



## Field Report: Autumn 2015 Bird Protection Camp, Cyprus



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*Autumn 2015 Bird Protection Camp*

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**Cover photos:**

Photos of dozens of artists, journalists, academics and intellectuals participating in the public awareness campaign “*Protect Birds, Not Poachers – Zero Tolerance Against Illegal Bird Killing*” («Προστατέψτε τα Πουλιά, Όχι τη Λαθροθηρία – Μηδενική Ανοχή Ενάντια στην Παράνομη Θανάτωση Πουλιών»). The public awareness campaign was organized by the Cypriot Citizens’ Initiative *Zero Tolerance Against Songbird Poaching in Cyprus* and was supported by local and international environmental non-governmental organisations, namely Πτηνολογικός Σύνδεσμος Κύπρου – *BirdLife Cyprus*, Komitee gegen den Vogelmord e.V. – *Committee Against Bird Slaughter* / CABS, Κυπριακό Ίδρυμα Προστασίας του Περιβάλλοντος *Terra Cypria – Cyprus Conservation Foundation Terra Cypria*, Φίλοι της Γης Κύπρου – *Friends of the Earth Cyprus* and Stiftung Pro Artenvielfalt / SPA – *Foundation Pro Biodiversity*) [<sup>1</sup>].

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## 1 SUMMARY

Between September and October 2015, the Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) and the Foundation Pro Biodiversity (SP Stiftung Pro Artenvielfalt) conducted their 5th Autumn Bird Protection Camp (BPC) in Cyprus. The camp started on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September and ended on the 18<sup>th</sup> of October. **During the camp, 262 trapping sites were checked, 164 (62.6%) of which were found active with set traps or evidence of recent trapping activity** (e.g. birds' feathers or blood on the ground, lime on the trees, etc.). **In total, 3315 limesticks, 163 mist nets and 79 electronic decoys were found this autumn.** The cooperation with police units led to **38 prosecutions**: 26 by the Cyprus Police Anti-Poaching Squad (APS) and 12 by the Anti-Poaching Unit (APU) of the British Eastern Sovereign Base Area (ESBA) Police.

Despite these results, data analysis shows a situation still out of control in both the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) and the British ESBA. Once again there was a significant disproportion between the number of trapping sites located by our teams every day and the capacity of response of law enforcement units, kept constantly undermanned.

The number of seized mist nets was the highest ever recorded by CABS and an astounding 83% of previously prosecuted trapping sites were active again. The levels of trapping in autumn are showing the first signs of decreasing within the RoC, with the number of limesticks at their lowest level and a minor percentage of active trapping sites.

However, even these slightly positive trends seem condemned to fail, considering the efforts made by the authorities of the Republic of Cyprus to reverse the progress made in the past few years, which is primarily a result of the cooperation between the law enforcement agencies and Environmental Non-Governmental Organisations (ENGOS).

During the BPC, without any warning and breaking written agreements, the number of hours assigned to the APS for joint cooperation was reduced by 4 hours daily, so that 56 hours of joint work were lost. This lack of will in the implementation of the law is also shown by the fact that, after two whole years of consultation on the formulation of the "*Strategic Plan for Tackling Illegal Trapping of Wild Birds in Cyprus*", the Ministry of Interior decided to submit a totally different "*Strategic Plan*" to the Council of Ministers. As a result, on the 13 May 2015, the Council of Ministers adopted an unacceptable version of the "*Strategic Plan*", which includes the so-called "*Alternative Planning*" for the legalization, with a derogation, of selective hunting of a protected species, *Sylvia atricapilla*. **This decision by the Government of the Republic of Cyprus demonstrates that the authorities haven't been honestly committed to the adoption of, nor have they been seriously engaged in the implementation of a 'zero tolerance' policy against illegal trapping, killing and trade of protected wild birds in Cyprus.**

**After years of inadequate implementation of the provisions of the *EU Birds Directive*, as well as the *Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats*, CABS and SPA believe that the time has come for the authorities of the Republic of Cyprus to either fulfil their conventional obligations or face the legal challenges of their decisions, statements and actions, which are blatantly violating national legislation, EU directives and international conventions on the elimination of illegal killing and trade of birds.**



## 2 INTRODUCTION

In 2015, the 5<sup>th</sup> Autumn BPC was organised by CABS and SPA in Cyprus. It started on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September and ended on the 18<sup>th</sup> of October.

