



Cyprus bird trapping surveillance project: Winter 2011 / 2012

**Covering the latest findings of BirdLife Cyprus' continuing monitoring programme
of illegal bird trapping in Cyprus**

Date: March 2012

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Περίληψη

- Η χειμερινή έρευνα πεδίου 2011/2012, στα πλαίσια του συνεχιζόμενου προγράμματος μη-επεμβατικής παρακολούθησης της παράνομης παγίδευσης πουλιών από τον Πτηνολογικό Σύνδεσμο Κύπρου, έγινε κατά τους μήνες Δεκέμβριο 2011 και Ιανουάριο 2012. Συνολικά ελέγχθηκαν 39 τυχαία επιλεγμένα τετράγωνα (1x1 χμ) και η ομάδα του Πτηνολογικού Συνδέσμου Κύπρου κατέγραψε αρκετή δραστηριότητα χειμερινής παγίδευσης, εντοπίζοντας 616 μέτρα ενεργών διαδρομών για δίκτυα και 34 δίκτυα *επί τόπου*. Όλα τα ευρήματα καταγγέληκαν στις αρμόδιες αρχές.
- Τα επίπεδα χειμερινής παγίδευσης με δίκτυα, που υπολογίζονται σύμφωνα με το συνολικό μήκος των ενεργών διαδρομών για δίκτυα που καταγράφεται, ήταν παρόμοια με τα περσινά για την αντίστοιχη περίοδο, με μια μικρή μείωση της τάξης 8% σε σύγκριση με το 2010/2011. Παρόλα αυτά, καταγράφηκε ένας πρωτοφανής αριθμός δικτύων *επί τόπου* (στημένων δικτύων) δίνοντας μια αύξηση της τάξης του 300% σε σύγκριση με την αντίστοιχη περσινή περίοδο.
- Η παγίδευση (με τη χρήση δικτύων) μειώθηκε κατά 25% και 20% σε περιοχές που ελέγχονται από τη Δημοκρατία και τις Βάσεις αντίστοιχα, σε σύγκριση με την χειμερινή περίοδο 2010/2011, μια ενθαρρυντική ένδειξη ότι η πάταξη έχει βελτιωθεί¹. Τα επίπεδα παγίδευσης ήταν 2 φορές ψηλότερα στις Βάσεις σε σύγκριση με τη Δημοκρατία εντός της περιοχής έρευνας, ενώ τα 'κοινά' τετράγωνα (όπου τα σύνορα μεταξύ της περιοχής Βάσεων και της Δημοκρατίας συναντώνται εντός του τετραγώνου δειγματοληψίας) ήταν περιοχές με πολύ ψηλά επίπεδα παγίδευσης. Και οι δύο αυτές τάσεις καταγράφονται συστηματικά στις πρόσφατες περιόδους παρακολούθησης.
- Η εκτίμηση των πουλιών που σκοτώθηκαν σε όλη την Κύπρο για την χειμερινή περίοδο ήταν λίγο πάνω από 400 000. Συνολικά για το έτος 2011 (άνοιξη 11, φθινόπωρο 11 και χειμώνας 11/12) υπολογίζεται ότι πάνω από 2,8 εκατομμύρια πουλιά παγιδεύτηκαν σε όλη την Κύπρο, η ψηλότερη ετήσια εκτίμηση πουλιών που θανατώθηκαν τα τελευταία 5 χρόνια².

¹ Οι μειώσεις 25% και 20% δεν συμπεριλαμβάνουν τα δεδομένα από τα 'κοινά' τετράγωνα, όπου τα επίπεδα παγίδευσης ήταν αυξημένα. Συμπεριλαμβάνοντας και τα δεδομένα από τα 'κοινά' τετράγωνα η συνολική μείωση είναι μόνο 8%.

² Η ετήσια εκτίμηση πουλιών που θανατώθηκαν λαμβάνει υπόψη την κάθε χειμερινή περίοδο καταγραφών στην ολότητά της (Δεκέμβριος – Φεβρουάριος) π.χ. η εκτίμηση των πουλιών που θανατώθηκαν για το έτος

