

BIRD TRAPPING IN CYPRUS

REPORT FROM THE FIELD

SPRING AND AUTUMN 2010



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SUMMARY

1) Non-selective bird trapping threatens indirectly or directly dozens of resident and migrant species of wild birds, the populations of which are either suffering a large decline or already have a vulnerable or even endangered status.

2) This phenomenon has become massive in the '60 with dozens of thousands of lime sticks and thousands of nets. The authorities have tried in 1985 and 2001 to clamp it down. After these operations poaching has decreased significantly, but the effort from the authorities has always been episodic. Normally a couple of years after the raids, poaching had increased to the former levels.

3) Considering that the last serious clamp down was taken on 2001, we have now one of the highest rates of trapping ever recorded. Non-selective bird trapping and killing has dramatically increased in both spring and autumn over the last ten years with a concomitant constant rise in the threat to the island's bird fauna.

4)The intensive scale of bird trapping in Cyprus can no longer be considered as a tradition; this illegal practice supports a whole industry of death for the rich bird fauna of the island. Millions of birds are trapped and killed every year, not in order to satisfy basic human needs, but in order to please the habit of a small minority of "delicacy lovers".

5) The illegal bird trapping supports the establishment and development of a well-organized criminal network, which plunders the common natural heritage of all Cypriot and European citizens. This criminal network has an annual budget of dozens of millions of Euros, due to the systematic violation of Cypriot and European legislation.

6) Criminal bird trapping negates democratic achievements and violates the environmental rights of citizens. The rights of protection and enjoyment of biodiversity and ecosystems are

strongly violated, as a handful of criminal gangs lead to the disappearance of dozens of resident and migrant wild bird species, while at the same time controlling large areas of the countryside of Cyprus, as well as large scale protected wilderness areas. Apart from the violation of environmental rights of law-abiding citizens, the escalation of poaching is directly related to dozens of serious criminal actions directed not only at national and foreigner protectionists, but also at the officers of public services and the representatives of the responsible authorities of the Republic of Cyprus.

7) The massive bird trapping is blackening the image of Cyprus abroad and damages irreparably tourism, which is the most vital and important sector of the national economy. At the same time, some of the most qualitative aspects of tourist services in the island, like ecotourism, agrotourism and bird-watching, are concealed behind the image of illegal, massive and non-selective bird trapping and killing, on one of the most important European migratory flyways.

8) The support and defence of poaching networks by particular politicians represents an extremely serious pathological phenomenon, which all democratic and progressive citizens must oppose. The support provided to poachers by these politicians maintains and strengthens pathological phenomena, such as populism and electioneering and political patronage. A policy of zero-tolerance towards illegal and non-selective bird trapping and killing is not only an aim for the protection of the environment, but is above all a mean of strengthening democracy.

INTRODUCTION

Despite the first alarm was already raised in the '80 and in the last 10 years many environmental organisations, from Cyprus and Europe, have directly intervened to combat bird poaching, this illegal phenomenon is still extremely widespread in the island. According to the data from the monitoring programme run by BirdLife, in 2010 we had the highest trapping rate since 2001, year of the last serious clamp down made by the authorities (during the EU accession), while CABS and FoE observe that the use of lime sticks has never decreased in the last 25 years, rather showing a marked increase in spring. Authorities have clearly failed in tackling bird-trapping and lime sticks and nets are ubiquitous in Cyprus.

Actually the seriousness of this matter is recognised and has been continuously stated in official and public documents. For instance in the *Fourth National Report of the Republic of Cyprus to the United Nations Convention on Biological Biodiversity* we read that “the illegal bird trapping of wild birds and animals threatens the biodiversity of species of Cyprus in general, as well as of migratory species” (pag. 34). On page 28 it is also reminded that Cyprus hosts 332 migrating bird species (out of 385) and that the island “constitutes one from the 8 most important migratory routes for the birds in Europe” (pag. 27).

In our view it is unacceptable that one of the most important migratory routes for birds in Europe, with some 150 millions of birds migrating in autumn (Flint and Stewart, 1983) is in fact a huge site for massive and non-selective bird trapping for over eight months a year.

It is difficult to figure out how many birds are caught every year in Cyprus (conservative estimates indicate 1.5 to 2.5 millions), but we can assume that some 1.200 nets and 15.000-45.000 limesticks are set out during the three main trapping season.

But bird trapping has not only a direct effect on birds; it harms the environment through the strong modification of the habitats and vegetation.

As the *Fourth National Report* states, in Cyprus a major environmental threat is posed by the invasive *Acacia saligna*, which is now being eradicated. What the Report does not mention, is that huge areas covered by this species have been planted by bird-trappers, in order to create a fast-growing, green area to lure birds and set netting installations. Cape Pyla, the main netting area, is a blatant example of this illegal practice.