CABS and SPA are organizing BPC's in spring, autumn and winter seasons to prevent illegal trapping and killing of birds in Cyprus. Based on the empirical findings of its continuing monitoring programme, Birdlife Cyprus estimates that more than 2.5 million birds could have been killed in 2014 in Cyprus [2].

BPCs have three main objectives:

- To locate and report as many illegal trapping installations as possible to the relevant law enforcement agencies, in order to arrest poachers who have been caught red-handed, confiscate trapping paraphernalia and ensure a safe passage on migration for birds;
- To collect data and evaluate the true impact of the massive use of non-selective trapping methods – such as limesticks, mist nets and electronic decoys – on wild bird populations and species;
- To collect data and assess the strategies and efforts implemented by the relevant law enforcement agencies to tackle illegal bird trapping, killing and trade in Cyprus.

CABS and SPA are always seeking for the cooperation and support of the relevant authorities and law enforcement agencies to assist them in combating illegal bird trapping, killing and trade.

## 3 AUTUMN 2015 BIRD PROTECTION CAMP METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 PARTICIPANTS

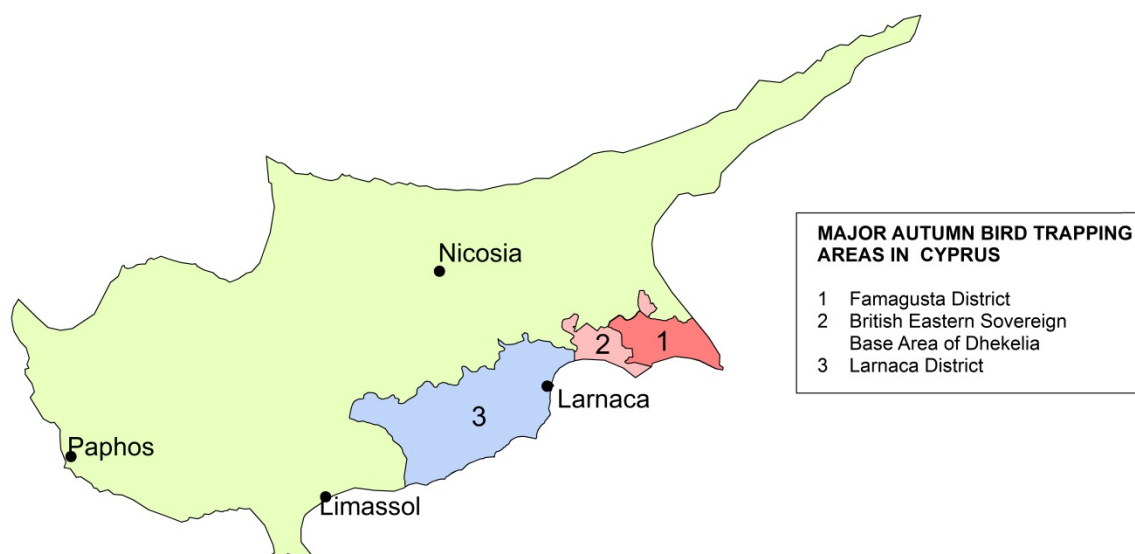
A total of 22 volunteers from Cyprus, Germany, United Kingdom, Italy, Slovenia and Switzerland participated in the camp. Most of them had previously participated in a BPC in Cyprus and had good knowledge of the area.

### 3.2 WORKING SCHEDULE AND AREAS

Joint operations with the Cyprus Police, APS, were organised every day between 9<sup>th</sup> of September and 9<sup>th</sup> of October. Investigations of trapping activities were concentrated in Famagusta and Larnaca Districts (Figure 1), where most of bird trapping occurs.

CABS and SPA worked together with the APU of the British ESBA Police for 7 days, between 16<sup>th</sup> of September and 14<sup>th</sup> of October. Cape Pyla was avoided because we were told the area was patrolled by the army. Trapping activity is scattered in the whole ESBA, but it is more intense in the areas of Cape Pyla and Ayios Nikolaos.

Joint fieldwork with the law enforcement agencies was conducted mainly late at night and early in the morning hours, when trapping activity is easiest to detect.



