



CABS Spring Report 2025

Anti-poaching operations in the Mediterranean



Spring bird protection
missions complete:
82 poachers convicted

Action against bird
trapping with limesticks
and nets in Lebanon

Attack on CABS members
on the Greek island of
Zakynthos

Happy Birthday – 50 years
of the Committee Against
Bird Slaughter (CABS)

Spring operations 2025



Editorial



Dear CABS Friends and Supporters,

The Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) is 50 years old in 2025! Since 1975, we have been committed to direct action for nature conservation and combating migratory bird poaching along the main migration routes of our feathered friends. Sometimes in vain, but very often successfully, as our reports from this spring have shown once again.

In addition to our usual areas of operation – Italy, Malta and Cyprus – we have also been successfully active again in Zakynthos (Greece) and also conducted a large and international bird protection camp in Lebanon, where our work was restricted last year due to the war. This spring, our teams focused on preventing stork and bird of prey shooting as well as tackling bird trapping with nets and limesticks.

During our anti-poaching operations across seven countries, the police have convicted 82 poachers and seized 568 traps, 158 nets, 6 hunting weapons, 240 rounds of ammunition and 33 electronic decoys as a direct result of our field investigations. More than 460 live birds were freed. You can read more about this on the following pages.

The fact that our work not only saves bird lives in a very concrete way, but is also appreciated by our members and donors, is shown by the numerous letters, donations and offers of help that we receive every year. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you very much for this great support and hope you enjoy this latest update from a busy spring season!

Best regards
Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'KH', set against a light blue rectangular background.

Karl-Heinz Kreutzer
1st Chairman

FRANCE

The end of stone-crush traps in France!

For centuries, hunters in the French Cévennes have caught and killed songbirds with brutal stone-crush traps. The “tradition” has only been formally banned for a year – to monitor compliance with the ban a CABS team checked all known trapping sites in the departments of Lozère and Aveyron in late winter and did not find a single active trap! All the sites inspected were last active about 12 months ago, and since then not a single bird has been caught here. It is the successful conclusion of a campaign that we started in 2006 and which, in cooperation with our French partners LPO, ended with the ban on stone-crush traps. This means that stone-crush traps are now essentially extinct throughout Europe, because even in Pavia (northern Italy) – the second known place where they were used until a few years ago – no active trap was found during inspections before Christmas!

This winter, two CABS teams checked compliance with the ban on stone-crush traps in the Cévennes in southern France. All known locations were inactive!



The officers of the Italian police were able to seize two decoys and two firearms in a joint operation with CABS.

ITALY

Action against illegal waterfowl hunting in Venice

The mouth of the Po River in northern Italy is one of the most important resting and wintering areas for waterfowl in the Mediterranean. Hunting is still allowed here today and is also very widespread. Unfortunately, many hunters do not comply with the legal regulations and either shoot protected species or resort to illegal hunting methods. In January, a CABS team was deployed in the south of the vast wetland together with the police and caught two people using prohibited electronic decoys for duck hunting. The perpetrators tried to flee with a boat, but were able to be pursued with the help of a drone across the difficult terrain and later arrested. Two decoys and two firearms were seized.

Shortly after our missions, Donald Trump Junior - the eldest son of the US President - had filmed himself hunting waterfowl in the important wetland and published it online. In one scene, he can be seen with a protected Ruddy Shelduck, which are not allowed to be hunted in Italy. He was immediately reported to the police.

The last poachers on Ischia and Ponza?

This spring, there were two missions on Ischia – the well-known Italian holiday island in the Gulf of Naples. In one of them, a bird trapper was caught red-handed at the beginning of April. The 80-year-old man had set up 11 snap traps for whinchats in a vegetable garden near Fiaiano. During an operation by the WWF's game wardens financed by CABS, police officers were able to confiscate 60 rounds of ammunition, an electronic quail caller and 14 snap traps for songbirds. On the small southern Italian Mediterranean island of Ponza, a CABS team together with the police caught another poacher. The man had set up a trapping net in March and caught a starling with it. The action was set in motion following a tip-off from a tourist who had found the net in the garden of his accommodation – the poacher rents out a holiday apartment.

Both islands used to be strongholds of poaching. Thanks to our operations, which began here way back in 1993, illegal hunting and bird trapping have now largely disappeared. Perhaps the three men were the last poachers still active here. We will check again in spring 2026!



