



## UPDATE on illegal bird trapping activity in Cyprus

Covering the Autumn 2012 findings of BirdLife Cyprus' continuing monitoring programme of illegal bird trapping in Cyprus and providing an overview of the latest developments regarding the problem

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## Περίληψη

Η παγίδευση πουλιών για το φθινόπωρο του 2012 έφτασε σε επίπεδα ρεκόρ σύμφωνα με το συστηματικό πρόγραμμα παρακολούθησης που διατηρεί ο Πτηνολογικός Σύνδεσμος Κύπρου τα τελευταία 11 χρόνια. Παρά την ενθαρρυντική μείωση της παγίδευσης στις αρχές του τρέχοντος έτους (άνοιξη), το φθινόπωρο το οποίο αποτελεί την κύρια εποχή παγίδευσης εξελίχθηκε σε μια ακόμη οικολογική καταστροφή, διατηρώντας την δραματική αύξηση της παράνομης παγίδευσης που παρατηρείται από το 2007 και ιδιαίτερα τα τελευταία 3 έτη. Τα επίπεδα παγίδευσης με τη χρήση διχτύων είναι τώρα γύρω στο 45% των επιπέδων του 1990, όταν η πάταξη του φαινομένου ήταν ουσιαστικά ανύπαρκτη. Αυτή η εικόνα αντιπροσωπεύει μια καταστροφική ανατροπή της σημαντικής προόδου που είχε επιτευχτεί για τη διατήρηση της φύσης, δεδομένου ότι τα επίπεδα παγίδευσης ήταν στο 10% των επιπέδων του 1990 την περίοδο 2002-06.

Ο Πτηνολογικός Σύνδεσμος Κύπρος θεωρεί πως αυτή η εικόνα αποτελεί μια χαμένη ευκαιρία για την Κυπριακή Δημοκρατία και το Ηνωμένο Βασίλειο να δείξουν στα άλλα κράτη μέλη της ΕΕ την αποφασιστικότητά τους για αντιμετώπιση του θέματος αυτού στη ρίζα του, ειδικά καθώς η Κύπρος είχε την Προεδρία της ΕΕ το δεύτερο εξάμηνο του 2012.

Η ανάλυση των δεδομένων από την έρευνα πεδίου δείχνει ότι καταγράφηκαν συνολικά 17 χιλιόμετρα διαδρομών για δίχτυα που ήταν ενεργά το φθινόπωρο 2012 - ένα μεγάλο ποσοστό από αυτούς βρέθηκαν στη Βρετανική Βάση της Δεκέλειας. Με αυτά τα επίπεδα παγίδευσης εκτιμάται ότι ως και 1,6 εκατομμύρια πτηνά μπορεί να θανατώθηκαν εντός της περιοχής έρευνας. Η χρήση διχτύων αυξήθηκε κατά 11% σε σύγκριση με το φθινόπωρο του 2011. Όσο για τα ξόβεργα, μια μείωση της τάξης του 35% καταγράφηκε αυτό το φθινόπωρο σε σύγκριση με το φθινόπωρο του 2011. Ωστόσο, το πρόγραμμα παρακολούθησης του Πτηνολογικού επικεντρώνεται περισσότερο στην παγίδευση με τη χρήση διχτύων και άλλες ΜΚΟ που επικεντρώνονται στον εντοπισμό ξοβέργων έχουν καταγράψει χιλιάδες. Η εκτεταμένη χρήση των ξοβέργων, κατά πλειοψηφία σε περιοχές της Δημοκρατίας, επιβεβαιώνεται και από τα στοιχεία πάταξης των αρμοδίων αρχών.

Ως συμπέρασμα, τα στοιχεία της έρευνας πεδίου επιβεβαιώνουν ότι η παράνομη δραστηριότητα παγίδευσης πουλιών, τόσο με δίχτυα όσο και με ξόβεργα, είναι εκτός ελέγχου, ανατρέποντας όλα τα (συγκριτικά) θετικά αποτελέσματα που επιτεύχθηκαν πριν από το 2007.

Τόσο η Κυπριακή Δημοκρατία όσο και η Διοίκηση των Βρετανικών Βάσεων αδυνατούν να εκπληρώσουν τις υποχρεώσεις τους σύμφωνα με την Οδηγία για τα Πτηνά. Η Δημοκρατία έχει κυρίως να ασχοληθεί με την χρήση ξοβέργων που παρουσιάζει μεγάλη αύξηση και τα εστιατόρια που σερβίρουν παράνομα παγιδευμένα πουλιά, ενώ η Βάση της Δεκέλειας έχει γίνει μια περιοχή όπου η χρήση διχτύων για παγίδευση πουλιών είναι εκτεταμένη, όπου οι φθινοπωρινές καταγραφές για τη χρήση διχτύων έδειξαν για άλλη μια φορά τα επίπεδα να είναι πολύ υψηλότερα στις Βρετανικές Βάσεις σε σύγκριση με τη Δημοκρατία.

