



**Committee Against
Bird Slaughter - CABS**
Komitee gegen den Vogelmord e.V.

Stiftung Pro Artenvielfalt®
Foundation Pro Biodiversity®

Field Report:
CABS & SPA
SPRING 2018
BIRD PROTECTION CAMPS
CYPRUS



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Photo on the cover:

CABS & SPA volunteer with golden oriole caught in a limestick, April 2018 (Photo: CABS)

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SUMMARY

In spring 2018, Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) and Foundation Pro Biodiversity (SPA – Stiftung Pro Artenvielfalt) conducted our 10th consecutive Spring Bird Protection Camp in Cyprus. It ran from 1st March – 23rd March 2018 and from 28th March – 13th May 2018.

13 volunteers from 8 European countries participated in the Spring Camp and monitored trapping and illegal hunting of birds in the south-eastern part of Cyprus. They investigated 270 known trapping sites and 28 of them were found to be active. 26 active trapping sites were found in the Republic of Cyprus and 2 in the British Eastern Sovereign Base Area (ESBA).

In total, 10 mist nets, 448 limesticks and 5 electronic callers were removed from trapping sites, found active by CABS & SPA members during the Spring Camp 2018.

Participants of the Spring Camps cooperated with police officers of the British Sovereign Base Area (SBA) Police, with wardens from Game and Fauna Service and with officers of the Cyprus Police. Unfortunately, joint operations with the Anti-Poaching Squad have ceased, following the cancelation imposed in Winter 2017-2018 by the Minister of Justice and the Chief of the police. Enforcement officers investigated 10 out of 21 trapping cases, reported by CABS & SPA teams and seized altogether 10 mist nets, 273 limesticks and 4 electronic callers. At 3 sites, reported by CABS & SPA members, enforcement officers caught and prosecuted individuals responsible for bird trapping.

45 birds belonging to 13 different species were rescued from traps, 7 birds were rescued from aviaries and 11 birds were found dead in the traps. Most common bird species found in traps was blackcap. It is estimated that a total of 3900 birds were trapped and killed on active trapping sites, found by CABS & SPA members, between 1st March - 15th May 2018.

1 INTRODUCTION

Cyprus lies on one of the key migratory routes that wild birds use during their journey between Europe and Africa, with around 100-150 million birds visiting the island every spring and autumn (Lederer 2016). Cyprus is also an important wintering place for birds which migrate to Cyprus to avoid harsh winter conditions in continental Europe.

Large numbers of migratory birds are illegally killed every year in Cyprus. Most of the illegally killed birds are either trapped or shot. It is estimated that a total of 550,000 birds were trapped and killed in Republic of Cyprus and the British Eastern Sovereign Base Area on Cyprus in 2017 (Debersek 2018a, 2018b).

Every year since 2009, CABS and SPA organises tactical operations, called Bird Protection Camps, to prevent illegal trapping and hunting of migratory birds passing through Cyprus. Camps can last from a few days up to several months. During the Camps, volunteers from all over Europe and other continents come together to monitor bird trapping and hunting activity in the field, and cooperate closely with enforcement officers to stop detected incidents of illegal bird killing in the shortest time possible.

2 SPRING BIRD TRAPPING

Bird trapping in Cyprus takes place in 3 distinctive seasons: spring, autumn and winter. Trapping methods and targeted species are different between the main seasons. Out of all seasons, bird trapping is most intensive during the autumn and least intensive in spring.

The spring trapping season starts around 1st of March and lasts until around the middle of May. Trappers are targeting migratory birds that are returning from Africa to their breeding grounds in Europe. In both the spring and autumn trapping seasons, the most frequently trapped species are warblers, especially blackcap.

The most common method used to catch birds in spring is the use of limesticks. Limesticks are twigs covered in a sticky substance, made from plums and honey, that instantly trap birds that alight on them. They are placed on various trees and bushes. In spring trappers prefer to place limesticks on fruit trees with ripe fruits as the fruits attract birds. Mulberry and loquat trees are two main trapping trees used in spring.



