

Spring 2012 Cyprus Bird Protection Camp

**Field Report
13.04 – 06.05.2012**



**Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS)
&
Friends of the Earth (FOE) Cyprus**

**with the support of the
Foundation Pro Biodiversity (SPA)**

1. Introduction:

Bird trapping is still a major environmental problem in Cyprus, as confirmed during the Council of Europe/Bern Convention conference on 'Illegal Killing of Birds in Europe' held in Larnaca in July 2011. Before its accession to EU in 2004, the Republic of Cyprus pledged to combat bird poaching and, according to monitoring programmes, there was indeed an initial decrease after 2001. In the past few years trapping rates have regrettably again increased, reaching levels comparable to those prior to EU accession. According to BirdLife Cyprus more than 2 million wild birds are trapped in Cyprus every year ⁽¹⁾ and official sources suggest that the total - untaxed - income derived from trapping is in the range of dozens of million € per year.



Collared Flycatcher on a limestick

This ranks, after illegal gambling, prostitution and drugs, among the major sources of income from organised crime in the Republic. ⁽²⁾

The Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) and Friends of the Earth (FOE) Cyprus, with the support of the Foundation Pro Biodiversity (SPA), have conducted regular bird protection camps on Cyprus since spring 2009. Seasonal field reports were prepared after the camps and were distributed, inter alia, to the Cyprus authorities, the European Parliament and the European Commission, in order to provide them with up-to-date field information and data, and to assist them in developing the most effective strategies to eradicate this widespread phenomenon. In their previous reports the two NGOs highlighted the following findings:

- a. The use of limesticks to trap birds is carried out blatantly and, in the Famagusta area, a blind eye is regularly turned to the illegal practice by the local authorities.

[¹] BirdLife Cyprus. *Cyprus Bird Trapping Surveillance Project: Winter 2011/2012. Covering the latest findings of BirdLife Cyprus' continuing monitoring programme of illegal bird trapping in Cyprus*. Nicosia, Cyprus: March 2012. Available at:

http://www.birdlifecyprus.org/images/Pdf_files/bc_trappingreport_winter2012_finalversion.pdf

[²] Βλ. Ο Φιλελεύθερος, *Τζίρος εκατομμυρίων από αμπελοπούλια: Τα τεράστια κέρδη οδηγούν και στο οργανωμένο έγκλημα*, Τρίτη, 1 Φεβρουαρίου 2011, σελ. 36.

Η Σημερινή, *Ο υπόκοσμος ανέλαβε τα αμπελοπούλια: Ακτινογραφία του προβλήματος στην Κοινοβουλευτική Επιτροπή Οικονομικών*, Τρίτη, 1 Φεβρουαρίου 2011. Πρόσβαση μέσω της ιστοσελίδας: < <http://www.sigmalive.com/simerini/news/local/350831> >.

- b. The Anti-Poaching Squad (APS) of the Cyprus Police, a special unit devoted to combat poaching including bird trapping, is totally undermanned for its task and requires more full time personnel.
- c. The Famagusta area, despite being notorious as the main trapping hotspot in the Republic, has a low prosecution record. The responsible law enforcement agencies seldom operate within this area.
- d. The fines for trapping are still far too low and do not constitute a real deterrent for trappers.

During the camps in the past few years volunteers constantly faced threats and abuse, physical aggression, and stalking by the trappers and their associates. The trappers make it quite clear that they intend to use all means in their power to continue this illegal practice and to protect their installations. To increase the security of our volunteers, and to improve the opportunities of catching trappers red-handed, CABS and FOE asked the Cyprus authorities to allocate a police escort for their patrols during the camp. The presence of police officers led to two immediate and welcome results: a sharp decrease in the confrontational incidents between trappers and volunteers, and the prosecution of a higher number of trappers. In addition a large amount of trapping paraphernalia was seized, in total some 4,439 limesticks, 15 nets and 12 electronic decoys. A private security officer (ex-SBA police) was also hired by CABS to assist in the de-escalation of difficult situations and to facilitate communication between the teams and the local police stations. His assistance was invaluable.