**Figure 1: Main areas for autumn bird trapping in Cyprus**

## 4 RESULTS OF AUTUMN 2015 BIRD PROTECTION CAMP

### 4.1 MONITORING OF TRAPPING ACTIVITY

Over the past seven years, from spring 2008 to autumn 2015, CABS and SPA (together with the other ENGOs that are monitoring illegal bird trapping in the field, namely BirdLife Cyprus and Migratory Birds Conservation in Cyprus – MBCC) located and listed 1130 trapping sites.

In autumn 2015, both during independent investigation by CABS/SPA volunteers and joint fieldwork with the competent police agencies, our teams monitored 262 trapping sites. Of the 262 sites checked, 164 sites (62.6%) were found active, either with set traps or with signs of recent trapping.

**Table 1: Comparison of trapping activity detected within last five Autumn BPCs**

Autumn season	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Duration of Bird Protection Camp (days)	9	17	24	28	40
No. of sites checked	143	227	247	186	262
No. of active trapping sites found	99	132	170	135	164
Percentage of active trapping sites	69.2	58.1	68.8	72.6	62.6

The percentage of trapping sites found active this autumn shows a slight decrease in autumn trapping activity over the past 5 years, especially when compared with 2013 and 2014 (Table 1).

Out of 164 trapping sites found active this autumn, 74 (45.1%) sites were new, with no records of trapping in the past, and 90 (54.9%) sites had been found active in previous seasons. The percentage of new trapping sites found is higher in comparison with previous autumn seasons (autumn 2013 - 34% and autumn 2014 - 37%). This can be explained by the more extensive and intensive field investigation made in new areas, which have previously been unvisited. Also many trappers, who have been located and prosecuted in past BPCs by CABS/SPA monitoring teams and the law enforcement agencies, are abandoning their detected trapping sites and are moving to new trapping points.

#### 4.1.1 FAMAGUSTA DISTRICT IN THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

Famagusta District is known as the major hotspot for illegal bird trapping in the territory of the Republic of Cyprus. Due to the high number of active trapping sites found, almost all of our field investigation work in previous years was concentrated in this district. This autumn, 152 out of 262 checked trapping sites, were located in this district. Out of 152, 75 trapping sites were found active.

**Table 2: Monitoring of trapping activity in Famagusta District within last five Autumn BPCs**

Autumn season	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
No of sites checked	134	187	204	151	152
No. of active trapping sites found	91	98	133	83	75
Percentage of active trapping sites	67.9	52.4	65.2	55.0	49.3

We are observing a positive trend with trapping activity steadily decreasing in the past five years (Table 2). This autumn it was record low with 49.3% of all checked sites found active.

#### 4.1.2 LARNACA DISTRICT IN THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

In Larnaca District we increased monitoring of trapping activity this autumn in regard to previous years. 68 trapping sites were checked and 49 of them (72.1%) were found active.

**Table 3: Monitoring of trapping activity in Larnaca District within last five Autumn BPCs**

Autumn season	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
No of sites checked	6	11	28	44	68
No. of active trapping sites found	5	7	22	43	49
Percentage of active trapping sites	83.3	63.6	78.6	97.7	72.1

With 72.1%, trapping activity is extremely high, especially if compared with trapping activity in Famagusta District (49.3%). The main reason for this very high percentage of active sites is the fact that many areas within this district were visited for the first time.

#### 4.1.3 THE BRITISH EASTERN SOVEREIGN BASE AREA

The ESBA is one of the two British Sovereign Base Areas (SBAs) in Cyprus. Within the ESBA, bird trapping is widespread and extremely professional. Cape Pyla is the most notorious trapping area in the whole of Cyprus. We estimated, that 300-400 mist nets were used for trapping last autumn just in this small area [3]. CABS/SPA presence in ESBA was sparse and sporadic in the past. This autumn cooperation was strengthened with the APU of the British ESBA Police and consequently increased the monitoring of trapping sites within the area.

**Table 4: Monitoring of trapping activity in ESBA within last five Autumn BPCs**

Autumn season	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
No of sites checked	3	29	14	7	38
No. of active trapping sites found	3	27	14	7	36
Percentage of active trapping sites	100.0	93.1	100.0	100.0	94.7

This autumn, we checked 38 trapping sites of which 36 were found active. This very high trapping activity can be explained by the timing of monitoring, which was conducted exclusively at night (from 11 p.m. to 4 a.m.), when the extensive use of tape lures to attract birds makes trapping sites easy visible. Most of the monitoring time was spent to locate exact position of trapping sites, from which electronic decoys were calling. Consequently we did not need to make random checks during the day.