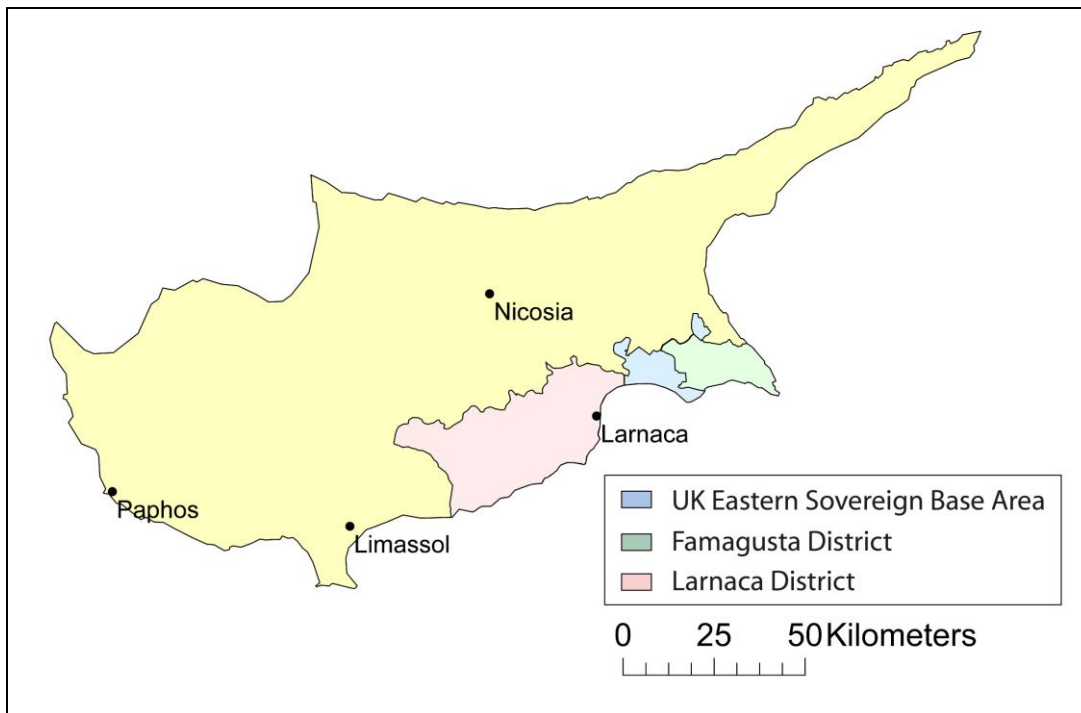
Picture 1: Blackcap caught on a limestick placed on loquat tree (photo: CABS)

In the last few years trappers rarely use mist nets and electronic callers in spring to catch birds. On the trapping sites found active during Spring 2017 Bird Protection Camp, limesticks without electronic caller were used at 80 %, limesticks together with electronic caller at 11 %, mist nets together with electronic caller at 5 % and mist nets without caller were used at 4 % of all active trapping sites (Debersek & Rutigliano 2017).

3 WORKING METHODS

In spring 2018, the 11th consecutive Spring Bird Protection Camp was organised by CABS and SPA in Cyprus. It ran between 1st March – 23rd March and from 28th March until 13th May 2018, for a total of 70 days. The camp covered almost the whole spring trapping season. A total of 13 people from Cyprus, Switzerland, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, Slovenia, Netherland and Portugal participated at the Camp.

Participants monitored known trapping areas within Famagusta District, Larnaca District and the British Eastern Sovereign Base Area (ESBA) on Cyprus (Picture 2).



Picture 2: Cyprus and the areas monitored during Spring 2018 Bird Protection Camp

Detected illegal activities were reported immediately to the authorities to ensure that activities were stopped in the shortest time possible and that enforcement actions against suspects, responsible for illegal bird killings, were taken.