2. Results of the Spring Bird Protection Camp 2012

The camp was conducted for 25 days during the main spring trapping season from the 13th of April to the 6th of May. A total of 15 volunteers from Germany, Hungary, Italy, UK, and the USA, split into two operational teams, took part in the operations. The teams checked 280 of 324 known trapping sites and located 58 new sites, thus monitoring a total of 338 trapping sites (out of an updated total of now 382 known sites). All trapping sites in the Famagusta area (from Agia Napa to Sotira, Frenaros, Derynia and Paralimni) were active, had signs of previous activity, or were prepared for trapping activity. Outside this area only a few trapping sites were found active, two in Agios Theodoros/Alaminos, three in Vrysoules and six east of Liopetri. These figures show that in spring the main trapping activity is concentrated in the eastern corner of the non-occupied area of Famagusta.

The volunteers checked trapping sites more than once in the course of the three weeks, in order to establish the trapping patterns. Some operations were also conducted at night to locate electronic bird decoys. Overall, taking into account follow-up as well as initial visits, the teams made a total of 458 checks.

At 112 sites (33% of all sites checked) a total of 4,439 limesticks, 15 active nets and 12 electronic decoy devices were confiscated (five of the latter were left in situ for different reasons).

3. Reactions of trappers and trapping patterns

This spring CABS attempted to invest more energy into understanding trapping patterns during spring migration, and to determine the reaction of the trappers to the disruptive action of their volunteers escorted by law enforcement officers.

If the number of sites where trapping paraphernalia were found (112) is considered in relation to the number of sites checked (338), this could lead to the false conclusion that only one site in three was in use

during the trapping season. The opposite was the case. At almost all trapping sites in the Famagusta area the teams found traces and indications that preparations had been made for trapping or that trapping had taken place. These indications usually included fresh glue still present on branches, mud and footprints on trees and recently trimmed branches.



A CABS teams with officers from Paralimni station seize a net with decoys close to private property.

It can be concluded that almost all trapping sites were in use, but not continuously. This is due both to the fact that spring is not the main season for trappers, and to the disruption to trapping activity caused by our patrols. We observed that many trapping sites are activated only on certain days or for only a few hours of the day during the months of March, April and May. This is probably explained by the fact that the trapper is interested in collecting a limited amount of birds for home consumption or for distribution with little or no economic profit. In these cases the trapper selects trapping times according to the intensity of migration, his personal necessity and his available free time.

A good example of this is trapping site No. 217 where the results of our monitoring revealed in:

- April 2011: 43 limesticks found on one day only (not collected) but no limesticks present on subsequent checks.
- September 2011: nothing found
- March 2012: 60 limesticks found and collected by the Game Fund

- April 2012: Four checks conducted during the three weeks at different times of day. Only three forgotten limesticks during the first visit and traces of glue on another occasion but the site was never active and is probably only used randomly.

In contrast, when comparing data from Spring 2009/2010/2011 and 2012, a clear development of trapping patterns in the monitored sites was established. After our raids trappers either abandoned the trapping site, reduced the number of traps, or set them out for a few hours only on different days in an attempt to avoid being detected again.



Barred Warbler caught on a limestick.

An example of these tactics is trapping site No. 186, where results of our monitoring revealed that numbers of limesticks were reduced and random trapping replaced a continuous trapping pattern:

- April 2009: 60 limesticks set during the day
- April 2010: 63 limesticks set during the day
- September 2010: At night a single limestick forgotten
- April 2011: nothing
- September 2011: nothing
- April 2012: three checks and seven limesticks found on one occasion

The different trapping patterns observed by our teams during previous spring operations, and the different development of the trapping patterns after our disruptive actions, are shown below as *before* and *after* examples:

- **Continuous trapping.** Some trapping sites, both large and small, are activated every day and the traps left standing day and night. In 2009 the vast majority of trapping sites followed this pattern. The number of these permanent sites has now decreased and only a few still trap continuously. This pattern is however still widespread in fenced-in properties.
- **Morning trapping.** Traps are set in the morning hours from 6.00 /8.00 to 9.00/10.00 a.m., usually with the use of a decoy caller. This trapping pattern is employed preferably in autumn, but some cases were also recorded in spring. Used mainly in maquis area and less frequently in orchards.