- Η περισσότερη δραστηριότητα της παγίδευσης (70%) καταγράφηκε τον Ιανουάριο 2012, όταν μεγάλος αριθμός τσιχλών (*Turdus spp*) κατέφτασαν στην Κύπρο για να διαχειμάσουν. Επισημαίνεται ότι οι παγιδευτές έχουν ως κύριο στόχο τις τσίχλες κατά τη διάρκεια του χειμώνα. Είναι πολύ πιθανόν πολλές περιοχές παγίδευσης που καταγράφηκαν ως μη-ενεργές το Δεκέμβριο 2011, όταν οι τσίχλες ήταν λιγοστές, να έγιναν ενεργές με την άφιξη των τσιχλών. Αυτό υποδηλώνει ότι τα επίπεδα παγίδευσης πολύ πιθανών να έχουν υποεκτιμηθεί για το χειμώνα 2011/2012, αφού τα μισά τετράγωνα δειγματοληψίας ελέγχθηκαν το Δεκέμβριο και τα άλλα μισά τον Ιανουάριο.
- Το 2011 διοργανώθηκε για πρώτη φορά Ευρωπαϊκό συνέδριο σχετικά με την παράνομη θανάτωση πουλιών στη Λάρνακα (Κύπρος). Η 'Διακήρυξη της Λάρνακας', που συμφωνήθηκε από όλους τους συμμετέχοντες συμπεριλαμβανομένου και των Κυπριακών αρμοδίων αρχών, καταδίκασε την παράνομη θανάτωση πουλιών και ζήτησε την εφαρμογή 'μηδενικής ανοχής'. Παρόλα αυτά η παγίδευση που καταγράφηκε το έτος 2011 αποκαλύπτει μια αντιφατική εικόνα έναντι των υποσχέσεων των αρμοδίων αρχών και επιβάλλεται περαιτέρω πάταξη.
- Η 'Διακήρυξη της Λάρνακας' και η εισήγηση 155 (2011) [T-PVS(2011)22] της Συνθήκης της Βέρνης (Παράρτημα 4) συνοψίζουν τα κύρια εργαλεία για την ριζική αντιμετώπιση της παράνομης παγίδευσης πουλιών στη ρίζα, συμπεριλαμβανομένου την ενδυνάμωση της πάταξης από τις περιοχές παγίδευσης μέχρι τα εστιατόρια που προσφέρουν πουλιά, και τη διεξαγωγή μιας ενημερωτικής καμπάνιας για το ευρύτερο κοινό. Προτρέπουμε τις αρμόδιες αρχές να υιοθετήσουν τη 'Διακήρυξη της Λάρνακας' και την εισήγηση 155 και να καταρτίσουν ένα σχέδιο δράσης που θα περιλαμβάνει όλες αυτές τις πτυχές, για να αντιμετωπιστεί αποτελεσματικά η παράνομη παγίδευση πτηνών.

Summary

- The winter 2011/2012 survey, as part of BirdLife's ongoing programme monitoring levels of illegal bird trapping, was undertaken during December 2011 and January 2012. In total 39 1x1 km survey squares were checked, and the BirdLife field team recorded significant winter trapping activity, finding 616 metres of active net rides and 34 mist nets *in situ*. All findings were reported to the responsible authorities.
- Trends in winter trapping activity using mist nets, calculated according to the total length of active nets rides found, remained at similar levels to last winter, with a small decrease of 8% compared to 2010/2011. However, an unprecedented number of mist nets *in situ* were recorded, resulting in a 300% increase compared to last winter season.
- Trapping activity (mist netting) decreased by 25% and 20% in areas controlled by the Republic and SBA respectively, compared to the 2010/2011 winter survey, an encouraging sign of improved enforcement³. Levels of trapping were 2 times higher in the SBA compared to the Republic within our study areas, while "joint" survey squares (where the SBA and RoC jurisdictions meet within the same square) were "hotspots" for trapping. Both these patterns have been consistently recorded in recent seasons.
- The death toll estimate across Cyprus for the winter period was just over 400,000 birds. In total for the year 2011 (spring 11, autumn 11 and winter 11/12 seasons) it can be estimated that over 2.8 million birds were trapped across Cyprus, the highest yearly death toll estimate of the last 5 years⁴.
- Most of the trapping activity (70%) was recorded in January 2012, when high numbers of wintering thrushes, *Turdus* spp, arrived in Cyprus. It is highlighted here that trappers are mainly after thrushes during the winter season. It is very likely that many non-active trapping sites recorded in December 2011, when thrushes were still low in numbers, would have later become active upon the arrival of the thrushes. This would suggest trapping levels have been

³ The 25% and 20% reduction figures do not include data from "joint" squares, where trapping was at higher levels. If the 'joint' squares are included, this would bring the overall reduction in trapping levels to only 8%.

⁴ Each winter season survey is considered in its entirety i.e. December – February for the calculation of the total annual death estimate e.g. the death estimate for year 2009 includes spring 2009, autumn 2009 and winter 2009/2010 (includes January 2010 since survey extended to that month) survey data.

underestimated for winter 2011/2012, since half the squares were surveyed during December and the other half in January.

- In 2011, a Europe-wide conference regarding illegal killing of birds was organized in Larnaca (Cyprus) for the first time. The 'Larnaka Declaration', agreed by all the participants including the Cyprus competent authorities, condemned illegal bird killing and asked for the adoption of a 'zero tolerance' approach. However, the trapping activity recorded for 2011 reveals a contradictory picture to the promises made by competent authorities and greater enforcement is needed.
- The 'Larnaka Declaration' and the Bern Convention recommendation No. 155 (2011) [T-PVS(2011)22] (see appendix 4) outline the key tools to tackle illegal bird trapping at its root, including strengthening of the enforcement chain from the trapping sites to the restaurants offering trapped birds, and the development of a public awareness campaign. We urge the competent authorities to adopt the 'Larnaka Declaration' and the recommendation 155 and to draw up an action plan that will incorporate all these aspects, if illegal bird trapping is to be stopped.