Priority was given to the investigation of locations with the highest probability of finding active trapping in-situ. This probability was estimated by consulting data and intelligence collected in previous years. Trapping sites were visited during the time of day when the traps are most likely to be set and when bird callers are used to attract birds to the trapping sites.

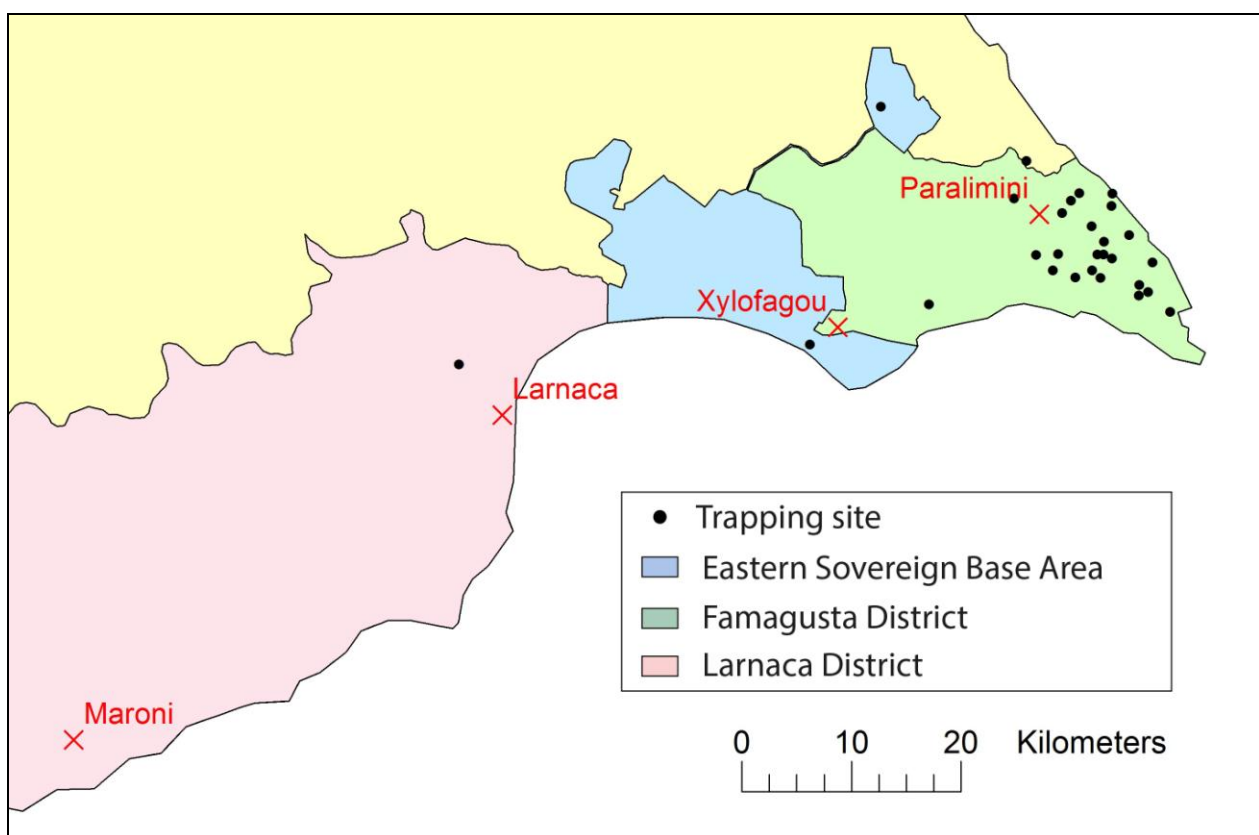
Active trapping sites are defined as those with set traps, which can either be limesticks or mist nets. Furthermore, trapping sites without set traps but with signs of recent trapping activity are also considered as 'active': feathers on the ground at trapping locations or remnants of glue on branches indicate that the location was recently active. Also trapping sites with electronic bird callers playing at them, even if there are no traps set out at the time of visiting, are counted as active. These callers are sometimes used solely in the night to attract birds to the trapping site and the trappers set their traps at them in the early morning.