- **Short morning trapping.** Only two such cases were recorded in spring 2012. The decoy is left calling during the night and limesticks are set before dawn in the bushes nearby. At first light the trapper flushes the birds from the nearby bushes towards the limesticks where they are caught. This method ensures a large catch within a short space of time (minutes).
- **Random trapping.** A common method for small trappers to meet mostly personal needs. Traps are set out on different days and at different times of day.

After operations by our teams the following reactions were observed:

- **Newly located and raided trapping sites.** The trapper changes his habits, usually setting the traps out again once or twice and then stopping trapping completely for long periods. Some trappers shift immediately from continuous trapping to random or morning trapping.
- **Already known and raided trapping sites.** The trapper stops trapping for 10 - 20 days and then begins again to check whether volunteers are still present in the area. Sometimes a couple of limesticks are set out as bait to find out whether the site is still being monitored or if it is being ignored.
- **Already known trapping sites not yet raided.** Some trappers are aware of the presence of the volunteers before the latter are able monitor the site. At the start of the camp signs of previous trapping were found on many occasions (a few fresh forgotten limesticks). Despite continuous monitoring the site is not activated during the period of our operations. These sites are usually found in open areas.
- **Trapping sites where the trapper has been caught and prosecuted.** It is still too early to establish the effect of police prosecution based on our data, but five examples are given here:
 - At site No. 222 the APS prosecuted the owner with five active nets. In subsequent years no nets were found but limesticks were however always set out.
 - At site No. 224 the owner was caught by APS with a net in 2009 and prosecuted. No nets have been seen at this site since.
 - At site No. 211 the owner was found with limesticks and a decoy all of which were seized by the Paralimni police. No more trapping at this site has been detected since.
 - At site No. 181 the Game Fund found and prosecuted the trapper. No more trapping activity has been recorded.
 - At site No. 82 the APS prosecuted the owner and five days later 130 limesticks were found again in the location.
- **Trapping sites where the trapper was not prosecuted.** In many fenced properties the limesticks are visible from outside. When called, the police either did not turn up or were unable to locate the owner. We checked such sites the following day and the traps had always disappeared, the owner having removed them at night after the police or our team had left.

- **Trapping sites where the trapper was not prosecuted.**

When the law enforcement agencies issue the owner of a trapping site with a warning only and simply remove the traps, these are set out again within a few days. Game Fund officers warned the trapper of site No. 129, caught with 20 limesticks in spring 2011. In the days following we dismantled 60, 74, and 165 limesticks respectively. In



Italian MEP A. Zanoni during an official visit to monitor the extent of bird trapping on Cyprus.

September, and in spring 2012 the site was active again. At site No. 80 the Game Fund issued a warning to the owner in spring 2009 and limesticks were found again in spring 2011 and 2012. The trapper of site No. 250 has been warned several times and still traps almost every morning.

Our conclusions from these observations are:

- Location of an active trapping site requires knowledge of the trapping pattern employed, and increasingly continuous monitoring of known sites. When a trapping site is found active, it is essential that the trapper is prosecuted immediately.
- The disruptive presence of volunteers disturbs trappers, obliges them to change their habits, and forces them to set out their traps less often or for shorter periods. When volunteers are reported to be in the area, some trapping sites are not activated at all. When a trapping site is raided, it is not activated for some days or even weeks. Continuous disruption by volunteers has some positive effect because of the cost of limesticks if purchased (a bunch of 25 is believed to cost 40 - 60 €), or the time invested in their production. Trappers therefore try to avoid the loss of their limesticks.
- If the law enforcement agencies issue a warning to the owner and seize the limesticks, but do not prosecute, there is no effect on the trapping activity. Trappers interpret the warning (i.e. the lack of prosecution) as a tacit permission to continue trapping.
- Prosecution appears to have the most long lasting effect on trappers. Even if the sample of such cases is still too small to draw definite conclusions, previous experience shows that in many cases the site is no longer considered safe and is abandoned.