On the other hand we would like to point out, that trappers not only have planted this invasive species, but also irrigate these artificial woodlands in the trapping areas to keep them green. A short visit to areas like Cape Pyla show how impressive is the labyrinth of pipes connecting the trees in the netting sites. In a country which suffers from water shortage due to over-exploitation of surface and ground water and which faces the risk of desertification, it is unacceptable that water is used to irrigate plantations of invasive exotic species, which are eradicated in other areas of the island.

FoE (Friends of Earth Cyprus) and CABS (Committee Against Bird Slaughter) have started a joint campaign in Autumn 2010 called “Stop poaching now!” in order to combat bird poaching through the direct removal of trapping paraphernalia, the cooperation with law enforcement agencies, the media work and the search for political representatives engaged against bird trapping. FoE has been dealing with this issue since the '80, being the first Cypriot association raising its concern about bird-poaching. The association can guarantee a continuous presence on the island and implement a network of contacts throughout the environmental organisations. CABS, which is monitoring the use of nets and limesticks since 2001, running anti-poaching camps, is using his accurate knowledge of the territory to achieve the most exact understanding of this phenomenon (areas, patterns, species affected, poachers' organisation, use of time and space)

The following report is aimed to provide informations collected on the field during the anti-poaching operations in spring and autumn 2010. The different patterns of trapping will be analysed according to the different seasons and the outcoming figures will be compared with data published by BirdLife Cyprus and the first known study, made by Magnin in 1986.

Nevertheless it is convenient to highlight here the main results:

1) Spring trapping (mostly with lime sticks) has been widely underestimated. Probably taking advantage of the tolerance of the authorities for traditional limesticks, bird trappers feel free to use every green patch in the area of famagusta for liming. The targeted birds are all in pre-nuptial migration.

2) In autumn bird trapping is more widely distributed, with the activation of new trapping hotspots (Cape Pyla, Avgorou, Agios Theodoros, Maroni) and the creation of professional trapping installations. The latter are organised and backed by surveillance squads, which patrol the territory, attacking every intruder, both police agent, protectionist or simple birdwatcher. This criminal control of the territory is well known and accepted by politicians.

We will also report on the political, legal and media frame through documents and testimonies gathered during and after our activities. In addition we will analyse how criminal organised poaching plunders democracy and the environmental rights of the citizens.

CAMPS' AIMS AND ACTIVITIES

General aims:

- 1) to promote effective implementation of Cypriot poaching legislation, especially concerning the non-selective trapping and killing of migrant and resident birds.
- 2) To ensure a safe path for migratory birds.

Specific goals:

- 1) Lobbying at the national level for the effective implementation of the ‘*Law 152(I) of 2003, amended by the Law 151(I) of 2006, on the Protection and Conservation of Wild Birds and Game Birds*’ and the ‘*Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the Conservation of Wild Birds.*’
- 2) Implement cooperation with law enforcement agencies
- 3) Conducting field research to gather information, images and other relevant data about illegal bird trapping and killing in Cyprus.

- 4) Raise awareness among the general public and decision makers by exposing poaching and opposing authorities' inaction, through press releases, public letters, media stories and online resources.
- 5) Use specific tactics of non violent and legal direct action, designed not only to change government policy or to shift the climate of public opinion through the media, but to change environmental conditions around us directly, through the tracking and dismantling of lime sticks, mist nets and electronic decoys.
- 6) Create an active national and transnational anti-poaching network that connect environmental organisations and activists, and mobilises them to take action aiming decision makers at the local, national and European level.

Activities:

- 1) Contacts and meetings with politicians and public authorities .
- 2) Call for back up and monitoring reactions, proactivity and response times of law enforcement agencies.
- 3) Search for trapping sites in known and new areas; record of the exact location, number of traps, time and number of caught birds. Pictures and videos.
- 4) Press releases, personal interviews and statements, online diary, signature collection.
- 5) Locating and dismantling poaching equipment, including lime sticks, mist nets, electronic decoys and associated materials, such as car batteries, cables etc
- 6) Contacts and meetings with representatives of environmental associations in Cyprus and abroad.

MONITORING OF KNOWN POACHING AREAS

In spring 2010 the activities of our teams were concentrated in the area of Famagusta. In our spring report, which was also published by the Minister of Environment, we stated that the total number of limesticks which according to our research are daily set out in the whole region (in the square area Cape Gkreko, Paralimni, Vrysoules and Xylophagou) are around 12.000-13.000 units.