1. Introduction

Bird trapping in Cyprus is an indiscriminate and illegal practice that threatens many bird species of conservation concern for the EU. Trapping with mist nets and limesticks is non-selective and in total 122 bird species have been recorded trapped on them, 58 of which are listed as threatened by BirdLife International and/or under the EU Birds Directive.

Trappers are mainly after blackcaps (*Sylvia atricapilla*) and other migrant songbirds, destined for home consumption or to be served as expensive *ambelopoulia* delicacies in local restaurants. Trapping activity is concentrated in the autumn season, when the largest numbers of birds pass through Cyprus on their way to winter grounds. Trappers are also active both during spring and winter; during winter trappers are mainly after the wintering song thrushes (*Turdus philomelos*). However, as shown from records many 'non-target' birds die in the mist nets and on the limesticks, significantly increasing the conservation impact of trapping.

Mist nets can generally catch many more birds than limesticks, though experienced limestick users, with expert knowledge of how to prune trees or bushes for optimum placement of the glue sticks, can probably catch as many birds as mist net users. The catch is significantly increased by the now widespread use of sound devices that reproduce bird song, which draw migrating / wintering birds into areas set with nets and/or sticks. Mist net use became widespread in the 1980s, while the extensive use of recorded bird song began in the 1990s. Nets are often erected in established plantations of citrus, olives, figs or other fruit trees. Additionally large areas of land have been planted with non-native acacia bushes specifically in order to create good bird trapping habitat. Cape Pyla, in the Eastern British Sovereign Base area (ESBA), is the most obvious example of extensive habitat management for trapping.

Though bird trapping has been illegal in Cyprus for over 30 years (since 1974), the practice was widespread and largely blatant prior to a clampdown by authorities in the new millennium. Financial gain is the main motivation for illegal trapping. Determined poachers can make thousands of euros a year by selling *ambelopoulia*, thrushes and other birds for home or restaurant consumption. Trappers have become well organized

due to increased enforcement and it is generally acknowledged that the 'big' trappers are a hard-core network of ruthless criminals. However, a resurgence of smaller-scale limestick use has also been noted in recent years, a response to a generally (and unacceptably) more "permissive" climate when it comes to limesticks.

In the autumn of 2002, concerns about the conservation impacts of bird trapping in Cyprus led the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (the RSPB, BirdLife in the UK) and BirdLife Cyprus (BirdLife in Cyprus) to launch a groundbreaking joint project to monitor the illegal activity of bird trapping. Systematic monitoring has subsequently been carried out every spring and autumn season and, since 2007, in winter too. This report covers the findings of the winter 2011/2012 surveillance programme, the 5th successive winter survey.

2. Methodology of field survey

The monitoring programme for illegal trapping follows a "Bird trapping protocol" that has been developed and implemented by BirdLife Cyprus and the RSPB, in consultation with the Cyprus Game Fund and the British Sovereign Base Area (SBA) police. Monitoring is concentrated in the two main trapping areas of the Island:

- the SE corner of the island, covering Paralimni, Ayia Napa, Cape Greco and Cape Pyla in the Famagusta and Eastern Larnaca Districts (including the Dhekelia Eastern Sovereign Base (ESBA) area), and
- Ayios Theodoros and Maroni valleys, west of Larnaca.

The project is undertaken with the close co-operation of the competent authorities of the Republic of Cyprus (the Cyprus Game Fund Service and the Anti-poaching unit of the Cyprus Police) and the British Sovereign Base Areas (SBAs), the SBA Police. When trapping evidence is found, the observers immediately contact the relevant enforcement authorities. It is stressed here that the BirdLife Cyprus observers never confront suspected trappers and never remove trapping paraphernalia. For further details on the methodology of the surveillance programme see Appendix 1.

3. Results and Discussion

- Field survey: the winter anti trapping survey 2011-2012 was carried out during December 2011 and January 2012 following the standard survey protocol. In total 39 squares⁵ were surveyed during this period, out of which 36 have been consistently monitored since 2007. In keeping with BirdLife's standard practice, the survey team immediately reported all trapping finds to the relevant enforcement authorities, either the SBA Police or the Cyprus Game Fund / Police Anti-poaching Unit, depending on the location of the finds.
- Summary of field data: appendix 2 presents all the survey field data for winter 2011/2012. In total the findings of the survey included 616 metres of active net rides (cleared "runs" in acacia plantations or other habitats e.g. orchards, olive trees, either holding nets or where there was clear evidence of preparation for the setting and/or use of nets), 34 mist nets found *in situ* (either classified as Active Set Nets or Active Unset Nets), 57 old (non-sticky) limesticks and 39 birds found trapped in nets, mostly robins (*Erithacus rubecula*), but also chaffinches (*Fringilla coelebs*), sparrows (*Passer domesticus*), song thrushes (*Turdus philomelos*) and to our surprise one dead mouse. Opportunistic checks outside the survey squares detected an additional 67 metres of active net rides and 4 mist nets *in situ* (see appendix 2).
- Trends in winter trapping activity: figure 1 shows the long term trends in winter trapping activity (using mist nets and limesticks) for the 36 squares that have been consistently surveyed since 2007⁶. The analysis shows that:
 - Mist netting activity for winter 2011/2012 remained at similar levels as last winter period, with a small decrease of 8% compared to 2010/2011. No active limesticks were found during the survey.
 - A dramatic increase of 300% in the number of nets found *in situ* was recorded during this winter period compared to winter 2010/2011. As shown by the graph, an unprecedented number of *in situ* nets were recorded this winter, the highest over the 5-year period that winter monitoring has been taking place. This clearly suggests that trappers

⁵ 28 squares surveyed were in RoC areas, 9 in SBA areas and 2 were "Joint" squares.

