

CABS & SPA SPRING 2022 BIRD PROTECTION CAMP IN CYPRUS FIELD REPORT



Photo 1: Limesticks with blackcaps caught - CABS & SPA Spring Bird Protection Camp 2022 in Cyprus

Committee Against Bird Slaughter

1. OVERALL RESULTS

In Spring 2022, CABS & SPA Bird Protection Camp lasted 25 days, from the 12th to the 28th of April and from the 5th to the 12th of May. Six bird protection activists from Italy, Slovenia and the United Kingdom participated at the camp.

The investigations concentrated on the blackspot for spring trapping, the Famagusta District in the Republic of Cyprus. Only marginal time was dedicated to monitoring the situation in the ESBA (Eastern Sovereign Base Area).

In total **22** trapping sites out of 176 checked were found active.

Table 1: Trapping activity recorded during CABS & SPA Spring Bird Protection Camp 2022 in Cyprus by jurisdiction

	Republic of Cyprus	ESBA	All
Trapping sites checked	175	1	176
Active trapping sites found	22	0	22

Table 2: Results of trapping investigations during spring Spring Bird Protection Camps 2012 – 2022 in Cyprus

CABS & SPA Spring Bird Protection Camp	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020*	2021	2022
Duration of field investigations (days)	24	31	37	36	43	44	70	50	-	36	25
N. of activists conducting field investigations	15	13	11	11	17	12	13	8	-	3	6
Limesticks found	5461	3371	2256	1470	1828	1835	448	286	-	586	342
Nets found	20	32	27	25	50	19	10	0	-	0	0
Callers found	17	16	10	10	13	9	5	1	-	4	2

* CABS & SPA Spring 2020 Bird Protection Camp was not carried out due to Covid-19 restrictions

2. ILLEGAL TRAPPING IN THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

During the spring camp of 2022, CABS teams found **22** active trapping sites in the Republic of Cyprus. Compared to the previous year, the total number of active trapping sites found decreased significantly (43 in 2021). Similarly, sites found active as a percentage of total sites checked also decreased (from 21.4% in 2021 to 12.6% in 2022).

However, it is worth noting that 2021 saw a particularly high number of trapping sites found compared to recent years, ending a steady downward trend that had been observed between 2016-2019 (with no camp in 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions). The results of the 2022 camp are therefore lower than the previous year, but remain higher than 2019.

In total **468** limesticks and **2** electronic decoys were found, of which **342** limesticks and the decoys were collected during the operations. **24** birds (blackcaps, house sparrow, barred warbler, great tit) were saved from traps and released back into the wild.

In Spring most of the trappers use limesticks. It is noticeable that the use of nets decreased since 2013 and that for the 3rd year in a row, in 2022 no net was found. This confirms the inferences drawn from observations in the field, that in spring almost no professional trapper is active but birds are caught for domestic consumption.

Table 3: Results of trapping investigations during spring CABS & SPA Spring Bird Protection Camps 2012 – 2022 in the Republic of Cyprus

CABS & SPA Spring Bird Protection Camp	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Trapping sites inspected	226	246	267	221	362	276	275	174	-	201	175
Active trapping sites	116	100	90	41	108	57	24	15	-	43	22
-Active sites with limesticks	106	81	75	32	98	55	23	15	-	43	22
-Active sites with nets	5	15	11	5	5	2	1	0	-	0	0
-Active sites with both or unknown method	5	4	4	4	5	0	0	0	-	0	0
Percentage of sites found active	51.3 %	40.7 %	33.7 %	18.6 %	29.8 %	20.7 %	8.7%	8.6%	-	21.4 %	12.6 %



Photo 2: Limesticks seized - CABS & SPA Spring Bird Protection Camp 2022 in Cyprus

3. EVALUATION OF THE ENFORCEMENT

In spring 2022 the cooperation with the Game and Fauna Service and police officers of local stations was successful: in total 12 sites of illegal trapping were reported to the authorities and the response was mostly positive. **9** criminals were prosecuted, 8 by the wardens of the Game and Fauna Service and 1 from the police.

Table 4: Quality of the responses of Game and Fauna Service and Police of local stations to illegal trapping reports

Action	Game wardens	Police
Prosecutions	8	1
Patrol non available	0	0
Operation failed/canceled	2	0
Only confiscation	1	0
TOTAL REPORTED SITES*	11	1

* One site was reported twice.