This estimate is probably conservative since new informations¹ highlight that even in orchards inside the main towns of the region, limesticks are set and all these green areas are active trapping places. In our study we did not consider these gardens as potentially suitable for bird trapping.

In addition it is important to point out that our estimates refer to sites which were active every day at every hours. There are however trappers who trap only in the first two hours of the day, mainly during week-ends, switching places, who have not been considered in our estimate.

Nevertheless in spring report 2010 we stated that some 240 trapping sites (154 in orchards and 86 in scrub and maquis) are active in the whole area of Paralimni, Agia Napa and Protaras, while some 400 installations (282 in orchards and some 120 in

¹ One poacher claimed we could take away his sticks from his unfenced orchard in the countryside, but he would still set limesticks in the garden of his house in Paralimni. It is well known that during migrations birds use every single patch of green to rest and feed.

maquis) must be considered active in the whole region from Kabo Gkreko to Xylophagou.

Although in the spring report we processed these data to arrive at a total amount of limesticks, and through the spring average trapping rate $(1/5)^2$ to the total amount of birds caught, if we focus now on the number of liming places, it is astonishing to note that it closely resembles the number given by Magnin in 1986 for the main autumn trapping season. Magnin gives 270-300 active liming places in the area of Paralimni-Agia Napa-Protaras, while we suggest 240 places. In the following map are marked active liming sites from



Magnin (spring and autumn 1986) and CABS (spring 2010). Considering data raised by Magnin reliable, we must notice that liming in spring has now reached the 85% of the same levels of autumn lime trapping in 1986, when Magnin suggest that 1.000 people were occupied in liming every morning.

Although the average number of sticks set in autumn 1986 was 150 and now it is supposed to be 30, this data does not affect strongly the final result, since every trapper can expand the area or the trapping period in order to achieve the desired number of birds.

² Though Magnin (1986) states that the autumn trapping rate of limesticks is $\frac{1}{2}$ bird a day and BirdLife considers it halved in spring and winter, our estimate of $1/5$ comes from our field experience which takes account more of the average size of the trapping areas than of the number of traps set (non linear relationship between number of set traps and number of birds caught, as noted also in BirdLife's report spring 2010)

We therefore believe that spring trapping in Famagusta area has been strongly underestimated by the authorities and researchers: liming is widespread in March, April and May and every potential trapper has been setting limesticks out for the whole season at least in the last 24 years. Estimates made in our spring report 2010 (12,500 limesticks for 190.000 birds) are thus reliable, although probably conservative.

In Autumn 2010 our single team could not devote enough time to the extensive search of limesticks and nets in the area of Famagusta. On the 20th September, 2nd and 3rd October the searching team has spent 20 hours making sample checks of the known trapping areas: all places are active, but not in bigger scale than in spring. 700 limesticks were easily found in 10 locations.

What is striking is the activation of numerous new professional installation located through the use of the decoy in the night. We could also observe one case of morning trapping³ (the trapper had already collected his sticks at 7.30 a.m.) Due to the lack of further investigations, we can not express any estimate about autumn liming, but the combination of three factors: activation of new trapping site, widespread use of decoy, higher numbers of migrating birds makes us believe that the number of trapped birds is much higher than in spring.

In the next autumn season we will continue and increase our field research in the area.

About nets, we just found 1 net in autumn and 9 in spring. After our first operation in 2009, when we collected 33 nets, this number has decreased dramatically. We believe that our presence is working has a deterrent combined with the more efficient response of the authorities against nets.

Nets are still present in Famagusta area, but used episodically and thus difficult to spot and to determine their number.

BirdLife methodology is more reliable than ours in order to arrive at nets' figures.

MONITORING OF NEW POACHING AREAS

In spring 2009 and 2010 there were very few single cases of bird trapping in the area west of Liopetri and Vrysoules, in autumn 2010 we have concentrated our researches in new trapping areas, namely Agios Theodoros, Cape Pyla and, after a new recommendation, Avgorou.

Two half days and one night have been spent checking the area of Agios Theodoros and Maroni, one half day and one half night was spent in Cape Pyla and one half night was spent to control Avgorou. Nine nets have been found in Cape Pyla and four in Agios Theodoros. 230 limesticks were set in 5 different locations in Agios Theodoros.

³ The timing is important to understand which trapping pattern the team is about to witness: we have observed at least 3 different patterns of liming: the first one takes place in orchards, where sticks are set out in the morning and collected in the evening (not every day, according to the schedule of the owner), the second one takes place in orchard and scrub, where limesticks are left day and night and controlled once or twice by the trapper, the third one takes place mostly in scrub, where limesticks are set out before dawn and collected a couple of hours later. All these patterns have been observed to be used with the support of tape lures.