4. Police support and cases filed

In spring 2012 the CABS teams had the valuable support of the APS in the field, together with good co-operation from the Game Fund patrols and the local police stations of Paralimni, Derynia and Agia Napa. On one night, a joint patrol with the ESBA police established that there were no decoys calling in the SBA area.



APS officers assist a CABS team with dismantling a limestick installation.

The continuous presence of 1-2 APS officers with CABS teams not only prevented open aggression trappers towards the volunteers by trappers, but also enabled rapid and efficient response where trapping was detected. The total number of 14 cases successfully filed against trappers during the CABS camp is a good start in our joint campaign against illegal bird trapping. In contrast only 16 cases were filed against bird trappers in the same area by all Cyprus law enforcement agencies in the second half of 2011 (according to official data published by the Cyprus Police and Game Fund). ⁽³⁾

In part due to the Greek Easter holiday period, cooperation with the APS - which proved ultimately to deliver the best results - began only on Day 6 of the camp, after most of the trapping sites had been raided by the volunteers together with local police and our security and liaison officer (SLO). The presence of the APS from the start of the camp, preceded by a meeting with their staff to discuss operational methods, would undoubtedly have led to even more prosecutions (and in particular the closure of bigger trapping sites). The responsible officers of the APS, with whom we discussed our proposal for future operations during the camp, considered this to be a vital and essential preparatory measure and it should be adopted as a standard procedure for future camps.

The teams called out or operated with the law enforcement agencies on 25 occasions where the owner or trapper was present at either a fenced or open trapping installation and an investigation or prosecution was therefore possible (LS=limesticks):

³ Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) & Friends of the Earth (FoE) Cyprus. "Annex I: Detailed law enforcement anti-poaching data", in *Field Report: Autumn 2011 Bird Protection Camp, 23 September – 2 October 2011*. Bonn, Germany and Limassol, Cyprus: Monday, February 20, 2012. Available at: http://foecyprus.weebly.com/uploads/4/1/1/1/411132/cabs_foecy_field_report_-_autumn_2011_bpc.pdf

14th April		
Site No. 240	Agia Napa police Paralimni police	16 LS in hut, reported to the police Paralimni-Agia Napa. Case filed.
Site No. 140	APS Paralimni police	50 LS in hut shown to the Paralimni police, who leave the LS for further prosecution. The site is visited again with APS and the owner prosecuted.
Site No. 294	Paralimni police	Fenced garden. At least 3 LS visible from outside. Called the police. No answer received.
15th April		
Site No. 109	Paralimni police SLO	Net, 160 LS and decoy: Paralimni police confiscated the trapping paraphernalia but did not prosecute the owner of the private property near the trapping site, even though the cable clearly leads into the adjacent fenced property where the owner is present.
Site No. 131	Game Fund SLO	Aviary with 30 protected birds and 2 LS in fenced property. Shown to the Game Fund the following day and 20 fresh LS seized. Birds freed. Prosecution.
16th April		
Site No. 212	Game Fund SLO	Unfenced property. Aviary with 40 protected birds and 15 LS. Called Game Fund patrol at 7.20. They arrive at 8.15 and open a file after identifying the birds. As yet we have had no feedback on the outcome of this case.
18th April		
Site No. 82	APS Paralimni police	Fenced property. 2 nets and 32 LS. Prosecution by

