

# What should be done?

Bird trapping is a profitable, large scale illegal activity whereby **hundreds of thousands of birds of tens of different species are killed on a massive scale every year**, contributing to an ecological catastrophe of our common heritage and our natural environment.

# What can you do?

There are a number of actions you could take to help stop illegal bird trapping in Cyprus, including:

- 1. Inform your friends and relatives** of the true extent of the problem and encourage them to act responsibly. Refer them to our website if they wish to learn more.
- 2. Highlight to the members of the Cypriot parliament** in writing that you are concerned about the specific problem and that it creates a bad image of Cyprus. Ask them what they are doing about this issue.
- 3. Report any incidents of illegal bird trapping or illegal offer of ambelopoulia in restaurants to the competent authorities or BirdLife Cyprus.** Download BirdLife Cyprus' free app 'Feathered journeys' which allows you to easily report such incidents. Learn more about reporting here: [www.birdlifecyprus.org/report-poaching](http://www.birdlifecyprus.org/report-poaching)
- 4. Subscribe to the monthly online newsletter of BirdLife Cyprus** and/or become a member of our organisation in order to receive more information on this subject and to support our actions against illegal bird trapping. Our members strengthen our voice!



European Bee-eater © D. Nye

## What's needed:

- Political will for the implementation of a 'zero tolerance' approach
- Participation of all relevant stakeholders in a joint, coordinated and targeted strategy for the elimination of this phenomenon
- Awareness of the wider public of the ecological impacts of trapping
- Education of children about birds, biodiversity and nature and the serious threats they face

Cover photos:  
Top: Red-backed shrike, juvenile © D. Nye  
Bottom: Red-backed shrike, juvenile © BirdLife Cyprus



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# Illegal bird trapping in Cyprus

The true extent of the problem



[www.birdlifecyprus.org](http://www.birdlifecyprus.org)

# 1. It is a non-selective method

Trapping with mist nets and limesticks is illegal both at national and European level due to the non-selective nature of these methods i.e. **it is not possible to select which bird species gets caught**. According to field surveys nearly half of the bird species recorded in Cyprus, i.e. **155 different bird species, have been found trapped on limesticks or mist nets, 82 of which are listed as conservation priority species under the EU Birds Directive and/or BirdLife International**. These species include also emblematic species which everyone knows such as the Common Nightingale (*Luscinia megarhynchos*) and the Scops Owl (*Otus scops cyprius*).

# 2. It is large scale

The widespread trapping of birds with the use of nets and limesticks in Cyprus contributes to **large scale killing of birds, whereby hundreds of thousands of birds are killed every year**. According to the systematic field surveys that BirdLife Cyprus has been undertaking since 2002, in the last years (2010-2016) more than 2 million birds could have been killed every year due to illegal trapping. Considering the multiple threats that birds face (climate change, habitat loss, intensification of agriculture etc.) it becomes clear that an ecological disaster is taking place.



Birds trapped in mist nets and on limesticks suffer an agonising death due to exhaustion and thirst, or in the hands of trappers



# 3. It is no longer a tradition

Bird trapping may have been a traditional, small scale method for hunting birds in the past. However, the current activity levels reveal an industrialised, large scale and profitable business, and **organised trappers make tens of thousands of euros illegally every year** at the expense of our common natural heritage. Moreover any activity that contributes to an ecological disaster cannot possibly be considered a traditional practice.

# 4. It impacts Cyprus tourism

Illegal bird trapping in Cyprus has an impact on the tourism industry, since many concerned tourists choose a different holiday destination due to the **bad image** created for the country. According to a study done by an environmental Non-Governmental Organisation, *Terra Cypria* in 2011, the losses in revenue due to the bad reputation created from trapping range between **40 to 100 million euros** every year! Furthermore the Game and Fauna Service estimates that the 'black market' of this illegal activity is in the order of 15 million euros every year.

Nevertheless, BirdLife Cyprus is promoting birdwatching in Cyprus through, among others, its participation at the Birdfair in the UK, the world's largest wildlife event. BirdLife Cyprus believes that the promotion of birdwatching in Cyprus is part of the solution to stop the persistent problem of illegal bird trapping.



Hundreds of thousands of birds are killed every year in mist nets and on limesticks



# 5. It is an inhumane method of killing

Trapping with mist nets and limesticks are among the most inhumane methods that can be used for killing birds. The captured birds usually remain **trapped for hours in mist nets or on limesticks**, getting further entangled with their every attempt to escape.

Any claims that all 'non-target' bird species (apart from blackcaps) are released by the trappers are untrue, as it is very difficult to nearly impossible to untangle a bird from a mist net and particularly peel off a limestick without inflicting any injury.

Furthermore birds **suffer such a shock when they get caught, which in many cases proves lethal** for them even if they have no apparent injuries.

# 6. It is prohibited across all EU

Bird trapping is prohibited both by the national legislation (Law 152(I)/2003) and by the European Birds Directive (Directive 2009/147/EC), as well as International Conventions (e.g. the Bern Convention of 1979 and the Bonn Convention of 1979). The use of mist nets and limesticks has been forbidden in Cyprus since 1974, but real enforcement never materialised. Both the national and European legislation strictly forbid these methods due to their non-selective nature and the large scale killing of migratory birds they contribute to.

**Additionally, the Cypriot legislation strictly forbids the trade and/or possession of trapped birds, either in restaurants or homes.**

Derogations from the Birds Directive may be granted, but only after a detailed justification and purely for reasons of public safety etc. "Traditional hunting methods" cannot be accepted as a valid reason for a derogation according to the European Court of Justice. Spain was convicted by the European Court of Justice in the case C-79/03 on 9 December 2004 for permitting trapping with parany (similar to limesticks) and trying to use the justification of 'traditional practice'.