⁶ Trapping activity includes: a) mist netting activity – the total length of active net rides, and b) limesticks – the total number of limesticks, found.

have become more blatant and less concerned about possible prosecution for illegal bird trapping.

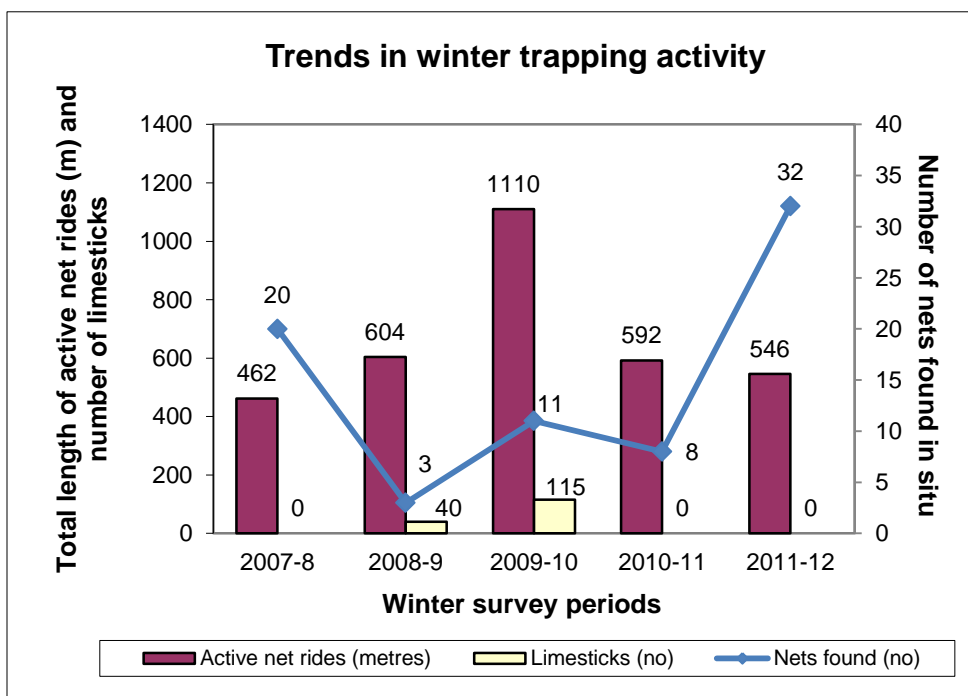


Figure 1 Long term trends in winter trapping activity using mist nets and limesticks

- Probable underestimation of winter trapping activity: it is highlighted that during the first half period of the field survey (December 2011) the arrival of wintering song thrushes (the trappers' main target species) was limited, whereas during the second half (January 2012) a lot more song thrushes were observed by the field team. This pattern is backed-up by statements from Game Fund officers and BirdLife Cyprus bird-watching records. Examining the field data of Appendix 2 for these 2 periods shows that:
 - 20 squares were surveyed during December 2011, recording around 30% (179 metres of active net rides) of the total length of active net rides and 11 mist nets *in situ*.
 - 19 squares were surveyed during January 2012, recording around 70% (437 metres of active net rides) of the total length of active net rides and 23 mist nets *in situ*.
 - Trapping activity increased dramatically upon the arrival of wintering song thrushes at the start of 2012. This in turn would suggest that much higher

levels of trapping would have been detected had the survey work been concentrated in January as it would be very likely that many trapping sites, recorded as non-active in December, became active upon the arrival of high numbers of song thrushes.

- Trapping under different jurisdictions: figure 2 summarises winter trapping activity using mist nets under different jurisdictions for all the squares surveyed in each period:
 - For Republic areas, winter 2011/2012 showed a decrease of 25% in trapping activity using mist nets compared to winter 2010/2011.
 - For the SBA areas, winter 2011/2012 showed a decrease of 20% compared to winter 2010/2011. As shown in the graph, trapping in SBA areas remained higher, more than 2 times per square surveyed, compared to areas in the Republic.
 - For “Joint” areas, winter 2011/2012 showed an increase of 125% compared to winter 2010/2011.