Snap traps for whinchats, an illegal decoy device and several dozen rounds of ammunition, used for migratory bird hunting on Ischia and seized by police following a CABS investigation.



Songbird snares in Sardinia

This winter, several CABS teams were sent on the Italian Mediterranean island of Sardinia to take action against illegal bird trapping with horsehair snares and nets. As a result of our investigations, the police convicted three poachers and confiscated around 90 bird traps; our activists have also collected five nets and 10 wire mammal snares. Five other poachers were also reported. Bird trapping with horsehair snares is declining sharply – in the same area 20 years ago we regularly collected over 10,000 traps! In order to catch the most persistent poachers, we will be back in action in Sardinia again during the next trapping season.

Unfortunately, it is rare for us to be able to free birds alive from a snare. This winter, a song thrush was lucky enough to be rescued from one of the brutal traps.



Not only huntable species are illegally trapped and fitted with fake breeding rings, but also rarer species such as cirl buntings or this bearded tit (photo). They are particularly interesting for collectors.

Bird trappers and traffickers convicted in northern Italy

In northern Italy, five bird trappers and traffickers were convicted in the course of spring 2025: One had a trapping facility operating not far from Lake Garda, the other four were animal dealers who had wild-caught birds on offer – sometimes quite brazenly via classified ads on the internet. The birds were fitted with fake and manipulated rings and were to be sold as ‘captive-bred’ birds. In total, police officers seized eleven nets, five snap traps and over 260 birds – from goldfinches, song thrushes and wagtails to bearded tits, cirl and rock buntings. Many of the birds are currently still in rescue centres and will hopefully be released back into the wild soon. Since Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) staff have been carrying out extensive inspections in Italy together with the authorities, it has become increasingly clear that a large proportion of the native bird species on the market come from the wild. It is feared that such ring manipulations are also widespread throughout Europe.

Decline in poaching in Calabria

The bird protection camp of the Gruppo Adorno in Calabria (southern Italy), financed by the Committee against Bird Slaughter (CABS), took place at the end of April and beginning of May. During the 14 days, eight volunteers monitored the Calabrian side of the Strait of Messina to protect birds of prey such as marsh harriers and honey buzzards as they migrated through. Although poaching has declined sharply here over the last few decades, it continues occur in isolated incidents. On days that were favourable for the passage, shots were regularly recorded. Because of the mostly very remote and difficult terrain, it was not possible to convict a poacher. However, the actions, some of which were carried out together with the police, have led to a calming of the situation.

Honey buzzard with plumage damage caused by shooting in Calabria.



MALTA

Bird trapping in Malta out of control

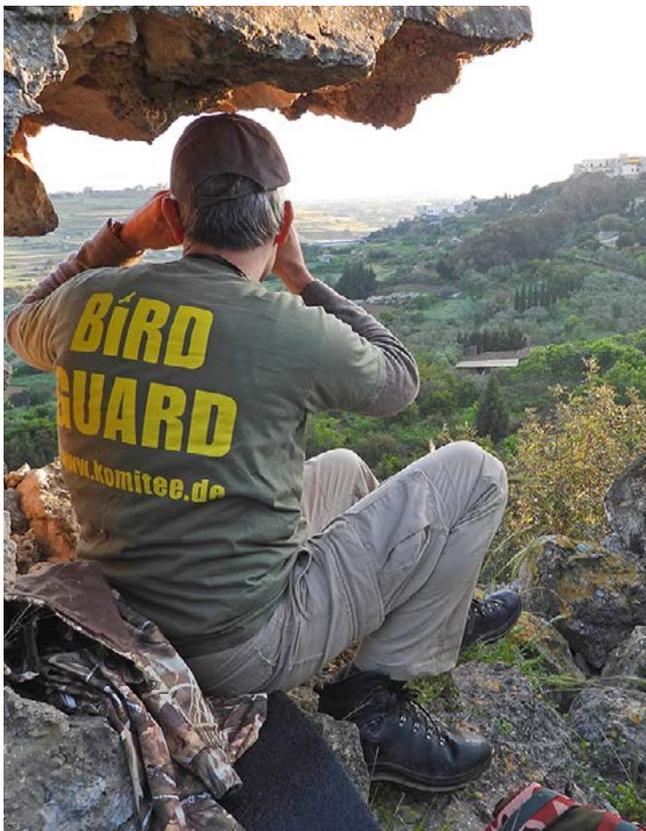
Although bird trapping is banned in Malta and the smaller sister island of Gozo during spring, Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) teams caught 19 poachers and had 85 live decoys, 40 nets and 10 electronic decoys confiscated by the Environmental Police (EPU) as part of the spring actions in March.