		APS. Three days later MBCC (allied conservation organisation) find 100 LS ready to be set out in the garden
19th April		
Site No. 116	APS Game Fund SLO	Fenced property. APS and Game Fund catch the owner (schoolteacher) setting out LS. 169 LS seized. Prosecution.
Site No. 311	APS Agia Napa police SLO	Fenced garden with LS on the gate. APS calls Agia Napa police. They call the owner who comes and surrenders some 50 LS. Prosecuted
Site No. 312	APS Agia Napa police Paralimni police SLO	Fenced garden with at least 4 LS. Birds alive on the traps. APS call the Agia Napa police again at 3.00 pm. They call the owner who says he will come but never appears. Three hours waiting time. Agia Napa calls Paralimni at 6.00. Policeman says: "If I go to Larnaca for the warrant, I finish work at midnight - but my shift ends in 10 minutes". No prosecution. The owner removes the LS during the night.
22nd April		
Site No. 332	APS Paralimni police SLO	Fenced property. At least 10 LS seen through the fence. APS calls the police, owner not available. The following day nothing there.
23rd April		
Site No. 339	Game Fund	100 LS in the hut. Game Fund waits for the owner and then leaves without prosecution
Site No. 342	APS Derynia police	Garden unfenced, 25 LS left for further prosecution. Shown to the APS five days later who call the Derynia

		police, but the LS are not so clearly visible. They do not locate the owner but a net is found and removed.
24th April		
Site No. 316	Paralimni police	Fenced property. 82 LS and decoy, seized with Paralimni police. Prosecuted.
28th April		
Site No. 148	APS Paralimni police	13 LS in fenced property and owner prosecuted. More LS probably removed from the rear during the long conversation with the whole family at the entrance to the garden.
29th April		
Site No. 352	Game Fund	Fenced garden. At least 1 LS seen from outside, the garden probably full of LS. Shown to the Game Fund, but no action taken.
30th April		
Site No. 353	APS Paralimni police	Fenced garden. 74 limesticks and decoy found in the morning. Prosecuted by APS
Site No. 37	APS Derynia police	Fenced property. 4 nets, decoy and 15 birds. Prosecuted.
Site No. 67	APS Derynia police	Fenced garden. 3 new LS plus some older ones. APS enters and talks to the owner, but it is not considered worth prosecuting.
1st May		
Site No. 180	APS Paralimni police	14 LS and three Blackcaps. Unfenced and trapper observed catching. Prosecuted.
4th May		
Site No. 85	APS	Fenced property. 55 LS set out in the early morning hours and then left during the day. Found by MBCC. APS obtain a search warrant and they find a

		total of 284 LS in the house. Prosecuted
5th May		
Site No. 336	APS Paralimni police	121 LS found by MBCC in fenced garden. Some days later again some 50 LS, although APS finds only 16. LS are scattered in many trees and often well concealed. Owner prosecuted.
Site No. 250	APS	Old trapper with at least 28 LS. Prosecution by APS
Site No. 212	APS	Trapper present in his field with LS visible. Second time during the camp. No action taken with APS at the time but LS confiscated later.
Site No. 216	Agia Napa police	Fenced garden. LS with trapped birds visible from outside. Owner present. Agia Napa police called. They promise to send a patrol, which never arrives. After 90 minutes the LS are removed by the trapper.

In summary:

- 1) There were 14 cases of successful prosecution
- 2) In five cases the authorities failed to act (either they did not appear or they departed without investigation and prosecution)
- 3) In three cases of fenced gardens the owner was either not found or did not show up after being summoned. In all cases the traps were removed by the owner during the night.
- 4) In two cases the authorities decided not to open a file as there were only 2 - 3 limesticks. In one case the limesticks were not seized. In one case it was not clear whether the law enforcement agency opened a file or just warned the owner.

Joint operations were additionally conducted at numerous other unfenced trapping sites, in gardens or on open land, where confiscation of trapping paraphernalia only was possible.

5. Problems in prosecution and authorities involved:

Despite the good results achieved, which for us made spring 2012 a milestone in the campaign against illegal trapping during pre-nuptial migration, some

critical lessons were learnt and must be taken into account for future operations.