Παρά το γεγονός ότι αναγνωρίζονται οι προσπάθειες πάταξης των τριών αρμοδίων αρχών (Υπηρεσία Θήρας & Πανίδας της Κύπρου, Κλιμάκιο Πάταξης Λαθροθηρίας της Αστυνομίας Κύπρου, Κλιμάκιο Πάταξης Λαθροθηρίας των Βρετανικών Βάσεων), είναι επιτακτική η

ανάγκη για ενίσχυση τους. Επιπλέον, η πάταξη κατά των εστιατορίων που σερβίρουν αμπελοπούλια ήταν περιορισμένη και μη συνεχόμενη κατά την περίοδο Αυγούστου – Νοέμβριου, την κύρια περίοδο που τα σερβίρουν τα εστιατόρια δηλαδή.

Δυστυχώς υπάρχει γενικά μια έλλειψη πολιτικής βούλησης για την αντιμετώπιση αυτού του ζητήματος στη ρίζα του και για την εφαρμογή ‘μηδενικής ανοχής’. Στο Συνέδριο της Βέρνης για την παράνομη θανάτωση πτηνών που πραγματοποιήθηκε στη Λάρνακα (Κύπρος) τον Ιούλιο 2011, τόσο η Κυπριακή Δημοκρατία όσο και το Ηνωμένο Βασίλειο δεσμεύτηκαν για την υιοθέτηση ‘μηδενικής ανοχής’ για την παράνομη παγίδευση πουλιών. Παρόλο που έχει περάσει περισσότερο από ένας χρόνος αυτό δεν έχει ακόμη υλοποιηθεί. Αντίθετα υπήρξαν προσπάθειες στην Κυπριακή Βουλή για χαλάρωση της εθνικής νομοθεσίας σχετικά με το θέμα και δηλώσεις δηλώσεις από προεδρικούς υποψηφίους για υποστήριξη της ‘αποποινικοποίησης’ της παγίδευσης πουλιών.

Είναι σαφές ότι χρειάζεται ένα στρατηγικό σχέδιο δράσης για την αντιμετώπιση αυτού του προβλήματος από όλες τις πλευρές το οποίο θα συμπεριλαμβάνει όλους τους ενδιαφερόμενους φορείς σε μια συλλογική, συντονισμένη και στοχευμένη προσπάθεια για την εξάλειψή του. Επιπλέον, μια μεγάλης κλίμακας και μακρόχρονη εκστρατεία ευαισθητοποίησης είναι επίσης απαραίτητη για να υπάρξει αλλαγή της κοινής γνώμης για το θέμα των αμπελοπουλιών και να προκαλέσει μια αλλαγή της στάσης απέναντι σε αυτή την οικολογικά επιζήμια πρακτική, τόσο σε πολιτικό όσο και κοινωνικό επίπεδο.

Η παρούσα έκθεση περιγράφει τα ευρήματα και τα συμπεράσματα του προγράμματος παρακολούθησης του Πτηνολογικού Συνδέσμου Κύπρου για την παράνομη παγίδευση πουλιών για το φθινόπωρο του 2012. Η έκθεση χωρίζεται στα ακόλουθα κεφάλαια:

- Κεφάλαιο 1 παρουσιάζει μια σύνοψη της παγίδευσης πουλιών στην Κύπρο, δίνει κάποια ιστορικά στοιχεία αυτής της δραστηριότητας, κάνει αναφορά στην εθνική νομοθεσία όσον αφορά την προστασία των πτηνών και παρουσιάζει την τρέχουσα κατάσταση,
- Κεφάλαιο 2 παρουσιάζει το πρόγραμμα παρακολούθησης του Πτηνολογικού Συνδέσμου Κύπρου,
- Κεφάλαιο 3 παρουσιάζει τα αποτελέσματα από το πρόγραμμα παρακολούθησης, συνοψίζει τα στοιχεία πάταξης των αρμοδίων αρχών και περιγράφει τη στάση των πολιτικών και του ευρύτερου κοινού σε αυτό το ζήτημα, και
- Κεφάλαιο 4 είναι η συζήτηση, όπου εξηγούνται οι λόγοι για τους οποίους η παγίδευση πουλιών αποτελεί ένα περίπλοκο θέμα και δίνονται προτάσεις για τη συνέχεια.

## Summary

Bird trapping activity for autumn 2012 was at record levels for the 11-year period of the systematic surveillance programme of BirdLife Cyprus. Despite the encouraging decrease in trapping activity at the beginning of this year (spring season), the main autumn trapping season has shaped into another ecological disaster, maintaining the dramatic increase in bird trapping observed since 2007 and in particular in the last 3 years. Levels of mist net use are now around 45% of levels in the 1990s, when enforcement was basically non-existent. This represents a disastrous loss of conservation ground, given that trapping levels were down to 10% of 1990s levels in the period 2002-06.

BirdLife Cyprus views the current situation as a missed opportunity for the Republic of Cyprus and the UK government to show to other EU Member States their determination to tackle this issue at its root, especially as Cyprus has been hosting the EU Presidency for the second half of 2012.