Among the trappers reported was an old “acquaintance” of the committee, who had exposed his bare buttocks towards one of our teams as a provocation. It didn’t help him – he was reported by us for illegal bird trapping, exposing his buttocks and an attack with his car!

In autumn, when the controversial finch-trapping ‘research project’ is expected to be approved again by the government in Valletta, we will be sending several teams to monitor compliance with the regulations.



According to our information, the Maltese environmental police were able to confiscate a total of 85 live songbirds, 40 pairs of clap-nets and 10 electronic decoys in March alone.



Action for the protection of birds of prey in April

In April 2025, three CABS teams comprised of 15 volunteers were active in Malta every week to combat the shooting of protected species. While the shooting of large birds such as storks, herons and birds of prey has declined significantly, turtle dove hunting remains completely out of control. Especially in rural areas, we registered hundreds of shots at the endangered doves in many places each morning, even before the opening of the controversial and, according to EU law, illegal spring hunting season. A total of six hunters were caught. In addition, there was also six bird trappers who had laid out their nets late in April. As a result of our teams’ field investigations, the Environmental Police (EPU) confiscated five clap-nets, several electronic decoys, a mist-net and a cage trap. 25 decoys, mainly finches, but also short-toed larks, tree pipits and wagtails, could be freed.

When monitoring the migration of birds of prey, the roosts of marsh and meadow harriers or honey buzzards in Malta are closely monitored – often from good hiding places.

GREECE

Illegal migratory bird slaughter on Greek holiday island



In the illegal spring hunt on the Greek island of Zakynthos, the hunters are not only targeting turtle doves. Every year we also document the shooting of other protected species such as orioles, swallows, birds of prey or swifts.

In April 2025, during the CABS bird protection camp on the popular Greek holiday island of Zakynthos, dozens of cases of poaching were documented. Turtle doves, bee-eaters and orioles are heavily targeted by poachers, who consider the birds to be a seasonal delicacy.

The Keri peninsula is the main stronghold of bird hunting, which is completely prohibited in spring. A total of



Not a rare sight in April and May on Zakynthos: The hunting equipment of a turtle dove hunter with weapon, ammunition, radio and three freshly shot birds.

19 people were reported for shooting protected species and hunting during the closed season. Six suspects were identified by the police in joint investigations with our team, which also led to the seizure of three shotguns, 180 rounds of shotgun ammunition, a walkie-talkie and an electronic decoy caller. Another 13 men were filmed red-handed by the CABS members and the video evidence was handed over to the authorities.

Attack on CABS members

On April 16, a Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) team was attacked by hunters in Zakynthos. The conservationists had identified several poachers on the Keri Peninsula who shot at protected migratory birds. During the check, 15 men, some of them masked, suddenly appeared and attacked the team without warning. A Slovenian CABS team leader suffered a broken nose, an Italian employee suffered a serious leg wound, two British volunteers and a bird conservationist from Switzerland also suffered cuts and bruises. A smartphone and a camera with evidence were destroyed and a backpack was stolen. The police were quickly on the scene and arrested four suspects in the following days and only released them after paying 3000 € bail.



Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) team leader with a broken nose after the attack by 15 masked men near the village of Keri in the southwest of Zakynthos.

CYPRUS

13 poachers convicted in winter

In January and February 2025, several CABS teams were deployed in Cyprus. Compared to the previous year, poaching activities on the island has decreased, mainly due to the lower number of wintering migratory birds. Nevertheless, together with the police and the game wardens, we were able to carry out some successful operations and convict a total of 13 bird trappers and poachers. In the process, 3 mist-nets, 117 limesticks and 12 electronic decoys were confiscated by the authorities.

Depending on the weather conditions, the number of songbirds that spend the winter in Cyprus can fluctuate. The bird trappers prepare their nets and limesticks to catch as many as they can, as here in the municipality of Paralimni.