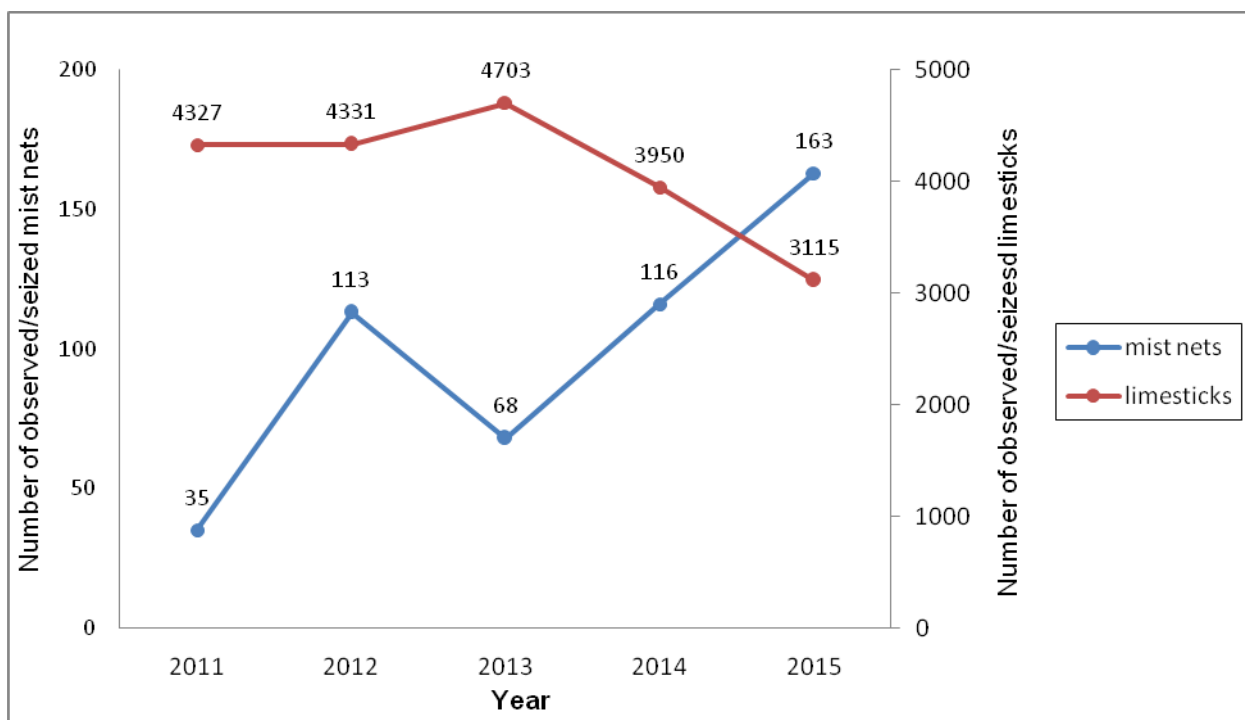
#### 4.2 OVERALL RESULTS

During our joint operations with the police agencies, 1765 limesticks, 133 mist nets and 61 electronic decoys were confiscated by police officers. In addition, 1350 limesticks, 31 mist nets and 18 tape lures were observed during fieldwork, but couldn't be reported for lack of police support.

Altogether, **3315 limesticks, 164 mist nets and 79 electronic decoys** were found this autumn. Following our findings, **38 prosecutions** for illegal trapping were made by the law enforcement agencies.

