members and 11,300 donors throughout the European Union.

CABS is a registered "Society" (Registration Number: VR 7095 – Date of Recognition as a Nature Protection Organization: 03.03.1989) by the authorities of the Federal Republic of Germany.

CABS is also a "Full Member" of *Deutscher Naturschutzring* (German Nature Conservation Organisation, DNR: www.dnr.de), *Deutscher Tierschutzbund* (German Animal Protection Association, DTB: www.tierschutzbund.de) and the *European Federation Against Hunting* (EFAH: www.efah.net).

Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS): www.komitee.de/en/homepage



Friends of the Earth (FoE) Cyprus is an environmental, non-governmental and non-profit, organisation, based in Limassol in the Republic of Cyprus. The organisation was founded in 1980 and since then has campaigned on a series of local, national, regional (Mediterranean and European) and global environmental issues. Its aim is to campaign on solutions to environmental problems, by promoting environmentally sustainable and socially just policies. Currently, the organisation has approximately 200 members all over Cyprus.

FoE Cyprus is a registered "Association" (Registration Number: 1367) by the Registrar of the Ministry of Interior (Date of Registration: 18.11.1993) and a recognized "Charity" (Circular Number: 2009/2) by the Inland Revenue Department of the Ministry of Finance (Date of Circular: 29/01/2009).

FoE Cyprus is also a "Full Member" of the *Federation of Environmental Organisations of Cyprus* (FEOC: www.oikologiafeeo.org), the *European Environmental Bureau* (EEB: www.eeb.org), *Friends of the Earth Europe* (FoEE: www.foeeurope.org) and *Friends of the Earth International* (FoEI: www.foei.org).

Friends of the Earth (FoE) Cyprus: www.foecyprus.weebly.com