Poacher caught after 16 years

During the spring mission in Cyprus, the teams of the Committee Against Bird Slaughter caught a total of three bird trappers. The police and game wardens confiscated 56 limesticks – fewer than ever before. We had one of the perpetrators on the list for 16 years! So far, he has always been able to escape, but this year we caught him red-handed while setting out 20 limesticks. The action was made possible thanks to his electronic decoy caller, which not only lured warblers, but also our team precisely to its trapping site.



Many of our volunteers in Cyprus are now very well-rehearsed in freeing small songbirds such as blackcaps (photo) from the sticky limesticks. With a little water and experience, this is easily possible.

Since high penalties for the use of limesticks and nets during the spring migration were introduced in Cyprus in 2017, we have seen a significant decrease in bird trapping. If poachers are caught during this time, they have to fear hefty fines ranging between 8,000 to 10,000 euros. For many, the business is no longer profitable.

LEBANON

Blow against bird trapping in Lebanon

Bird trapping with nets and limesticks is widespread in Lebanon, especially along the coastal region. In reed beds, fallow land or olive groves, numerous songbirds rest here on their way to Europe. In an operation near the coastal city of Anfeh, the teams of the Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS), together with our Lebanese partners MESHCA Anti-Poaching Unit and the Lebanese Internal Security Forces, dismantled three large trapping sites with a total of 269 limesticks and released >30 freshly caught birds. A net and two decoys were also confiscated by the officers. In the coastal city of Barja and in West Bekaa in the centre of the country, our teams also dismantled a total of 40 mist-nets in two operations together with police. Dozens of birds – including warblers, finches, Mediterra-

nean wheatears as well as a rare species including barred warbler, a grey ortolan bunting and a desert finch – were rescued.

For many European songbirds, migration ends on one of the numerous limesticks or in the nets of the bird trappers in Lebanon. Together with the Lebanese security forces, we were able to collect over 260 limesticks in April.



Stork and eagle shooting in the Cedar State



During our missions in Lebanon in March and April, we were able to document over 50 freshly shot storks and dozens of other cases involving the slaughter of short-toed eagles, honey buzzards and sparrowhawks.

The shooting of large protected migratory species continues to reach very concerning levels in Lebanon. In the north of the country alone, we found over 50 shot white storks within just a few days at the end of March 2025, including a bird ringed in the Czech Republic. A GPS tagged stork from Germany is still missing despite an intensive search by our



Lesser spotted eagles are particularly affected by poaching in Lebanon. Almost the entire global population passes through the cedar state twice a year, with thousands being illegally shot simply for 'sport'

teams. In a particularly serious case, a poacher was filmed and reported by us shooting and killing an endangered Lesser spotted eagle. The investigations are currently still ongoing. In downtown Beirut, we freed an illegally kept Golden eagle against considerable resistance from its owner – the bird was released in the mountains of southern Lebanon.

Swallows and songbirds under fire

On the eastern migration route, the birds passing through are stalked to an incredibly alarming extent. Along the



coast of Lebanon alone, thousands of hunters are out in force targeting songbirds. Particularly popular are black-caps and lesser whitethroats, barn swallows, tree pipits, masked shrikes, as well as wagtails, which are intended for consumption. In almost every suitable area in the Lebanese coastal strip, electronic decoys can be heard playing their songs and calls. No one can seriously quantify how great the ecological damage really is. During our checks, however, we repeatedly find that every single poacher shoots dozens of birds within just a few hours. Due to a lack of awareness of the problem and the gigantic dimension, police operations against songbird hunting are currently unthinkable in Lebanon. We must therefore limit ourselves to startling the perpetrators and confronting them. It's a long way to go in Lebanon.

Many songbirds in Lebanon are shot at like clay pigeons. In spring alone, hundreds of thousands of birds are illegally killed.