Cape Pyla

The area of the Cape is well known for being moulded for trapping purposes. Many acacia plantations have been planted and irrigated by trapper to host hundreds of nets. Limesticks are virtually absent from the area. During our surveys on the 29th September we checked two parts of the Cape, on the west and the east. In the west we walked covering some 400 square metres and finding 3 netting installations (4 set nets and 5 active net rides). At 5 p.m. we could hear two decoys singing. In one location 3 nets were set with the decoy.



In the eastern part we covered in the night by car and by foot some 3,000 square metres, finding 5 nets, 5 active net rides, 5 decoys and hearing a presumed total of 14 decoys.

Though the total estimate of decoys can not be completely exact, since one decoy can cover a second one set hundreds of meters behind it, during our monitoring we have tried to be as accurate as possible, calculating distance and exact position of our standing point and of the calling machine. This monitoring could have been much more accurate, if we had dismantled the machines, moving from one to the other, but the presence of trappers' vehicles, patrolling the zone has discouraged us.

On this basis, we would try to figure out the presumed number of trapping installations present in Cape Pyla. It seems likely that decoys are set each 200 square metres ($3,000/14$



which fits with the result of the afternoon of 2 decoys heard in a 400 square metres). Being Cape Pyla 16,848 square metres, we would have 84 decoys ($16,848/200=84$) in use in the Cape. If every decoy accompany in average 3 nets (in our 4 cases we have 1/3, 1/1, 1/4, 1/4), we would have a total amount of 252 nets set out during the autumn season just in the Cape. This estimate is necessarily vague, since our data are not complete and the methodology followed can lead to errors of estimation. There can be also nets set out without decoy in the area, so our estimate is conservative. **Nevertheless we believe that we are not away from the truth, if you state that between 250 and 300 nets are located in the area, causing the death of some 300.000-400.000 birds during September and October (20 birds per 12 metres long net per day).**



Agios Theodoros

This area is traditionally considered as the second hotspot for liming and netting. Magnin observed in 1986 that spring trapping is virtually absent in the area, whereas both liming and netting are quite widespread in autumn. CABS has found nets and limesticks in the past spring seasons, but in single spots, never in huge numbers. Further investigations are required, though. In autumn 2010 our search team has spent some 18 hours (12 during day, 6 in the night) in order to locate trapping devices. The operations were restricted to the area around Agios Theodoros and just partially the area east of Maroni. The following map shows the trapping places active in autumn 1986 compared with our data from 2010.

In Agios Theodoros valley we have 2 netting places (3 in 1986), 12 liming places (9 in 1986). In the coastal area between the two valleys we have 3 netting places (4 in 1986). Considering that Magnin spent 13 days in the area and our team just 2, we believe that our sample search proves that trapping in autumn is still common, although not as much as it is in the Eastern part of the island (Famagusta, Cape Pyla and Avgorou). In October 2010 a police raid in Agios Theodoros seized some 3.800 dead birds from restaurants owners.



We would like to point out that even in Agios Theodoros we had to face a professional poaching activity, though limited. Eastern of the village we found a trapper surveilling his night decoy (who eventually escaped as our team showed up in force). In a second spot, where a decoy was singing we observed a car patrolling the area, which immediately drove up towards us, when we stopped in proximity of the singing device and eventually stalked us forcing us to leave the area.

Avgorou

Avgorou was not known to be an important trapping area, even if roughly included in the Famagusta trapping area. In our previous operations we never searched deeply this area and some sample searches never brought important results.

We decided to check this area for night decoys on the night between the 1st and the 2nd of October, after a suggestion given by people in Paralimni.

We could search just for 1 hour, spotting 8 decoys: the rest of the night was spent trying to avoid trappers' cars patrolling the area, contacting police and writing an official complaint in the police office of Xylophagou.





To give a figure of the seriousness of autumn poaching in the area, we would like to use here the same methodology of the transect employed for cap Pyla. Again, we do not claim to give exact figures, but we try to give an account of the magnitude of trapping in the area.

We estimated that the area surrounding Avgorou is some 49,000 square metres, of whom we checked 4,500 (see figure on the left). Having located 8 decoys in this area, we thus believe that the density of night decoy in the area is 1 decoy every 560 square metres. That would be, some 88 decoys in the whole area.

In the only case, where we could approach the trapping devices, we observed 2 nets,

whereas other orchards seemed to be more apt for liming. In addition we should consider trapping places, which we could not discover due to the lack of decoys calling. We though believe that some 150 trapping places are active around Avgorou with probably 200 nets (100 places with 2 nets each) and 1.500 limesticks (50 places with 30 limesticks each). **Around Avgorou it is likely that 258.000 birds are caught every autumn** (200 nets x 60 days x 20 birds + 1.500 sticks : 5 x 60 days) through both nets and limesticks.