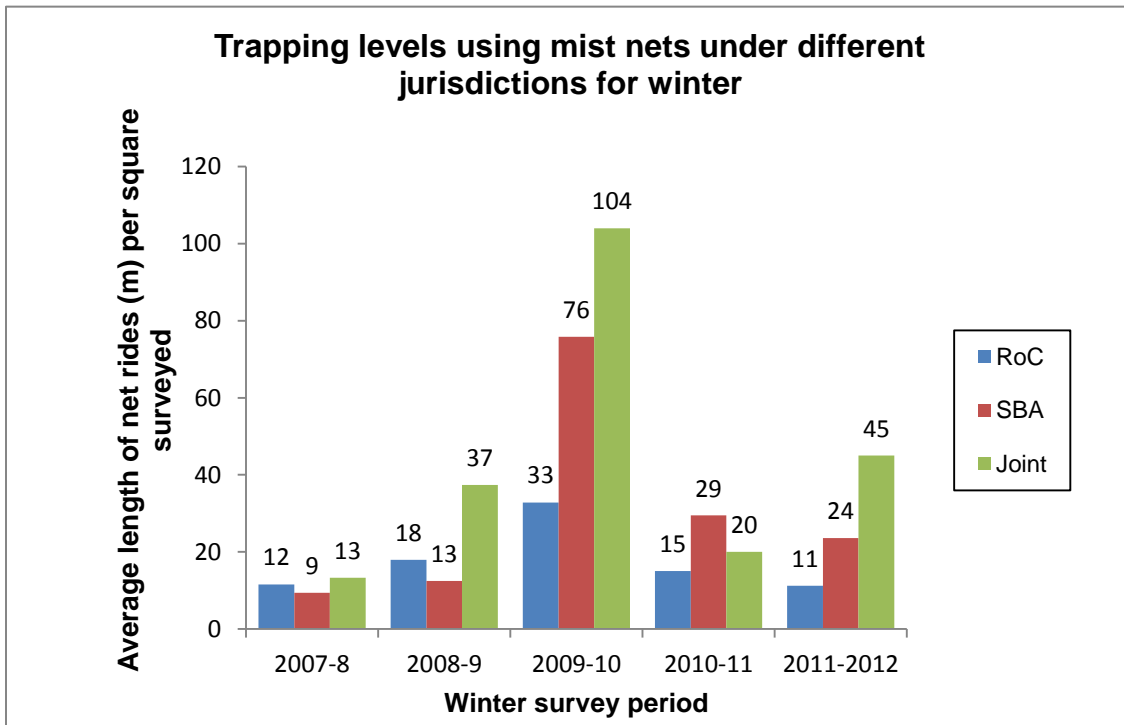


Figure 2 Trapping levels using mist nets under different jurisdictions for the winter period

- “Joint” squares: despite the small sample size of this trapping period for joint squares (only 2 squares surveyed), it is clear that these squares, that are partly controlled by the Republic and partly by the SBA administration, have become a hotspot of illegal bird trapping, since there seems to be no clear jurisdiction between the competent authorities.
 - Competent authorities (Cyprus Game Fund, Anti-poaching unit of Cyprus Police and SBA Police) should coordinate more closely with targeted joint operations on these squares where their jurisdictions meet.
- Death toll estimate:
 - It is estimated that over 300,000 birds were killed within the survey area and over 400,000 were killed across the whole of Cyprus (see appendix 3 for details on the estimation methodology) for winter 2011/2012.
 - For the whole year 2011 (spring 2011, autumn 2011 and winter 2011/12) the death toll estimate was over 2.1 million birds within the survey area and over **2.8 million birds** across the whole of Cyprus. This is the **highest yearly death toll estimate** of the last 5 years of the surveillance programme of BirdLife Cyprus⁷, exceeding even the previous record estimate of 2.4 million birds of 2010.⁸

⁷ The surveillance programme started in 2002 but surveillance in spring, autumn and winter has only taken place since 2007.

⁸ Each winter season survey is considered in its entirety i.e. December – February for the calculation of the total annual death estimate e.g. the death estimate of year 2009 includes spring 2009, autumn 2009 and winter 2009/2010 (includes January 2010 since survey extended to that month) survey data.

Appendix 1 – Methodology of the trapping surveillance programme

Survey area and sampling strategy

The surveillance project began in 2002 with the coverage of 60 sample squares (each 1x1 km) chosen at random from within a 261 km² study area, which covered most of the Famagusta/Eastern Larnaca area and the Ayios Theodoros – Maroni area.

In 2005, the monitoring became more targeted, focusing on habitat suitable for trapping. Each 1 km square within the study area was classified as either a 'possible bird trapping area' or 'unlikely bird trapping area' based solely on the presence or absence of vegetation suitable for setting limesticks or nets. Surveillance subsequently took place in 'possible' squares only. Some 44 of the original 60 sample squares were 'possible bird trapping area' squares under the new classification. These 44 squares were kept, with another 16 new squares chosen randomly to bring the total sample to 60 again.