MISCELLANEOUS

Germany: Raptor persecution at a persistently high level

In the first five months of the year, several cases of illegal persecution of protected bird species have been reported to our head office in Bonn. In Dithmarschen (Schleswig-Holstein), a buzzard was poisoned with carbofuran, and four other white-tailed eagles, which were found dead not far from the site, are currently in a laboratory for toxicological screening. Other birds of prey, including several kestrels and a peregrine falcon, have been shot with air guns in Rhineland-Palatinate, North Rhine-Westphalia and Brandenburg. In Brandenburg, the nesting site of a peregrine falcon was also deliberately destroyed. Nesting site destruction by white-tailed eagles has also been reported from Lower Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein. At Neumünster,

EU gives green-light for turtle dove hunting

Over-hunting, together with habitat loss due to intensive agriculture, is the most significant cause of conservation concern for the turtle dove. After years of lobbying, the European Commission temporarily suspended hunting on the western migration route – Spain, Portugal, France and Italy – in 2021. With resounding success, because the populations of the highly endangered species have visibly begun to recover. This is now becoming the bird's undoing: Because of a small increase against a backdrop of decades of decline, from this autumn, hunters will be allowed to shoot hundreds of thousands of turtle doves again, bringing the bird back to the brink of extinction. The EU is caving into the powerful hunting lobby – a sad decision for bird protection in Europe and a wrong signal to many

Member States, which are already doing a lot to gradually undermine the EU Birds Directive.

Welcome back to the abyss: After a four-year break, the European Commission is once again allowing countries to shoot the endangered Turtle dove along the western migration route.



Successful operation: The police seized a prohibited hawk trap near Cologne, following a tip-off from the Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS). The perpetrator has confessed.

also in Schleswig-Holstein and near Cologne in North Rhine-Westphalia, two men were reported by CABS staff for using strictly forbidden hawk traps which were immediately confiscated by the police. So far, 22 cases of the more than 80 reported suspected cases of illegal persecution of birds of prey have been confirmed. The number of cases of illegal persecution of protected species is thus higher than in the same period in recent years.

50 years of the Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS)

When the first newspaper reports appeared in Germany in the mid-1970s regarding the unbelievable extent of migratory bird hunting in Italy, a small group of bird conservationists in Berlin decided to do something. On March 1, 1975, they founded 'Komitee gegen den Vogelmord e.V. – now known internationally as 'the Committee against Bird Slaughter (CABS). Half a century later, we are a Europe-wide organisation and a leader in the fight against illegal bird trapping and hunting. Every year, >250 volunteers from all over Europe and beyond come together for our bird protection camps in the Mediterranean region. You can read more about our history and evolution, our successes and challenges on our website here: www.komitee.de/en/about-us/our-history/



A team celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) in Malta.



**DONATE
FOR MIGRATORY
BIRD PROTECTION**

As a building breeder, the black redstart suffers from the renovation of old buildings, where nesting opportunities are lost. But not only that. In the Mediterranean region, this migratory species is also widely hunted – in Spain and Italy with snap traps, in Cyprus with limesticks and in Lebanon with guns! Like robins and blackcaps, they are considered a delicacy. During our bird protection camps, the Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) is committed to the protection of the black redstart.

Your Gift, Their Flight: help to protect migratory birds!

Every year, we organise over 30 bird protection camps and operations in eight different countries to protect our migratory friends from illegal shooting or trapping. Led by a small staff team, more than 250 volunteer bird conservationists travel to the bird poaching hotspots in the Mediterranean region to prevent illegal killing. We search and collect illegal trapping equipment and help the police and law enforcement agencies in their work against illegal bird trapping, shooting and trade. As a result of our fieldwork, hundreds of poachers are convicted each year, tens of thousands of traps are collected, and several thousand birds are freed from traps and nets!

Get active in migratory bird conservation

At the Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS), this means packing your bags and travelling to the Mediterranean. If you are physically fit, have courage and knowledge of ornithology and can speak English, you can take part in our

bird protection camps and become part of the team. Many of our operations are not without risk and require a certain amount of practice and skill in finding traps and nets. Dealing with armed poachers and law enforcement authorities is also a necessary skill. If this is not for you, you can also look out for illegal traps or trapping devices on your own doorstep or while on holiday. If you suspect poaching, please contact our office – we will process your report immediately.

Your donation fuels the fight against bird poaching!

You can also directly help us protect migratory birds from home. Our efforts to improve the protection of wild birds in Europe are mainly funded by tax-deductible donations. With your support, we organise our bird protection camps and campaigns against poaching and bird-trapping. You also have the opportunity to become a supporting member and receive regular reports on our missions. Every amount counts!

Donation accounts

German account \ \ SozialBank Köln \ \ IBAN DE61 3702 0500 0008 1255 00 \ \ BIC BFSWDE33XXX

Swiss account \ \ PostFinance AG \ \ IBAN CH20 0900 0000 6102 8944 8 \ \ BIC POFICHBEXX



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