TRENDS AND PATTERNS OF BIRD TRAPPING

In this chapter we would like to resume and summarize what we have observed about trapping in these years of operations, not only in the trend of trapping, but also in the pattern and reaction of trappers to our activities.

Trend: netting on Cyprus seems to have always followed a waded progression, with continuous increases after the repression by the authorities. In 1974 catching of small birds was prohibited, but illegal trapping was so blatant (25 millions birds caught)⁴ that the authorities stroke in 1985, reducing trapping. In the following years trappers increased their activity again (from 2.2 to 12 millions birds caught), until in 2002 there was a second clamp down by the authorities with some 130 cases brought to the court (plus 25 cases of restaurants). According to BirdLife Cyprus numbers of traps decreased dramatically in 2002 but have increased progressively in the following years reaching their actual top in autumn 2010.

CABS, which has concentrated his activities during the spring season, shares the same general view, with a difference about limesticks: the number of liming sites (concentrated in Famagusta area) has never sunk like nets, but has maintained a high standard throughout the years. That is, limesticks trappers have never been really discouraged from trapping. Data comparison from 1986, 2001 and 2010 show that liming has never decreased, but remained in full blow through the years and season. Leaving by side the low numbers of Magnin for spring 1986, we observe that autumn 1986 had the same density of liming sites as spring

⁴ These estimates actually refer to both netted and limed birds, but nets have a higher trapping rate than limesticks, thus accounting for the most part of trapped animals

2001, spring 2002, spring 2009 and 2010. We still need to find out exactly how higher are the numbers for autumn 2010.

Patterns of liming: trappers trap following three different patterns. Many of them set the sticks in their orchards in the morning (before going to work or before starting working in their garden) and collect them in the evening to prevent damage through night humidity. Those who use public land, i.e. scrub and maquis, usually leave the sticks day and night. Sometimes they actively catch also in the night through the help of a decoy. (There are also many cases of orchards where limesticks are left through the night, probably according to the disponibility of time of the trapper). A third group are the limers who trap just in the early morning, from 6 a.m. to 8 a.m., sometimes with the use of the decoy to improve the captures. This last group is a minority, probably due to the major effort that this trapping pattern requires.

Patterns of netting: nets can be left set day and night (passive trapping) or can be set in the morning and used for a hour with the help of a decoy and of the trapper which tries to lure birds into the nets (active trapping). It seems that active trapping is the most widespread technique in Cape Pyla in autumn, while passive trapping is more in use in all other places and seasons.

Professional trapping and organized crime: professional trapping takes place also in spring with huge installations (up to 400 limesticks and 6 nets, as observed in spring 2009 and 2010 in Paralimni, Vrysoules, Maroni and Protaras), but it is obviously concentrated in Autumn. This is easily observed through the number of active decoys calling in the night and the criminal organisation built up by trappers. The same strategy was observed in Cape Pyla, Avgorou, Agia Napa and Maroni, that is:

- 1) Car or cars patrolling the territory in the night. Being the decoys easy to spot, trappers drive around surveilling decoys, nets and responding to every car which approaches the area.
- 2) People waiting in the night in proximity of the decoy with or without weapons and with concealed face.
- 3) Intruders are stalked by car or threatened with deaths by shooting in the air or screaming death threats.
- 4) Land owners (mainly foreigners) whose plantations are apt for trapping and thus used by trappers, are threatened with death in case they call the police, the activists or remove nets and decoy.

On 31st January 2011 during a discussion in the Parliamentary Commission on Economics, the Head of the Game Fund, Pantelis Hadjiyerou, admitted that poaching and especially illegal bird trapping is controlled by the organised crime. Maria Kyriakou, MP from the Nicosia District of the liberal-wing party admitted that "Illegal hunting of any bird or other animal is controlled by the organised crime". Moreover, the MP of the Green Party stated that "poaching is closely related with the organised crime", while at the same time the President of the Committee also mentioned that "We are now talking about a market, with an annual budget of dozens of millions, which unfortunately is now controlled by the organised crime".

Reactions: it is important to point here out that the presence of law enforcement agents and activists on the territory does have a deterrent effect on trappers. Despite 40 years of illegality and violent acts by trappers, they do fear prosecution. After the raids by the police trappers have really dropped their activity for some time. When CABS started removing nets in Famagusta area in 2009, we had a strong decrease in 2010 (from 33 to 9 nets). If there were a

real and continuous presence of law enforcement agents and controls were implemented and not only episodic, we believe that the trapping could be easily clamped down.