**Table 5: Overall results of last five autumn 2015 BPC**

Autumn season	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Duration of Bird Protection Camp (days)	9	17	24	28	40
No. of observed/seized limesticks	4327	4331	4703	3950	3315
No. of observed/seized mist nets	35	113	68	116	163
No. of observed/seized tape lures	55	110	136	75	79
No. of prosecutions	1	13	1	27	38



**Figure 2: Limesticks and mist nets found during autumn BPCs between 2011 and 2015**

#### 4.3 COOPERATION WITH THE APS OF THE CYPRUS POLICE

This autumn we worked for 29 days together with the Cyprus Police APS. The results of cooperation are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6: Detailed results of the joint work with the Cyprus Police APS**

<b>Monitoring of trapping sites</b>	
Number of days working together with APS	29
No. of active trapping sites found by CABS/SPA members and police officers	91
No. of active trapping sites visited by APS	63
Sites with prosecution of trappers	26
Sites with confiscation of trapping paraphernalia only	28
Sites where APS arrived too late (nothing found)	9
Sites that were left behind	28
<b>Seized trapping paraphernalia</b>	
Limesticks	1741
Mist nets	104
Sound lures	43

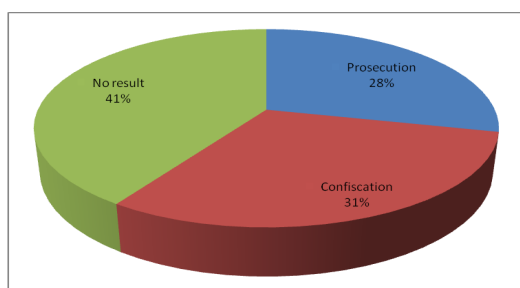


This autumn, the APS officers of the Cyprus Police made 26 prosecutions for bird trapping, one less than in last autumn (Table 5). The result is the outcome of good cooperation between the APS officers and CABS/SPA volunteers and the professional law enforcement strategy employed in the field by the APS officers. This has led to successful and well-organized ambushes at trapping sites and detailed investigation of trapping cases, including the search either with the owner's authorization or with a search warrant of the private properties where trapping paraphernalia and dead birds are usually stored.

**Table 7: Proportion between reported trapping sites and the sites prosecuted by APS officers during Autumn BPCs, between 2012 and 2015**

Autumn season	2012	2013*	2014	2015
No. of reported trapping sites	105	/	126	91
No. of prosecuted sites	13	/	26	26
Percentage of sites with prosecution	12.4	/	21.4	28.6

\* In autumn 2013, CABS and SPA didn't have the operational support of the Cyprus Police APS in the field, due to the suspension of their cooperation by the Ministry of Justice & Public Order.



**Figure 3: Results of APS work on CABS' reported active trapping sites**

Although we are satisfied by the efforts made by the Cyprus Police APS, we must stress that the single police patrol was insufficient to investigate all trapping sites located by CABS/SPA volunteers. As in previous years 2 patrol cars with 4 police officers, available for joint operations, worked together as one police patrol. In 29 days, we located 91 active trapping sites in the Republic of Cyprus. Only 54 of them could be properly investigated by the APS officers and 37 were left behind (never checked or police arrived when trapping activity was over).

At 26 out of 54 investigated sites, prosecutions for illegal bird trapping were made. As prosecutions are the only real deterrent of trapping activity, our efforts are aimed at arresting and prosecuting bird trappers. But with only one available police patrol and considering the time spent for setting up an ambush and later for conducting prosecution work at the local police station, on average only 1 prosecution was possible per day.

To make things worse in the last week of September and the first week of October, the Cyprus Police Headquarters decided, without any formal notice, to reduce the hours of joint cooperation from 9 to 5 on a daily basis in a clear effort to minimise our impact on illegal bird trapping. It should also be noted that initially we asked the operational support and daily escort of the Cyprus Police APS for 39 days, from 9<sup>th</sup> of September to 18<sup>th</sup> of October. Then, due to the limited operational capacity of the APS, we were forced to make a new request for 32 days of joint monitoring shifts, from 9<sup>th</sup> of September to 12<sup>th</sup> of October. In both cases, we asked to have the

operational support and daily escort of 2 independent police patrols with 3 police officers each. Eventually, we had 29 days of joint monitoring shifts, from which 14 were reduced to half.

#### 4.4 COOPERATION WITH THE APU OF THE BRITISH ESBA POLICE

This autumn we worked for 7 days together with the APU of the British ESBA Police. During our joint operations, we located 36 active trapping sites and we reported them to the police officers. The results of police investigations are presented in Table 8.