Photo 3: Barred warbler caught on a limestick - CABS & SPA Spring Bird Protection Camp 2022 in Cyprus

The following table shows the effectiveness of the investigations performed by the enforcement in the Republic of Cyprus by confronting the number of prosecutions out of totals of the trapping sites reported during springs 2016-2022. In 2016, 48% of the investigations at the reported trapping sites ended with a prosecution through the good cooperation between CABS and the Anti-Poaching Unit of Police (APS). The following years the police unit was weakened and eventually completely dismantled; this is reflected in the decreasing trend of the percentage of prosecutions.

CABS meanwhile started working with the Game and Fauna Service officers and continuously adapted its strategy to maximize its effectiveness in fieldwork and investigations. Before, CABS teams only located and reported the active trapping sites but in recent years we started carrying on also further investigations at every active site, by collecting the necessary evidence for a successful prosecution. This has increased practical support to game wardens and helped to identify and catch suspects in the act. The success of the new strategy is confirmed by the increase of the percentage of the prosecutions out of the number of reported cases (from 50% in 2019 to 75% in 2022).

Table 5: Reported cases of illegal trapping during CABS & SPA Spring Bird Protection Camps 2016 -2022 in the Republic of Cyprus

Spring Bird Protection Camp	2016*	2017	2018	2019	2021	2022
No. of trapping cases reported to the enforcement officers on duty	25	28	17	10	25	12
N. of prosecutions	12	5	4	5	17	9
Percentage of prosecutions out of reported sites	48%	17.9%	23.5%	50%	68%	75%

* In 2016 investigations and prosecutions only with police

4. REACTIVATION OF SITES AFTER PROSECUTIONS IN CYPRUS

Monitoring the reactivation of spring trapping sites following a successful prosecution can provide an indication of the efficacy of current enforcement and fines. Reactivation is measured as a percentage of trapping sites found active again, out of the total number checked with past prosecutions for spring trapping.

Between 2016 and 2019 there was a steady decrease in the percentage of reactivated sites. In the absence of CABS & SPA bird protection camp in spring 2020, the number of reactivated trapping sites increased the following year, 2021. However, the re-establishment of bird protection camps saw an immediate reduction in reactivation of trapping sites in 2022.

Table 6: Trapping sites with previous prosecutions found again active during CABS & SPA Spring Bird Protection Camps 2013 – 2022 in Cyprus

Spring Bird Protection Camp	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2021	2022
Trapping sites checked with previous prosecutions for spring trapping	11	16	26	41	32	34	21	38	35
Trapping sites found active with previous prosecutions for spring trapping	3	7	4	14	9	8	2	8	5
Percentage of trapping sites with previous prosecution for spring trapping found active	27.3 %	43.8 %	15.4 %	34.1 %	28.1 %	23.5 %	9.5%	21.1 %	14.3 %

4. CONCLUSIONS

In spring 2022 the trapping situation in the Republic of Cyprus appeared to have improved compared to the previous year. The number of trapping sites found active halved, even though it remained higher than 2019. The trend of the phenomenon depends on the fines imposed, but not solely. In 2020 CABS & SPA could not organise the spring camp due to covid restrictions and in 2021 poaching increased significantly: the new legislation with the provision of higher fines for spring trapping, alone, did not have a big deterrent effect. In 2021, CABS investigations and the effective cooperation with enforcement led to 17 prosecutions and consequently the following year, 2022, the trapping level decreased again. It is clear that higher fines constitute an important tool in the fight against bird poaching but need to be paired with constantly present enforcement.

It is worth noting that no nets were found during spring camp for three years in a row, confirming what appears to be a seasonal variation in the methods used by poachers. In autumn and winter, nets are the main method and are also used by professional trappers, whereas spring trappers use limesticks, primarily for domestic consumption.

The successful operations carried out by activists and the game wardens in spring 2022 are a sign of the good cooperation developed over years of activity, in which activists play a significant role in the gathering of information and supporting the game wardens with investigations, who have responded quickly to the reported activity.



Photo 4: Blackcap on a limestick - CABS & SPA Spring Bird Protection Camp 2022 in Cyprus