CONTACTS WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

During the 2 camps in 2010 we have given priority to strengthen contacts with law enforcement agencies, namely the Game Fund, the Anti Poaching Squad, the Police Station of Paralimni and the SBA. We believe that these police forces are the only ones who can find a definitive solution to the trapping problems and that the engagement of environmental activists does not constitute but the social input for these forces to act.

In spring 2010 we reported 8 trapping locations to the authorities. The one we reported to the SBA police was successfully dealt with. The offender was prosecuted and fined. The 7 cases we reported to the Game Fund/Anti-Poaching Squad /Paralimni Police were not successful. Officers redirected us continuously during 7 days and just after the accident (violent aggression by poachers in Paralimni on the 30th of April) the game Fund took action.

Only in one case the offender was fined and that happened just by chance, because he drove to the fenced garden, while we were leaving. In all other cases, even if limesticks were catching and visible from outside the fence, the policemen had to leave, since the owner was not (or pretended not to be) in the property.

The difference between SBA police and the law enforcement agencies of the Republic was striking: in the first case we had a prompt response and prosecution of the offender, in the second case we had a **late and non-proficient reaction** (due to legal problems as well).

We would like to note here that prosecution of offenders it is very hard even in fenced gardens without a well organised operation: if the law requires the presence of the owner on his ground, the only way to prosecute trappers is for policemen to wait for them on the spot and ambush them, when they set or collect traps and birds.

If similar targeted operations are not carried systematically on by law enforcement agencies, trapping will remain an unpunishable activity.

Finding date	Locality	Trapping device	Contact with authorities, follow up	Waiting time
25.04.2010	Protaras, Northern roundabout	Limesticks in fenced garden	1) 27.04.2010, 9:25 a.m. Call to Game Fund, none answers, we leave a message. 2) 27.04.2010, 9:35 a.m. Call to Anti-Poaching-Unit, the policeman says, he has no time and that we should call the Game Fund. 3) 28.04.2010, 10:55 a.m. Call to Game Fund, still no answer 4) 30.04.2010, 9:30 a.m. Meeting with the Chief of Police of Paralimni. He promises to send a patrol for the 03.05. 5) 03.05.2010, 10:20 a.m. Call to the Chief of Police of Paralimni for the patrol. He declines and suggests to call the Game Fund. 6) 03.05.2010, 2:30 p.m., Call to Game Fund. They promise a patrol for the following day. 7) 04.05.2010, we take the Game Fund patrol to the garden. Policemen refuse to approach the garden to check for the limesticks, because there are people in the property.	7 days

25.04.2010	Protaras, new residential area, West	Limesticks in 2 fenced garden	1-6) like in previous case 7) 04.05.2010, we take the game Fund to the gardens. In the first one the limesticks are not there anymore, in the second one they are with many caught birds. Policemen claim they cannot do anything, since the owner is not there and leave. On the way out we casually meet a car driving in: being the owner policemen prosecute the man and seize the limesticks.	7 days
26.04.2010	Agia Napa North	Limesticks in 2 fenced garden	1-6) like in previous case 7) 04.05.2010, policemen of Game Fund have to go to the police station to prosecute the trapper just caught. They have no time to follow us in these 2 gardens.	No reaction
26.04.2010	Paralimni, Souteastern roundabout	Limesticks in fenced garden	1-6) like in previous case 7) 04.05.2010, the garden is fenced and the owner is not inside (but the gate is opened and the fence just 1 meter high). Policemen tend to leave, but after observing 3 golden orioles and dozens of birds hanging from the sticks, they decide to enter the property and seize the sticks.	7 days
27.04.2010	Protaras, mainroad	Limesticks in fenced garden	1-6) like in previous case 7) 04.05.2010, garden is fenced and high, the owner not inside. We can see the limesticks with birds. Policemen decide to leave the place and ask for a warranty.	7 days
30.04.2010	Xylophagou, West	Limesticks and electronic decoy in fenced garden	- 30.04.2010, 5:00 a.m., Call to SBA police - 30.04.2010, 6:00 a.m., a patrol comes and catches the two trappers in the house with limesticks and decoy	1 hour

In autumn 2010 we could observe a different and much more welcome attitude by the authorities. CABS and particularly FoE were in contact with the authorities during the whole month of September. The Ministers of Environment, Justice and Interior, the Game Fund, Police, SBA and Anti Poaching Squad were contacted before, during and after the operations 25 times (per phone, mail, letter, meetings).