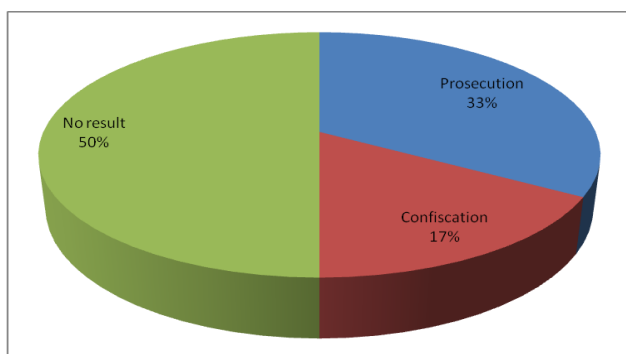
**Table 8: Detailed results of the joint work with the APU of the ESBA police**

<b>Monitoring of trapping sites</b>	
Number of days working together with the APU	7
No. of active trapping sites found by CABS/SPA members	36
No. of active trapping sites visited by APU	36
Sites with prosecution of trappers	12
Sites with confiscation of trapping paraphernalia only	6
Sites where nothing was found by the APU	18
<b>Seized trapping paraphernalia</b>	
Limesticks	50
Mist nets (data missing)	20
Electronic decoys	7

While we were unable to organise cooperation with the British ESBA Police last autumn, we are pleased that we could arrange it this year. 12 prosecutions for illegal trapping is a first acceptable result for our newly established cooperation between us and the APU this autumn, but by far insufficient for tackling bird trapping in the ESBA. Even if we monitored trapping activity in the ESBA only for 21 hours at night (1 team per 7 nights x 3 hours), we could easily locate 36 active trapping sites. And our monitoring excluded the main trapping area of Cape Pyla, which was supposed to be under surveillance by the army and where acacias were about to be eradicated. We concluded that no or very little trapping activity was going on there. To our disappointment we were later informed by BirdLife Cyprus that during their survey they observed not only that mapped trapping sites of Cape Pyla were still untouched, but that they all showed fresh signs of activity, such as feathers, blood, etc. (pers. comm.).

In total during the autumn trapping season the APU made only 17 arrests on bird trapping, out of which 12 were made with us or on sites reported by us, and only 5 independently. Their effort against bird trapping is still and by far insufficient to solve the problem.

It is worth noting that these figures could have been much higher, if the British ESBA Police had allocated enough manpower to support CABS during all the requested 17 days. In August CABS officially asked the British ESBA Police for 2 independent police units for 17 days between September and October, but the police were able to make only one patrol available for 7 days.



**Figure 4: Results of APU work on CABS' reported active trapping site**

#### 4.5 REACTIVATION OF TRAPPING SITES WITH PREVIOUS PROSECUTIONS

As we presented in Chapter 4.1, we found 164 active trapping sites this autumn. 74 sites were new, with no records of trapping in the past, and 90 sites were already found active in previous seasons, so they can be classified as reactivated trapping sites.

The reactivation of trapping sites is a common practice by bird trappers. They can be found active again even after police patrols enforced measures against trapping on them. Especially those trapping sites, where the police patrols only confiscated trapping paraphernalia, are almost all used again by bird trappers.

The most efficient way to stop people from trapping again is to catch them red-handed and prosecute them. But often even a prosecution is not sufficient to hinder people from trapping. As illegal trapping proves to be a highly profitable activity, often trappers need to be arrested and prosecuted more than once.

In this chapter we analyse the effect of prosecutions on the reactivated trapping sites. This autumn we visited 42 trapping sites with known records of prosecution for illegal bird trapping in the past. **Out of these 42 sites, 35 sites (83.3 %) were found active** (Table 9).

**Table 9: Rectivated prosecuted sites found during autumn BPCs**

CABS Autumn BPC	2013	2014	2015
No. of sites with previous prosecutions checked	22	30	42
No. of reactivated prosecuted sites	15	19	35
Percentage of reactivated prosecuted sites	68.2	63.3	83.3

The percentage of reactivated prosecuted sites (83.3%) is higher as in the previous two years. Almost all checked sites, where trappers were prosecuted in the past, were found active this autumn. And not just that, **8 trapping sites were found reactivated in the same season, in just few weeks after trappers have been caught and prosecuted for trapping.**

It is obvious that something is very wrong with Court actions against bird trapping offences. If nothing else, it is certain that the fines and penalties imposed by the Courts are in no way a deterrent.