Then, in 2007, the survey area was expanded to cover 295 km² for Famagusta/Eastern Larnaca area and 111 km² for Ayios Theodoros – Maroni area, bringing the total survey area to 406 km². This was done after preliminary surveys in autumn 2006 found evidence of extensive trapping on the margins of the original (261 km²) survey area. The sample size was expanded to 100 squares (40 new squares were randomly chosen) to allow for this extension of the survey area. Out of the 406 1 km² squares of the expanded survey area, 301 have been classified as 'possible bird trapping area' squares.

The random selection of sample squares is stratified to ensure representative coverage of areas under SBA, Republic of Cyprus and "Joint" jurisdiction (squares where the two jurisdictions meet).

Surveying for trapping activity

Surveying consists of a two-man team systematically searching for evidence of illegal trapping activity in the randomly selected one by one kilometre squares. The time taken to survey each square is recorded, as are weather patterns and the presence or absence of large numbers of migrant birds.

For safety reasons (avoidance of possible confrontation with trappers) the BC observers do not go out in the field at dawn, which is the main period of trapping activity, but carry out surveys between 09:00 and 17:00. Each sample square is surveyed only once each season, partly for safety reasons (minimising the risk of the observers becoming known to trappers) and partly because repeat sampling of each square has no particular value when it comes to analysis of the collected data. Opportunistic observations are also made in the surroundings of squares where mist netting is suspected. Trapping activity includes:

- a) mist netting activity, which is the main focus of the surveillance programme of BirdLife Cyprus. This is calculated using the total length of active net rides recorded within the survey area; and
- b) limesticks, using the total number of active limesticks found within the survey area.

Mist nets

The two observers carry out a thorough search of all habitat patches suitable for the setting of mist nets (i.e. all areas with bushes and/or trees) within each sample square. The observers record all direct and indirect evidence of mist net and tape lure use and of net ride preparation and use (e.g. cleared corridors within vegetation for putting up nets, presence of pole bases). The codes used for the various categories of mist netting activity and tape lure use are given below, as are the codes used for recording the type of habitat where trapping activity is detected⁹. The surveyors note cases where they come across enclosed (fenced) areas that they cannot see into at all, or cannot see into well enough to survey fully.

Box 1 Key to survey codes used for the field		
<u>Net code</u>	<u>Habitat code</u>	<u>Tape lure code</u>
O – old ride	A – acacia	P – tale lure present, playing
P – ride recently prepared	C – citrus	L – loudspeakers present
ANN – active no nets present	E – eucalyptus	Y – tape lure present, not playing
AUN – active unset net present	F – fig	U – unknown
ASN – active set net present	J – mulberry	W – electrical wires associated
IUN – inactive unset net present	O – olive	

⁹These codes are explained fully in detail in the Autumn 2002 Bird Trapping surveillance report

	M – maquis P – pomegranate K – carob Cy – cypress L – lentisk S – syrian plum	with tape lures B – car battery present
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Limesticks

While the main effort of the observers is to locate evidence of mist netting, all evidence of limestick activity is also recorded. Limesticks are much harder to locate in the field than mist nets and are often set in a different habitat to mist nets. In addition, incidental evidence for limestick use is hard to detect (though trees pruned to hold limesticks are readily identifiable). It is impractical to search entire 1 km² sample squares for limesticks due to the time consuming nature of the task. The protocol is therefore for the observers to look out for limesticks while concentrating on surveying for mist netting activity.

Appendix 2 – Winter 2011/2012 field data

Confidential data – provided upon request

Appendix 3 Estimation of numbers of birds caught during winter 2011/2012

The following key assumptions are applied for the estimation of the birds killed:

- 12 metres is the assumed average length for a mist net
- 20 birds are caught per 12-m net per day (Magnin, 1986¹⁰)
- 0.5 birds are caught per limestick per day
- 40 days is the duration of the trapping period for winter; this is a conservative number that considers for rainy weather
- 301 are the possible bird trapping squares within the survey area as identified from the surveillance programme in 2007 (the random sample of squares surveyed by BirdLife Cyprus is taken from these 301 squares)
- 75% of illegal trapping activity for all of Cyprus takes place within the survey area (based on input from enforcement authorities and other experts)
- For P (prepared) nets it is assumed that they are active *every other day* while for ANN (Active No Nets), ASN (Active Set Nets) and AUN (Active Unset Nets) nets it is assumed that they are active every day during the trapping season.

Using the above assumptions the bird death toll is estimated as follows:

For nets = [(Total length of P category net rides/2) + (Total length of ANN+AUN+ASN rides)] / (average length of a net) x (20 birds per net per day) x (total number of 'possible bird trapping area' squares / number of squares surveyed) x (length of trapping season in days)

$$= [(62/2)+0+102+452] / (12) \times (20) \times (301/39) \times (40)$$

= **301,000 birds** caught within the survey area in **mist nets**.

For limesticks = 0

No limesticks were found during the survey; however this does not necessarily suggest that there was no bird trapping with the use of limesticks. In fact the press release of Game Fund regarding poaching arrest cases for December 2011 reports that on the 16th December 2011 a person was arrested because it was hunting with the use of 150 limesticks and a decoy.