Observation of potential trapping areas and sites. Many professional trappers set their traps in open areas or unfenced gardens, which this spring were raided, but never kept under regular observation beforehand. This tactic had the effect of disrupting the activity, but in most of the cases did not lead to prosecution. In order to catch these trappers red-handed long term observation, together with the APS, is essential. Although this is demanding, Personnel - intensive and time consuming, major results would be achieved, particularly if large scale and professional trappers are targeted in this way.



Two Blackcaps caught in a trapping installation immediately behind a tourist hotel in Protaras.

Fenced gardens. Over the past ten years many trappers have fenced in their gardens to improve their security when trapping birds. Within these gardens trees pruned for limesticks, limesticks themselves, and poles for nets can often be observed from outside the fences and decoy devices can be heard calling from within the properties.

- The prosecution of owners of these gardens is extremely difficult because evidence cannot be seized without trespassing on private property and therefore breaking the law, which we as volunteers have to respect. In many such cases therefore nothing is achieved.
- The procedure adopted by the law enforcement agencies is clumsy and time-consuming. The officer who observes trapping paraphernalia within a fenced property first requests support from the local police station, who try to locate the owner of the property in their files. The owner is then contacted by telephone or is visited at his home. He then either comes to the property or gives permission for the police to enter the property. If the owner cannot be contacted, the police officer must go personally to Larnaca and obtain a search warrant. This normally takes one working day. In some cases the owner of the property with traps set out is warned by others who have observed the police presence. Forewarned, the owner either does not answer the telephone, or agrees to come but does not turn up. In three cases we have experienced the owner of the property making the police wait for up to three hours. They then leave in frustration and the owner comes and removes his traps at night.

- If the police return the following day and find no traps, they are unable to prosecute the owner, even if they know his identity. Prosecution can only follow if traps are present and the police are able to seize them as evidence. This weakness in the procedure allows owners of fenced properties to set traps without real fear of prosecution. They can decide not to appear when summoned and then remove the traps at night thus avoiding prosecution.

Limestick trapping. Trapping with limesticks is very widespread in the Famagusta area. There are almost no gardens without some form of preparation or trapping paraphernalia. In open areas hundreds of bushes are pruned for setting out limesticks.

- The area of Famagusta, located on a very important migration route, is full of birds during migration. Limesticks set out in green cultivated areas or in the Mediterranean maquis have a high trapping rate. CABS/FoE Cyprus and BirdLife Cyprus consider a trapping rate of 0.5 birds/day/limestick to be a reliable figure. This rate only represents the average catch and is dependent on the intensity of migration, the type of land used for limestick



Three Blackcaps (1m/2f) caught on limesticks in a pruned tree.

trapping and the area covered. On-site observations do give the impression that limestick trapping is highly effective. In spring 2012 we had cases of 2 - 3 birds trapped on a single limestick and once even 5 birds on a single limestick. At site No. 212 at about 7.00 a.m. the teams, together with the Game Fund, removed 15 limesticks set in three trees with 9 birds already caught. In a huge Mediterranean maquis in Paralimni, site No. 120 at 6.30 a.m., we observed the trapper collecting the caught birds. We removed the 210 limesticks only a couple of minutes later and found 9 freshly-caught birds. At site No. 180, at 6.15 a.m., together with APS 3 birds were reported already caught in 14 limesticks. At site No. 369 in 21 limesticks (with decoy) there were 18 birds caught, which is similar to what was observed in Autumn 2011 when 50 limesticks (with decoy) in a single bush had caught 19 birds in one hour. These figures do not differ significantly from those on mist netting sites. From our experience one net set out in a garden catches on average the same as 20 limesticks. In addition limesticks can be used also in maquis area with low vegetation where mist nets cannot be used because the lack of high trees.