The response time were partially better, as shown in the following table:

Finding date	Locality	Trapping device	Contact with authorities, follow up	Waiting time
28.09.2010	Sotira	not fenced garden with lime sticks	5.30 p.m.: trap found and police called 6.00 p.m.:agents are in Sotira, but do not find the meeting place 6.15 p.m.: we meet 6.20 p.m.: agents set waiting for the landowner to come Follow up: the landowner does not come in the evening. Agents dismantle the traps	50 minutes
29.09.2010	Sotira	decoys and armed patrol in Sotira	03:20 a.m. Locating 2 decoys (Mr. Charambolous and Coen) 03:30 a.m. Poachers patrol arrives 03:35 a.m. Poachers patrol leaves 03:40 a.m. Poachers patrol arrives 03:40 a.m. Calling the Police Station in Deryneia 03:50 a.m. Poachers leave 03:55 a.m. 2 shots by the poachers 04:00a.m. Activists leave the scene Follow up: Police never showed up	No reaction
29.09.2010	Paralimni	tree full of traps in a cultivated hedgerow	6.30 p.m.: traps found 6.48 p.m.: Mr. Papastylianou from FoE calls the police 6.52 p.m.: police is contacted 7.02 p.m.: police confirms that a patrol is coming 7.32 p.m.: we meet and move to the spot 7.53 p.m.: traps are removed	1.23 hour
29.09.2010	Protaras	bushes full of traps	8.25 p.m.: we call the police 8.53 p.m. : a patrol comes. After knowing that they have to walk 5 minutes, they say: "You can remove the traps, they are not in private land". They leave. During dismantle of the traps, a car	No intervention

			shows up, but after seeing people and lights, is leaving the scene.	
30.09.2010	Pyla	decoys with set mist nets	30.09.2010: Mist nets and decoys in Cape Pyla, guarded by poachers 01.10.2010, 10.30 a.m.: CABS meeting with the SBA Police. Follow up: They would try to send patrols on the weekend and provide us with feedback. Never sent	No intervention
01.10.2010	Agios Theodoros	decoy calling	03.40 a.m.: found 2 decoys. Trapper escapes in the night 03.48 a.m.: called police 04.02 a.m.: a patrol is sent 04.10 a.m.: comes the police 04.24 a.m.: we are on the spot. We show the 2 decoys 05.22 a.m.: 1 decoy removed. We are in the station 05.52 a.m.: We have written the denounce and we leave Follow up: the landowner of the second decoy says that he has nothing to do with trapping and that someone else placed the decoy in his orchard. Police investigations stopped	30 minutes
01.10.2010	Agios Theodoros	lime sticks in public land	07.00 a.m.: lime sticks found 07.10 a.m.: police send a patrol 07.53 a.m.: start removing	50 minutes
01.10.2010	Agios Theodoros	lime sticks in fenced property with owner inside	08.20 a.m.: lime sticks found 08.20 a.m.: the patrol is already with us and says, they will wait until the owner shows up. Police calls the president of the community's village, who calls the owner to open the gate of the fenced orchard. An officer of the Game Fund arrives and with the two police officers is dismantling the lime sticks. Follow up: The owner claims that he is from Nicosia, went to his property to water his plants and knows nothing of the sticks. He claims that someone got into the fenced property and placed the lime sticks	0 minutes
01.10.2010	Agios Theodoros	lime sticks in an open orchard	10.16 a.m.: lime sticks found 10.20 a.m.: we call the police 4 times in 2 hours. The police pass us to the Game Fund who never comes.... not even answers the calls (7 calls within almost 2 hours)... According to the Police, the only patrol of the Game Fund was in Lefkara and was investigating another case, but it would come within 30 minutes 12.05 a.m.: We call and say, we dismantle ourselves. Policeman says: "do what you want, if they do not come...I helped you this night, this morning.... now I have other cases to handle..."	No reaction
02.10.2010	Avgorou	decoys, mist nets, shot guns, balaclavas	01:00 a.m.: Arrival to Avgorou. Decoys calling 01:35 a.m.: First call to Avgorou Police Station – Not answering because is not open at night 01:37 a.m.: Second call to Famagusta Regional Headquarters – connecting with Xylophagou Police Station. One police officer in duty with two other cases: one car accident and two drunken guys. He says that he will inform the Game Fund Patrol 01:47 a.m.: Call back from Xylophagou Police Station. He called the Game Fund Patrol, inform them and they will arrive soon. 02:17 a.m.: Third call to Xylophagou Police Station – Nobody is coming 02:35 a.m.: Call by the other team in Sotira 02:36 a.m.: The team in Sotira calls the Direct Action Line – Police Headquarters are suggesting to call the police station in Deryneia 02:39 a.m.: The team in Sotira calls the Deryneia Police Station and they say that they will send a patrol 03:05 a.m.: Fourth call to Police Headquarters – Decoys singing beside the phone 03:08 a.m.: Fifth call to Game Fund Larnaca. Nobody is answering 03:09 a.m.: Sixth call to two Game Fund Patrol Lines. Both are not answering 03:20 a.m.: The team in Avgorou goes to meet the team in Sotira. They find the patrol in their way, but the police officer of Deryneia cannot be engaged either in Sotira or Avgorou, due to the fact that the responsible police station for these areas is Xylophagou 03:26 a.m.: Seventh call to two Game Fund Patrol Lines. One is not answering and the other is switched off	No reaction