4 RESULTS OF INVESTIGATIONS AND ACTIONS AGAINST BIRD TRAPPING

4.1 MONITORING OF TRAPPING ACTIVITY

During Spring 2018 Camps, CABS & SPA teams inspected 292 known trapping sites. Of the 292 sites checked, 28 sites were found active. Trapping activity at the trapping sites, found to be active, was detected 46 times or 1,6 times per active trapping site.

Distribution of 28 trapping sites, found to be active during Spring 2018 Bird Protection Camp, is shown on Picture 3.



Picture 3: Distribution of trapping sites, found to be active during Spring 2018 Bird Protection Camp

4.1.1 TRAPPING ACTIVITY OVER THE DURATION OF THE CAMP

To present trapping activity over the duration of Spring 2018 Bird Protection Camp, we have divided the Camp in ten-day periods and for each period displayed the results of field investigations made by CABS & SPA members (Table 2).

Table 2: Trapping activity per ten-day periods from the start until the end of Spring 2018 Bird Protection Camp

Period	1.3.- 10.3.	11.3.- 20.3.	21.3.- 30.3.	1.4.- 10.4.	11.4.- 20.4.	21.4.- 31.4.	1.5.- 10.5.	11.5.- 20.5.
No. of checked trapping sites	66	29	63	142	133	69	97	14
No. of active sites found	7	6	2	9	6	9	7	0
Percentage of active sites	10.6	20.7	3.2	6.3	4.5	13.0	7.2	0.0

As we inspected a different number of trapping sites in each ten-day period, we cannot directly compare the number of trapping sites, found to be active, to evaluate trapping activity over the duration of the Camp. It is better to use percentages of active sites to compare trapping activity between the periods.

Trapping activity during Spring 2018 Bird Protection Camp was highest in the middle of March and in late April.

4.1.2 SPRING TRAPPING ACTIVITY TREND FOR 2011-2018

To evaluate spring trapping activity trend in Cyprus for the period 2011-2018, we used the results of CABS & SPA Spring Bird Protection Camps 2011-2018.

As the extent and the length of field investigations are different for each Spring Bird Protection Camp, we cannot directly compare the number of trapping sites, found to be active, to compare trapping activity against previous years. As noted in the previous chapter, it is better to use the percentages of active sites found at each Bird Protection Camp, to compare the trapping activity between years (Table 3, Figure 1).

Table 3: Comparison of trapping activity detected at Spring Bird Protection Camps 2011-2018

Spring Bird Protection Camp	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Duration of the Spring Camp (days)	13	25	27	23	29	43	44	70
No of all trapping sites checked	122	238	267	311	249	395	282	292
No. of active trapping sites found	78	120	111	102	51	111	62	28
Percentage of active trapping sites found	63.9	50.4	41.6	32.8	20.5	28.1	22.0	9.6