Fines for bird trapping should be higher in Cyprus as in other EU Member States. There are two main reasons for that. Cyprus lies on an important migration route for birds and high numbers of songbirds are crossing the country during migration. In addition to that, there is a high demand of songbirds for consumption. This makes trapping extremely rewarding with high catch rates and big incomes.

## 5 AVERAGE NUMBER OF TRAPPED BIRDS

The cooperation with the APS and the fact that the agents catch trappers red-handed shortly after dawn, when they are about to "harvest" trapped birds, allows us to make a reliable estimate of the average number of trapped birds in nets during the autumn season. Police agents can "freeze" the moment when the catch is measurable and shed light on the most likely numbers of captured birds in these installations. The following table shows the figure we have collected.

To have reliable and standardised data, we took only those cases where the APS gave us exact numbers coming only from nets (without limesticks) and excluded those very few cases where we knew for sure that trappers had collected some birds during the nights.

All these trapping sites were equipped with electronic tape lures, going on all night. The lures force migrating birds to interrupt the migration and to concentrate around the trapping sites. We have evidence of nets that already have a dozen trapped birds by midnight and in some cases trappers "harvest" birds more times during the night. Even if we excluded those cases, we couldn't rule it out for all those taken into consideration the average catch considered here is consequently still a conservative estimate.

**Table 10: Birds found caught in nets by APS and average catch**

DATE	AREA	TIME	Number of nets	Number of freshly trapped birds
12/9	Avgorou	05:00	4	75
14/9	Aradippou	05:45	2	80
16/9	Liopetri	08:00	1	70
19/9	Avgorou	05:20	4	30
22/9	Aradippou	05:15	7	137
27/9	Tersefanou	05:15	4	250
30/9	Vrysoulles	05:15	4	28
2/10	Aradippou	05:30	3	23
2/10	Aradippou	06:45	5	205
7/10	Avgorou	06:00	6	62
8/10	Avgorou	05:30	2	85

<b>Maximum catch per net</b>	<b>70 birds</b>
<b>Minimum catch per net</b>	<b>7 birds</b>
<b>Average catch per net</b>	<b>24.9 birds</b>

Considering that each bird is sold for around 2.5 euro, a small 2-nets trapping site gains on average 125 € per day and a big 12-nets trapping site 750 € (and up to 2,100 € in the best days).

Once again we have to observe here that there is no wonder that fines imposed by the Court have no power of deterrence over trappers.

This number explains as well why many professional trapping sites are activated so soon after prosecution: trappers cannot miss the migration period, because the average catch will allow them to pay back the fine and still have great economic gain.

## 6 LEGAL, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ANALYSIS

In the past few years, CABS and SPA provided the political authorities and law enforcement agencies with comprehensive reports and analyses on the legal, political and social aspects of the problem of illegal, non-selective and large-scale trapping, killing and trade of protected wild birds in Cyprus [4]. Unfortunately, it seems that the authorities of the Republic of Cyprus are still neglecting the facts regarding these crucial aspects of the problem. Even worse, they are once again trying to reverse the progress made in terms of law enforcement

CABS and SPA consider as particularly alarming, the fact that after two whole years of consultation on the formulation of the *“Strategic Plan for Tackling Illegal Trapping of Wild Birds in Cyprus”*, the Ministry of Interior decided to submit a totally different *“Strategic Plan”* to the Council of Ministers. As a result, on the 13 May 2015, the Council of Ministers adopted an unacceptable version of the *“Strategic Plan”*, which includes the so-called *“Alternative Planning”* for the legalization, with a derogation, of selective hunting of a protected species, *Sylvia atricapilla* (*Blackcaps* in English and *Ambelopoulia* in Greek).

**This decision by the Government of the Republic of Cyprus is undoubtedly a major step backwards, which demonstrates that the authorities haven't been honestly committed to the adoption nor have they been seriously engaged in the implementation of a ‘zero tolerance’ policy against illegal trapping, killing and trade of protected wild birds in Cyprus.**

Even more alarming is the fact that, between August and December 2015, the DG-ENVI of the **European Commission officially stated three times that such a derogation cannot be granted, as “this is an option that cannot be justified on the basis of EU legislation”**. Within this framework, *“the European Commission encourages the Cypriot authorities to step up the efforts to enforce EU environmental law and does not think that such a derogation is in line with EU legislation, so the enactment of such derogation would trigger the need for the Commission to take appropriate measures”* [5]. Despite the fact that the DG-ENVI of the European Commission have sent a clear message, three times, to the authorities of the Republic of Cyprus, unfortunately the Minister of Interior, the Head of the Game & Fauna Service and a Member of the Parliament (MP) of the governing party, who is coming from the major trapping hotspot of Famagusta District and proclaimed himself the defender of the songbird poachers’ lobby, are flagrantly neglecting the legally binding obligations of the Republic of Cyprus to harmonize its laws, strategies and policies with the EU environmental acquis.