In total **301,000 birds** can be estimated to have been caught in mist nets within the survey area during winter 2011/2012. Assuming that the survey area accounts for 75% of the trapping activity in Cyprus, the bird death toll across Cyprus is:

= 301,000 / 75%

= **401,333 killed in nets across all Cyprus during winter 2011/2012.**

¹⁰ Magnin G. (1986) "An account of the illegal catching and shooting of birds in Cyprus during 1986". International Council for Bird Preservation

Appendix 4 Larnaca Declaration and Recommendation No. 155



LARNACA DECLARATION

The European Conference on Illegal Killing of Birds, co-organised by the Council of Europe and the Game Fund of Cyprus (Ministry of Interior) in the framework of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern, 1979), was held in Larnaca, Cyprus from 6 to 8 July 2011. The event was attended by 100 participants representing various stakeholders, including Contracting Parties and Observers to the Bern Convention, international organizations, national and local authorities, enforcement agencies, nature conservation NGOs including hunting associations, scientific and research bodies, tourism industry, police authorities and mass-media.

Recognising that many birds species in Europe and worldwide are declining rapidly and that, for this reason, governments have adopted various measures to help birds, the Conference participants agreed that measures to tackle illegal killing are urgently required.

Despite efforts by many governmental authorities, illegal taking and trading in wild birds is still a serious pan-European problem with clear regional patterns, having a considerable negative impact on biodiversity across the continent. In some European countries, the driver for such activities is mainly direct or indirect financial profit for individuals or organised crime, generating illegal (untaxed) benefits not related to basic survival needs. Considering the multiple dimensions of illegal killing, trapping and trading of birds in Europe, such as the ecological/environmental, legal, economic, social and political aspects, a combination of measures, policies and strategies is necessary to solve the problem. These measures should sensitively combine law enforcement (including advocacy and judicial processes, effective investigative agencies, exemplary punishment and adequate court judgments), education and awareness of the general public and of specific target groups (eg: hunters, farmers, children and youth, etc.) and securing political support mostly by strengthening the operational capacity of law enforcement agencies or bodies.

The participants in the European Conference on Illegal Killing of Birds call therefore on responsible stakeholders, governments, local communities, law enforcement agencies, nature conservation NGOs including hunting associations to unequivocally condemn all forms of illegal taking and trading in wild birds, and to pledge a zero tolerance approach to illegal killing, and a full and proactive role in fighting against this illegal activity, which represents a serious threat to biodiversity, damaging nature as well as human society. More detailed recommendations will be submitted to the 31st meeting of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention to be held in Strasbourg on 29 November – 2 December 2011 for possible adoption.

They include, inter alia: i. The need to strengthen enforcement at each stage of the bird crime chain through appropriate targeting, scientific and technical support and cooperation ; ii. The need to recognize the significance of the illegal taking and trade of birds as a risk to the achievement and maintenance of favorable status of bird populations and a damage to the conservation actions undertaken by the Parties with adverse impacts on the conservation, legal hunting, agriculture and tourism sectors; and iii. The need to develop, finance and support national communication strategies promoting dialogue between relevant stakeholders and the wider public.

At the same time, the participants in the Larnaca Conference express their warm thanks to the Cyprus authorities for their generous hospitality.

Done in Larnaca, Cyprus, 7th July 2011



Strasbourg, 2 December 2011
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T-PVS (2011) 22

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee
31st meeting
Strasbourg, 29 November - 2 December 2011

RECOMMENDATION
ON THE ILLEGAL KILLING, TRAPPING
AND TRADE OF WILD BIRDS

Document
prepared by
the Directorate of Culture and Cultural and Natural Heritage



Convention on the Conservation of
European Wildlife and Natural Habitats

**Recommendation No. 155 (2011) of the Standing Committee, adopted on 2 December 2011 on the
illegal killing, trapping and trade of wild birds**

The Standing Committee of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats,
acting under the terms of Article 14 of the Convention;

Having regard to the aims of the Convention to conserve wild fauna and its natural habitats;

Recalling that under Article 1, paragraph 2, which sets out the aims of the Convention, particular emphasis is to
be given to the conservation of endangered and vulnerable species, including endangered and vulnerable
migratory species;

Recalling that Article 6 requires Parties to take the necessary and administrative measures to ensure the special
protection of the wild fauna species specified in Appendix II, prohibiting in particular all forms of deliberate
capture and keeping, and deliberate killing, as well as the possession and internal trade in these animals, alive
or dead;

Recalling its Recommendation No. 5 (1986) on the prosecution of persons illegally catching, killing or trading
in protected birds, which encouraged Parties to ensure the prosecution of persons illegally catching or killing
birds or establishments commercialising live or protected birds;

Further recalling its Recommendation No. 90 (2001) on the catching, killing or trading of protected birds in
Cyprus, which encouraged Cyprus to properly implement the actions suggested in Recommendation No. 5
(1986);

Noting with satisfaction that since these recommendations were adopted by the Standing Committee, most
Parties have adopted national legislation providing for the prosecution of persons illegally catching, killing or
trading in wild birds;