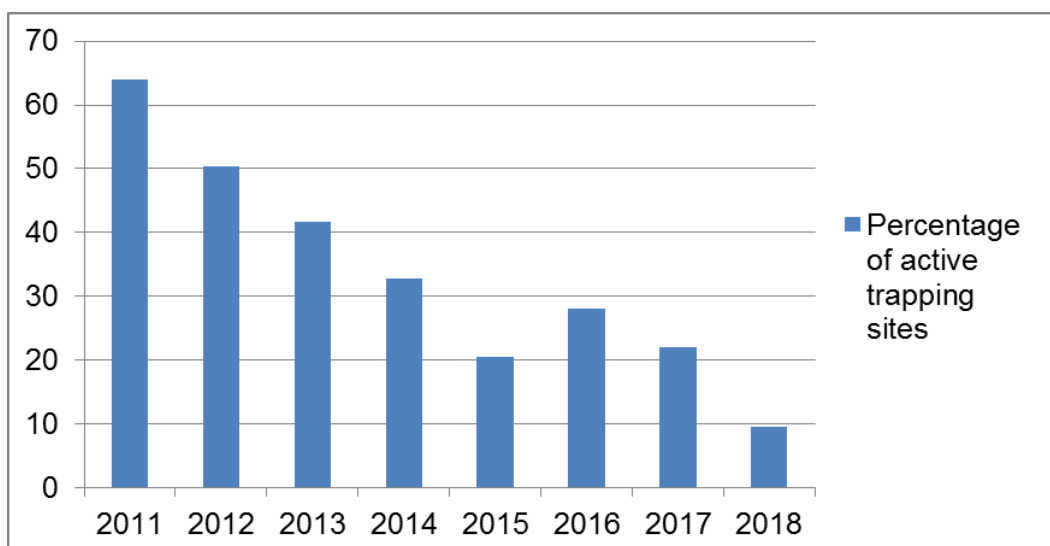


Figure 1: Percentage of active trapping sites found at Spring Bird Protection Camps 2011-2018

With the exception of the period 2015-2016, the ratio between found active trapping sites and all checked sites is steadily decreasing and it indicates that spring trapping activity in south-eastern Cyprus has considerably declined over the period 2011-2018.

4.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF ACTIVE TRAPPING SITES AND TRAPPING PARAPHERNALIA SEIZED FROM THEM

Trapping activity was detected 46 times on 28 trapping sites during Spring 2018 Bird Protection Camp. Set traps were found 23 times on 19 trapping sites. On most trapping sites with set traps found, limesticks were used for trapping. Altogether, 10 mist nets, 448 limesticks and 5 electronic callers were found and seized by enforcement officers and CABS & SPA members (Table 4).

Table 4: Characteristics of trapping sites with set traps and trapping paraphernalia seized during Spring 2018 Bird Protection Camps

Characteristics of trapping sites with set traps	
No. of all active sites found sites	28
No. of sites with set traps found	19
No. of sites with only set limesticks found	15
No. of sites with set limesticks + electronic caller found	1
No. of sites with only set mist nets found	0
No. of sites with set nets + electronic caller found	4
Average number of limesticks found on trapping sites with set limesticks	24,9
Average number of mist nets found on trapping sites with set mist nets	2,5
Seized traps	
Total number of seized limesticks	448
Total number of seized nets	10
Total number of seized electronic callers	5

The total number of seized traps at CABS & SPA Bird Protection Camps is gradually decreasing since 2011 (Table 5, Figure 2).

Table 5: Trapping paraphernalia seized at CABS & SPA Spring Bird Protection Camps in years 2011-2018

Spring Bird Protection Camp	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Duration of the Camp (days)	13	25	27	23	29	43	44	70
No. of limesticks	3892	5461	3371	2256	1470	1828	1835	448
No. of mist nets	33	20	32	27	25	50	19	10
No. of electronic callers	12	17	16	10	10	13	9	5