			<p>03:27 a.m.: Eighth call to Xylophagou Police Station – Nobody is coming</p> <p>03:35 a.m.: Ninth call to two Game Fund Patrol Lines. One is not answering and the other is switched off</p> <p>03:45 a.m.: Meeting of both teams in Avgorou to dismantle nets</p> <p>04:00 – 04:05 a.m.: Poaching patrol threatens activists</p> <p>04:45 a.m.: Arrival to Xylophagou Police Station</p> <p>05:00 – 05:35 a.m.: Official testimony by Mr. Papastylianou</p> <p>05:40 – 06:05 a.m.: Official testimony by Mr. Charalambous</p> <p>Follow up: Supplementary testimony by Mr. Charalambous, on Saturday, 23th of October 2010, between 14:15 and 15:30. Visit to the area with two police officers and pointing out of the place. Search warranty is issued by the Famagusta Regional Headquarters and Xylophagou Police Station. Nothing has been found. The case goes to court</p>	
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This table clearly shows that, even if patrols and policemen are personally willing to intervene on this problem, the law enforcement system is not proficiently structured to cope with trapping. We point out here the most important points:

- 1) Police has asked the activists not to remove directly the traps to avoid confrontation, but no law enforcement agency has been able to follow the number of findings we had daily. In Agios Theodoros we were left alone after the second intervention. We usually find 7-10 trapping locations per day.
- 2) When police swiftly intervenes does not do anything more than removing traps, without making serious efforts to catch poachers red-handed. They disturb poaching more than tackling it. A different strategy is needed.
- 3) Agents are scared of trappers, as often stated. It is well known that both in the Republic and in the SBA, trappers threaten and beat agents while in duty. During the raid by the Anti-Poaching Squad in Agios Theodoros, some persons attacked, stalked policemen, being later even supported by MEPs.
- 4) In the night, when it is easy to spot trapping sites through the decoys, there is no police activity. Game Fund were unavailable, whereas the police could not cope with the situation, being undermanned.
- 5) Two raids against trappers and restaurants have been organised in the SBA and in Agios Theodoros. They happened in late October, whereas trappers were active since the begin of September. When disturbed, trappers were anyway left free to operate for 40 days out of 60 days of migration.

Tackling bird trapping could be an easy issue, if authorities invested more energy and time on it. Places and timings of the trappers are well known. If law enforcement agencies developed a joint strategy raiding restaurants and ambushing trappers during their activity, trapping would decrease and eventually disappear.

If the police does not concentrate on this issue, but just seizes occasionally traps without looking for offenders, or organises a single important raid, being then dissuaded from continuing in other areas, it is quite obvious that in whole Cyprus lacks a real political will to implement the legislation. This is nothing new, since many MEPs especially coming from Famagusta area have officially stated that trapping must be “tolerated”. This same attitude is held by the Cyprus Hunting Federation (member of FACE), which blatantly supports illegal trapping.

In 2010 one politician even suggested in the press, without any proof, hint or document, that foreigner activists are paid by the Turkish government to discredit the Republic of Cyprus.

Considering the sensitive situation of the country, we believe that these infamous accusations are extremely serious and can set in danger the life of activists.

The Cyprus Embassy has recently published some official documents stating that: “we wish to note that between 2004 and 2010 just in the district of Larnaka and Famagusta, where trapping is widespread, we brought more than 700 cases for Court, denouncing 1,073 offenders. In the same time 3.040 nets, 6,328 limesticks and 610 tape lures have been seized”.

We wish to note that this estimate means an average of 70 cases per year, with 904 limesticks seized and 434 nets. About limesticks we note that 900 limesticks are easily collected in spring in 2 days of work, whereas the 70 cases⁵ per year is a too small minority compared with thousand of trappers. The simple fact that trappers have continued everywhere for 40 years with their illegal activities shows that the implementation of the law is far from being achieved.

⁵ In the *Fourth National Report of the Republic of Cyprus to the United Nations Convention on Biological Biodiversity* we read though that 250 cases of illegal trapping are reported every year by the competent authority and violators are taken to court”.