- Species affected by limesticks are not principally Blackcaps. According to data from MAGNIN (1986) Lesser Whitethroat is the most trapped species, followed by Blackcaps and large numbers of other protected migrant passerines, the populations of which endangered throughout Europe. At Annex 1 is a list of birds (species and total numbers) found trapped in limesticks during CABS anti-poaching operations. (4)

- Limestick trapping is still perceived as a 'minor trapping issue' by the authorities in Cyprus, and even by some police officers. When a trapping site with limesticks is reported, this is considered by the police to be a third or fourth ranked issue. Nets on the other hand receive priority attention. There is no scientific basis for this different perception, but rather an emotional approach to the problem.



Sad record catch: 5 Blackcaps on a single limestick near Agia Napa.

Even if we admit that a mist net can catch slightly more birds than limesticks (about 10 birds per 10 metre net), the catching rate and the non-selectivity is high for both trapping methods. The tolerance shown to limestick trapping by the authorities and some law enforcement agencies has absolutely no basis as far as conservation is concerned, but is of interest for anthropological, sociological and political reasons. Only the perceived 'tradition' of limestick trapping can account for the tolerance, or much more the acceptance, that Cyprus authorities show for this illegal method.

The law enforcement agencies. Anti-poaching operations in the Republic of Cyprus are conducted mainly by the Anti-Poaching Squad (*Klimakio Pataxis Lathrothirias*) and the Game Fund (Tameio Thiras) with the co-operation of local police stations. CABS teams worked regularly with the three agencies during the spring 2012 camp. In the following paragraphs we underline our main observations regarding the co-operation achieved:

[⁴] Magnin Gernant (1987). "Species Caught", in *An Account of the Illegal Catching and Shooting of Birds in Cyprus during 1986*. International Council for Preservation of Birds (ICPB), Migratory Birds Programme, Study Report No. 21. Cambridge: ICPB, pp. 24-29.

For a detailed, up-to-date overview, see also: Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) and Friends of the Earth (FoE) Cyprus. *Species Affected by Trapping with Limesticks and Mistnets and their Conservation Status*. Bonn, Germany and Limassol, Cyprus: Tuesday, May 3, 2012. Available at: http://foecyprus.weebly.com/uploads/4/1/1/1/411132/03-05-11_-_species_affected_conservation_status_-_cabs_foecy.pdf

- **Anti Poaching Squad.** The APS was our main partner during the camp, for security reasons and for the prosecution of offenders. The Anti-Poaching Squad behaved professionally and was extremely proficient. There was great flexibility in their time schedules, the officers being available for extra hours if the case required further investigation. They were available for operations which involved patrolling on foot in the countryside in order to approach the trapping sites undetected. The APS is the best available law enforcement agency to combat illegal bird trapping but it is hopelessly under strength for the task. The presence of APS officers with CABS teams is essential to ensure the security of our volunteers and to enable them to carry out their anti-poaching monitoring operations. Eleven out of the 14 successful prosecutions were dealt with in cooperation and in the company of the APS.
- **Game Fund.** Although we had less contact with the Game Fund than with the APS we found cooperation with the former more difficult. The Game Fund patrols were mostly available and always supportive but they appeared not able to prosecute the owners of fenced properties (on more than one occasion they left the fenced garden with traps set out without taking action). Communication with their headquarters was also far from easy at times and we did not receive any feedback on the cases we dealt with jointly. The officers also made it clear that they were not able to escort us in the field on foot, which makes the undetected approach to some gardens and areas extremely difficult.
- **Local police stations.** Our experiences with the local police varied considerably and depended greatly on the police station and the individual officers we dealt with. On the whole the cooperation shown was a great improvement on previous years and the attitude of the policemen towards the volunteers was much more supportive. This was demonstrated in the overall shorter response times and investigation of cases reported and was particularly evident when the APS or our Greek-speaking SLO contacted the local police. The best experiences were with the Paralimni police station, with whom we were able to solve two cases and received very proactive and professional assistance. Our most disappointing experience was with Agia Napa police station. On this occasion we waited in vain for 90 minutes for a patrol that never arrived - the officers eventually stated that they were unable to locate us - even though our location was easy to find. This was not the only case of a police patrol called to assist that did not arrive, or did not even receive instructions from the station (according to MBCC as told to them by the police patrol). The reason is that many local police officers still consider cases of trapping with limesticks unimportant and not worthy of police attention.
- **Buffer zone (United Nations responsibility).** In the buffer zone almost every garden has trapping installations. Even the big professional