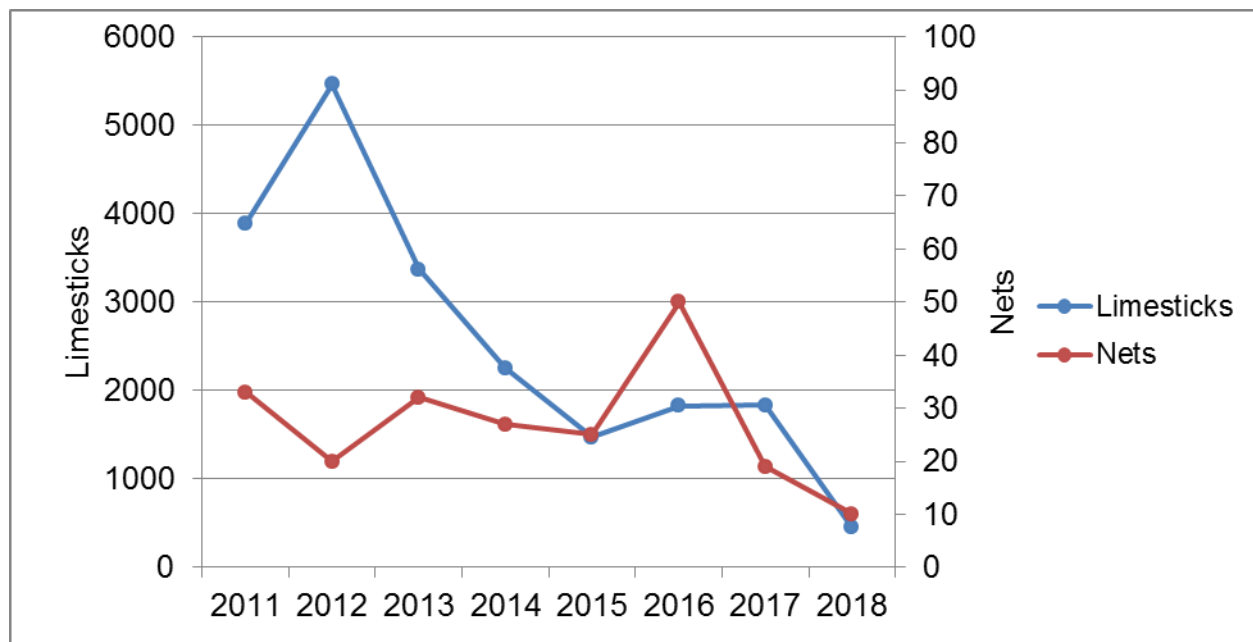


Figure 2: Total number of nets and limesticks seized at CABS & SPA Spring Bird Protection Camps in years 2011-2018

The number of traps seized this spring was significantly lower as the number of traps seized in previous spring. During Spring 2017 Bird Protection Camp a total of 1835 limesticks was seized, while only 448 limesticks were seized this spring. Additionally, whilst 10 nets were seized in spring 2017, just 5 nets were seized this spring.

4.3 BIRDS RESCUED FROM TRAPS AND AVIARIES

In total, 52 birds were rescued from traps and aviaries and 11 birds were found dead in traps during Spring 2018 Bird Protection Camp. Rescued birds belonged to 15 different species (Table 6).

Table 6: Bird species found in traps and aviaries during Spring 2018 Bird Protection Camp

		No. of birds rescued from traps	No. of dead birds found in traps	No. of birds rescued from aviaries
1	Blackcap (<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>)	7	3	0
2	Common redstart (<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>)	2	0	0
3	Chiffchaff (<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>)	2	4	0
4	House sparrow (<i>Passer domesticus</i>)	1	2	2
5	Eastern bonelli warbler (<i>Phylloscopus orientalis</i>)	2	0	0
5	Lesser whitethroat (<i>Sylvia curruca</i>)	1	0	0
6	Robin (<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>)	1	0	0
7	Hoopoe (<i>Upupa epops</i>)	1	0	0
8	Black redstart (<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>)	1	0	0
9	Great reed warbler (<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>)	1	0	0
10	Great tit (<i>Parus major</i>)	1	0	0
11	Wryneck (<i>Jynx torquilla</i>)	1	0	0
12	Sedge warbler (<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>)	1	0	0
13	Golden oriole (<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>)	1	0	0
14	Blackbird (<i>Turdus merula</i>)	0	0	2
15	Starling (<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>)	0	0	3
	Unidentified	22	2	0
	Total	45	11	7



Picture 4: Sedge warbler rescued from a limestick during Spring 2018 Bird Protection Camp (Photo: CABS)

4.3.1 ESTIMATED TOTAL NUMBER OF TRAPPED BIRDS ON ACTIVE TRAPPING SITES

To calculate total number of trapped birds in spring 2018 trapping season at the sites, found to be active during Spring 2018 Bird Protection Camp, we used the following trapping activity estimations:

- length of spring trapping season is 75 days (from beginning of March until middle of May)
- trapping sites, found to be active during Spring Camp, were active on average 15 days during the spring trapping season. This estimation is based on observations of trapping activity during Spring Camp. Activity of trapping sites was, among others, affected by the enforcement response such as confiscations of traps and arrests made. Most of the trapping sites, from which trapping paraphernalia was removed by CABS & SPA members and enforcement officers during Spring Camp, were rendered inactive following the raids.
- estimated 10 birds are caught per net and 0,25 birds per limestick per day in spring trapping season

Considering the results of field investigations (columns A,B,C,D,E,F and G in Table 10) and trapping activity estimations (columns H,I and J in Table 7), we estimate that approximately 3900 birds were trapped and killed from beginning of March until middle of May on trapping sites, found to be active during Spring 2018 Bird Protection Camp.

Table 7: Estimated total number of trapped birds in spring 2018 trapping season at the trapping sites, found to be active during Spring 2018 Bird Protection Camp

A	No. of all active trapping sites found	28
B	No. of active trapping sites with limesticks used on them	24
C	No. of active trapping sites with mist nets used on them	4
D	Average number of limesticks used on trapping sites with set traps	24.9
E	Average number of mist nets used on trapping sites with set traps	2.5
F	Total number of limesticks used on all active trapping sites per day ($F=B*D$)	587
G	Total number of nets used on active trapping sites per day ($G=C*E$)	11
H	Estimated duration of trapping activity on active trapping sites in spring trapping season (days)	15
I	Estimated number of birds killed per limestick per day	0.25
J	Estimated number of birds killed per mist net per day	10
K	Estimated no. of trapped birds on active trapping sites ($K = F*H*I+G*H*J$)	3860

4.4 RESULTS OF ACTIONS MADE BY ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES ON TRAPPING SITES REPORTED BY CABS & SPA

During Spring 2018 Bird Protection Camp, CABS & SPA members cooperated with regular and anti-poaching police units from Cyprus Police, regular and anti-poaching police units from Sovereign Base Areas (SBA) Police and with game wardens from Game and Fauna Service.

Altogether CABS & SPA members reported 21 cases of illegal trapping and 10 of them were investigated by enforcement officers. 11 reported cases were not investigated because enforcement officers were unable to respond to our request for investigation.

All investigated cases were visited by officers within a few hours after being reported by CABS & SPA teams. In total, 10 mist nets, 273 limesticks and 4 electronic callers were seized by enforcement officers from reported sites and prosecutions for bird trapping were made at 3 reported sites (Table 8).

Table 8: Results of actions made by enforcement agencies on trapping sites, found to be active by CABS & SPA members during Spring 2018 Bird Protection Camp

	Cyprus Police	Game and Fauna Service	SBA Police	All agencies
No. of trapping cases reported by CABS & SPA members	3	14	4	21
No. of reported cases investigated by enforcement officers	1	5	4	10
No. of mist nets seized	0	1	9	10
No. of limesticks seized	41	232	0	273
No. of electronic callers seized	0	1	3	4
No. of prosecutions	0	3	0	3

The number of prosecutions made for bird trapping was low when compared to the number of investigated cases. Police officers and game wardens only managed to catch and prosecute 3 individuals for illegal trapping out of 21 incidents reported.

All 3 prosecutions were made for cases with traps found inside fenced gardens. It was easy for enforcement officers to catch and prosecute individuals trapping inside fenced properties as they fined the landowners of these properties without making any additional investigations. All cases in non-fenced areas ended in no prosecutions, with ambushes lasting only 1 or 2 hours or no ambushes at all.

When we compare the enforcement results made during Spring Camps organised by CABS & SPA in the years 2014-2018, we can observe a steady decline in the extent of all enforcement actions against trapping (Table 9, Figure 3).