## 6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Autumn 2015 was again a bad season for birds migrating over Cyprus: trapping was basically as rampant as in the previous autumn seasons and both authorities from the ESBA and the RoC proved for another season their lack of will to implement the EU Birds Directive.

This was particularly obvious in the Republic with the Cyprus Police Headquarters giving order to reduce the hours of joint operations with CABS and the Council of Ministers working on the adoption of an “alternative Strategic Plan” that removed all the quantitative targets and introduced the hunting of blackcaps.

The approach of the APU of the British ESBA Police has been strongly criticized by ENGOs and even by other institutions that look with scepticism at the very poor results achieved by the Administration and the Police of the British ESBA. The expected change of the situation in the British ESBA has not come yet; once again, in autumn ENGOs witnessed an insufficiency of the law enforcement efforts made by the APU of the British ESBA Police, a very low profile kept at the communication level by the British SBAs Administration and extremely high levels of illegal bird trapping in the territory of the British ESBA for the whole season.

If bird trapping is to be properly and efficiently tackled the following minimum measures must be adopted:

**Republic of Cyprus:** Adopt and implement the recommendations made by the Commissioner of Administration and Human Rights (Ombudsman) [<sup>6</sup>], the DG-ENVI of the European Commission [<sup>7</sup>], the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention and the Council of Europe [<sup>8</sup>]. Especially:

- Immediately adopt and implement the *STAP for Combating Illegal Bird Trapping in Cyprus*.
- Increase the average fines and penalties imposed by the Courts, settling a minimum fine which has to be a real deterrent for a very small amateur trapper and forces judges to scale up the other fines according to the number of traps.
- Increase the operational capacity of the APS, by doubling its staff. 2 independent patrols on daily base meaning a total of 14-16 experienced officers are the absolute minimum required. These 14-16 APS officers must be specifically trained to work on combating songbird poaching and wildlife crime, while they should also constitute a long-term permanent staff of the APS.
- Require that all law enforcement agencies keep an average number of prosecutions every year to avoid huge fluctuations in the law enforcement efforts, mainly dependent on political will and administrative decisions rather than real change in trapping trends.
- Require that the relevant law enforcement agencies – the APS and the Game & Fauna Service – regularly publish their results, in order for third parts to evaluate their efforts.
- Develop national communication strategies, public awareness campaigns and environmental education projects for changing attitudes to the consumption of ambelopoulia and the ecological impact of illegal, non-selective and large-scale bird trapping, killing and trade.

**British ESBA:** CABS and SPA urge the British SBAs Administration and Police to strengthen the implementation of a 'zero tolerance' policy, following the recommendations of the *Larnaca Declaration*<sup>[9]</sup> and the United Kingdom Police Partnership Against Wildlife Crime<sup>[10]</sup>. In more detail, CABS and SPA ask for:

- The overall eradication of invasive alien species and particularly the artificial acacia groves in the Special Area of Conservation of Cape Pyla.
- An increase of the operational capacity of the APU of the British ESBA Police with at least 4 independent patrols working on the field from 11 p.m. to 8 a.m. and responsible only for disrupting illegal bird trapping and prosecuting songbird poachers, on daily basis.
- Require that the APU of the British ESBA Police keeps an average number of prosecutions every year to avoid huge fluctuations in the law enforcement efforts, mainly dependent on political will and administrative decisions rather than real change in trapping trends.
- Organize joint patrols and anti-trapping operations in the so-called 'grey zones – the border areas between the territories of the British ESBA and the Republic of Cyprus between the British ESBA Police, the Game & Fauna Service and the Cyprus Police APS.
- Last but not least, conduct clearance operations on a weekly basis between mid-August and late-October, in Cape Pyla and Ayios Nikolaos.

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