trappers use this area for mist netting. Neither the APS nor the local policemen are permitted to enter these areas or to take any action. Since some professional trappers have their trapping sites there, any operation without armed police escort is potentially very dangerous. The Republic of Cyprus should urge the UN to monitor and intervene in this area; it is fortunately not extensive and easy to control.

Future improvements

On the basis of our previous experiences and the successes of spring 2012, we believe that close cooperation between law enforcement agencies (mainly the APS, but also the Game Fund and the local police stations) can lead to a sharp decrease of trapping in the Republic, provided that:

1. The APS is reinforced and its strength increased to a minimum of 20 officers on duty (taking account of shifts) during, and immediately preceding and following, peak migration.
2. Operational deployment must be based on the intensity of trapping. The eastern Famagusta district must be considered the core trapping area in spring and the first priority trapping hotspot in autumn; followed by the western Famagusta district and finally Larnaca district.
3. Cooperation by the law enforcement agencies with NGOs must continue and be implemented on the basis of forward planning in order to focus strategies and priorities. The presence of volunteers can be used by law enforcement agencies to optimise the monitoring of the countryside and to pinpoint the most active trapping locations.
4. Limestick trapping must be considered a serious offence against protected wild bird species on exactly the same basis as mist netting. The excuse that limestick trapping is a relatively harmless traditional practice must not be accepted as a legal, social or political ground for this illegal activity.
5. The current fines (100 to 600 €) are no deterrent for small and medium trappers, but are regarded by them as more of a licence fee to continue trapping. The minimum fine must be high enough to deter even a small trapper. In the present situation hundreds of small and medium trappers who continuously reactivate their sites, even when caught red-handed, are a hindrance to the law enforcement agencies, distracting them from dedicating their energies to raiding the larger trapping sites.
6. A fenced property cannot be allowed to be used to protect a trapper from prosecution. Police officers must be at liberty to intervene to prevent the committal of an offence in progress (such as the trapping and death of protected wild birds) that permanently causes harm to a common good. The integrity of private property must be subordinated in this case. As in other countries a search warrant should be obtainable from the duty public prosecutor by electronic means or by telephone, particularly within the same police district.

The goals of the Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) and its partners should include:

- 1) The extension of its spring and autumn anti-poaching camps to preferably three weeks to one month.
- 2) Because of the large number of trapping sites (most of which are active in the early morning hours), team objectives should aim at providing the escorting police patrols with large size and professional installations as a priority, and attempt to strike the right balance between dismantling of traps and prosecution of the poachers.
- 3) Cooperation with other environmental non-governmental organisations that are active in the same area (in most cases MBCC and where possible BirdLife Cyprus) who have extensive knowledge of trapping patterns and times, is highly welcome and is crucial in order to tackle bird trapping more efficiently. All organisations will profit from this cooperation.
- 4) In autumn CABS should devise a strategy to improve its presence in the ESBA, especially in Cape Pyla where mist netting is extremely widespread, and where only a continuous volunteer presence on the ground under escort can help to bring the trapping situation under control.
- 5) Operations must be planned with and implemented jointly with the law enforcement agencies. In the first instance this should be the APS with officers accompanying the CABS patrols. Good communications must be maintained with local police stations. In this respect an SLO (Greek-speaking and with a security background) for each team is recommended, above all when the APS is not available. The resources of the Game Fund must also be exploited and attempts made to ensure that they at least deploy a patrol in the general area of daily operations to enable a rapid response when necessary.

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