Table 9: Comparison of enforcement results for cases reported by CABS & SPA members at Spring Bird Protection Camps 2014-2018

Spring Bird Protection Camp	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
No. of cases reported by CABS & SPA members	n/a	39	39	32	21
No. of reported cases investigated by enforcement officers	n/a	39	26	14	10
No. of mist nets seized	27	25	48	17	10
No. of limesticks seized	2256	1470	615	419	273
No. of electronic callers seized	10	10	8	5	4
No. of prosecutions	15	17	13	6	3

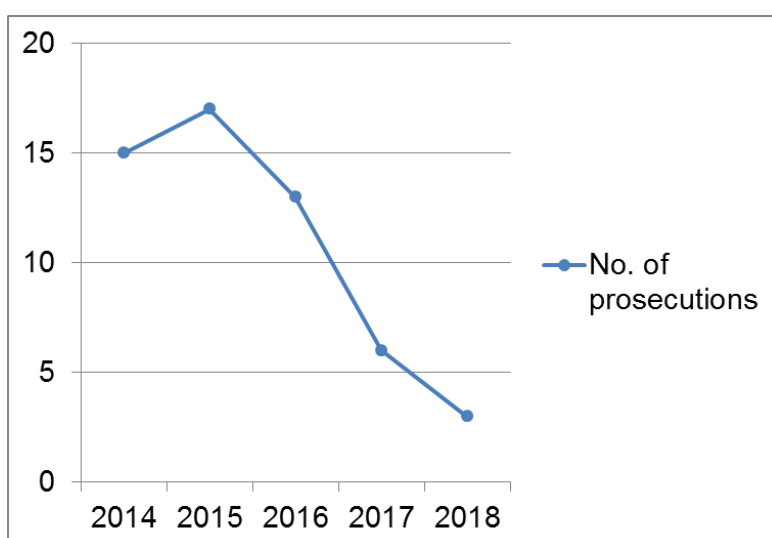


Figure 3: Number of prosecutions for illegal bird trapping made for cases reported by CABS & SPA members at Spring Bird Protection Camps 2014-2018

5 CONCLUSIONS

Field investigations, made during Spring 2018 Bird Protection Camp, revealed 28 active trapping sites in the south-eastern part of Cyprus. Detected trapping activity was significantly lower than spring 2017, when 62 active trapping sites were discovered by CABS & SPA members.

We were expecting to find lower trapping activity this spring than spring 2018 because spring trapping activity is steadily decreasing since 2011. However, we were surprised by particularly strong decline of trapping that was observed this spring season.

It is evident that the main reason for strong decline of trapping are the new fines for illegal killings of birds, introduced in autumn 2017. They are particularly high for illegal bird

killings that are committed during the spring, outside the official hunting season. Fines start at over 8000 € for a single bird illegally killed in spring season and they increase exponentially with number of killed birds.

At two out of three prosecutions, made for cases reported by CABS & SPA members during Spring 2018 Camps, on-the-spot fines, higher than 8000 €, were issued to the offenders. CABS & SPA welcomes the new, higher fines as they are effectively deterring spring bird trapping.

Huge decrease of spring trapping, observed in the period 2011-2018, shows that it is possible to stop this illegal activity with resolute and persistent actions against trapping and deterring fines. To further decrease spring trapping in the coming years, efforts by enforcement agencies in catching and prosecuting offenders should be maintained and amplified. New fines will only be efficient, when they are imposed.

In spring 2018, only 3 out of 21 cases, reported by CABS & SPA members to enforcement agencies, ended with prosecution and fines for trappers. All 3 prosecutions were made for cases with traps found inside fenced gardens, while at the remaining 18 reported cases traps were set on non-fenced properties and not enough efforts were made by officers to catch trappers on these properties. Either they only confiscated traps without making an ambush to catch the offenders or the ambushes were too short to catch them. Particularly worrying is the total lack of action by the APS of the Cyprus police, which seems to have disappeared from the scene in fulfilling their purpose and obligations.

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Notes:

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although jointly scheduled operations with the Anti Poaching Squad have not been carried out anymore, after the cancelation imposed in Winter 2017-2018 by the Minister of Justice and the Chief of the police.