Regretting that despite growing efforts by competent authorities, enforcement of domestic legislation intended
to meet international obligations is weak and not always accompanied by appropriate sanctions;

Recognising and regretting that illegal killing, trapping and trade in wild birds is still carried out, and that in
some Parties these are a growing phenomena, sometimes involving other related issues, such as the transit of
the killed and captured birds through third countries;

Bearing in mind the difficulties in identifying the illegally killed or captured species and proving the crimes
before the Courts, in order to achieve the effective prosecution of offenders;

Bearing in mind the European Charter on Hunting and Biodiversity (document T-PVS (2007) 7 revised),
adopted by the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention on 29 November 2007, and particularly its

Principles No. 2 – Ensure that regulations are understandable and respected; No. 3 – Ensure that harvest is ecologically sustainable; No. 8 – Empower local stakeholders and hold them accountable; and No. 11 - Encourage cooperation between all stakeholders in management of harvested species, associated species and their habitats;

Regretting the negative conservation impact that results from the indiscriminate killing and trapping of birds, including by using prohibited means and methods of killing, capture and other forms of exploitation, listed in Appendix IV of the Convention;

Welcoming, and bearing in mind, the Strategic Plan of the Convention on Biological Diversity 2011-2020, and its Aichi targets;

Recalling the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 (COM (2011) 244) and, in particular, its target 1 “Fully implement the Birds and Habitats Directives”;

Recalling that Contracting Parties to the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) shall ensure that any use of migratory waterbirds is sustainable for the species as well as for the ecological systems that support them (art. III. 2b), shall develop and implement measures to reduce and, as far as possible eliminate, the use of poisoned baits, and prohibit the possession or utilisation of, and trade in, birds and eggs which have been taken in contravention of the prohibitions laid down pursuant to this agreement (art. II. 1 together with the Action Plan);

Recalling also that the Action Plan of the Memorandum of Understanding on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia, under the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), has identified as a priority action the protection of the species covered by the Memorandum of Understanding from unlawful killing, including poisoning, shooting, persecution, and unsustainable exploitation;

Further recalling that the CMS Conference of the Parties urged Parties to develop an Action Plan for the Conservation of African-Eurasian migratory land birds;

Recalling that the promotion of cultures and traditions, as well as of a European identity based on shared values should be respectful of human and fundamental rights, and take into account ethical aspects;

Recognising that effective measures to secure compliance with international obligations need to include actions aimed at education, changes in social attitudes and awareness campaigns;

Recognising that the need for improved knowledge should not in any way delay the undertaking of urgent measures in response to the growing problem of illegal wild bird killing, trapping and trade reported by several Contracting Parties;

Recommends Contracting Parties to the Convention and invite Observers to:

1. General

a. Develop and support national communication strategies, promoting dialogue between all relevant interest groups, and noting cultural sensitivities. These strategies should be aimed to the conservation of bird population and based on the following principles: (i.) this is about illegal killing of birds, not legal hunting; (ii.) zero tolerance of illegal killing of wild birds; (iii.) recognition of legal hunting and sustainable use.

2. Enforcement aspects

- a.* Consider birds as a European heritage and a valuable resource, thus applying a zero tolerance approach to illegal killing, trapping and trade of wild birds to support a shift of culture towards shared values respectful of nature, and promote active stewardship;
- b.* Strengthen the enforcement at each stage of the bird-crime chain through appropriate political, judicial, operational, scientific and technical support and cooperation, and include a concerted focus on end-users;
- c.* Promote partnership and coordination between government agencies and stakeholders so as to streamline enforcement at the local, national and international level, and target awareness-raising.

3. Biological aspects

- a.* Taking into account that scientific knowledge can never be complete and this should not be an impediment to taking action, nevertheless every effort should be made to improve knowledge needed to support the solutions to the problem of illegal killing, trapping and trade of birds such as, in terms of priorities, a European bird migration atlas for the better knowledge of flyways of species and populations, seasonality of movements and connectivity among key areas for migratory birds;
- b.* In cooperation between the stakeholders, to establish systematic monitoring and reporting systems for illegal activities using standardised methods for data collection, providing for common reporting format and taking into account population flyways;
- c.* Undertake prioritised actions in hotspots of bird concentration and illegal killing activities in order to facilitate a best practice approach in countries along flyways. The breakdown of the links between the demand for wild birds and the supply through illegal activities should be dealt with as a priority by the relevant countries and institutions;
- d.* Ensure the effective management of protected areas with the aim of maintaining and improving the connectivity of habitats in the wider landscapes thus ensuring the functionality of flyways;
- e.* Take forward the issue of poisoning of migratory species in a global context to Conferences or Meetings of Parties of CMS and respective agreements.

4. Institutional aspects:

- a.* Strengthen the capacity, human resources, competencies and the level of cooperation between the relevant enforcement and judicial authorities, as well as make the best use of available budgetary resources to effectively prevent and punish wildlife/bird crimes;
- b.* Where internal judicial processes allow, encourage the creation of special units of judges and prosecutors, provided with specialist training on combating wildlife/bird crime, and ensure all relevant cases are assigned to them.