The analysis of the survey data shows that 17 km of net rides were active during the autumn of 2012 – a large proportion of these in the Dhekelia SBA. These trapping levels could have resulted in 1.6 million birds killed. Mist netting activity was up by 11% compared to autumn 2011. As for limesticks, a decrease of 35% was observed for this autumn compared to autumn 2011; however the surveillance programme of BirdLife Cyprus focuses more on mist netting activity and other NGOs that focus on limesticks have reported thousands. The extensive limestick use – mostly in the Republic areas - is also confirmed from the enforcement data of the competent authorities.

In conclusion, the survey data confirm that illegal bird trapping activity, both with mist nets and limesticks, is getting out of control, reversing all the (relatively) positive results achieved prior to 2007.

Both the Republic of Cyprus and the UK sovereign base areas (SBA) Administration are failing to meet their obligations under the Birds Directive. The Republic has in particular to deal with the resurgence in limesticks use and the restaurants that illegally serve the trapped birds, while the Dhekelia SBA area has become a mist netting hotspot, with autumn mist netting levels once again very much higher in the SBAs than the Republic.

Although the enforcement efforts of all three competent authorities (Cyprus Game & Fauna Service, Cyprus Police Anti-poaching and SBA Police Anti-poaching unit) are acknowledged, strengthening of their resources is urgently needed. Furthermore, enforcement against restaurants serving *ambelopoulia* has been limited and not persistent during the period August to November, which is the main period for serving trapped birds.

Unfortunately, there is a general lack of political will to tackle this issue at its root and to enforce a 'zero tolerance' approach. At the Bern Conference on illegal bird killing that took place in Larnaca (Cyprus) in July 2011, both the Republic of Cyprus and the UK Government pledged for the adoption of 'zero tolerance' on illegal bird trapping. However, more than a year after this has not yet materialised; on the contrary there have been attempts from the

Cyprus Parliament to relax the national law on this issue and public statements from presidential candidates in support of the “decriminalisation” of bird trapping.

It is clear that a strategic action plan is needed to tackle this problem from all angles which will involve all relevant stakeholders in a collective, coordinated and targeted effort to eliminate it. Furthermore, a large-scale and long-lasting awareness campaign is also necessary to begin changing public opinion on the *ambelopoulia* issue and to cause a shift of both political and social attitude towards this ecologically damaging practice.

This report details the findings and conclusions of the BirdLife Cyprus surveillance programme on illegal bird trapping for autumn 2012. The report is separated into the following sections:

- Section 1 provides an overview of the bird trapping in Cyprus, gives some historical background to this activity, makes reference to the national legislation regarding bird protection and presents the current situation,
- Section 2 describes the historical outline of the surveillance programme of BirdLife Cyprus,
- Section 3 presents the results from the monitoring programme, summarises the enforcement data of the competent authorities and gives an outline of the political and social attitudes regarding this issue, and
- Section 4 is the discussion, explaining the reasons why bird trapping has become a complicated issue and providing suggestions on the way forward.

## 1. Overview of bird trapping in Cyprus

Historically, trapped birds – mostly Blackcaps - were a food supplement for the mostly poor island inhabitants living off the land or would be traded as a traditional delicacy for export commodity. The practice of bird trapping in Cyprus has been recorded in historical documents from the Middle Ages and even earlier times. Trapping as practiced in Cyprus today bears no relation to the ‘traditional’ or historical situation.

Bird trapping in Cyprus became illegal in 1974, when legislation on hunting was introduced with Law 39/74, when a number of bird species were listed as protected, including waterbirds, birds of prey, endemic species such as the Cyprus wheatear and the Cyprus warbler. In accordance with this law the game species were the hare, the chukar and the blank francolin and non-selective methods such as mist nets, limesticks and traps were prohibited. Moreover, in 1988 Cyprus ratified the 1979 Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, enlisting more bird species as protected, including also the Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*) for the first time. Blackcaps are the main target species of illegal bird trapping in Cyprus and with this important legislative amendment blackcaps obtained a protected species status in Cyprus, in addition to the previous prohibition for the use of non-selective methods for the killing of birds.

However, the implementation of the abovementioned national legislation regarding bird trapping was weak and enforcement on the ground virtually non-existent. During the accession period of Cyprus into the European Union, illegal bird trapping was a serious issue for Europe and political pressure resulted in a significant decrease in illegal bird trapping activity due to greater enforcement by the competent authorities. The EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC, formerly 79/409/EEC) was transposed into Cyprus Law N. 152(I)/2003, prohibiting anew the use of non-selective methods including mist nets, limesticks and calling devices. In particular Article 8(1) of the EU directive, which was transposed into the Cyprus law, clearly states that “... *Member States shall prohibit the use of all means, arrangements or methods used for the large-scale or non-selective capture or killing of birds or capable of causing the local disappearance of a species, in particular the use of those listed in Annex IV, point (a)*”. It is highlighted that also the possession of trapping equipment, trapped birds and the trading and eating of trapped birds (referred as *ambelopoulia* in Cyprus) are also banned under the Law 152/2003.

Despite the crackdown of this illegal activity prior to and after the Cyprus accession in 2004, there has been a dramatic increase in bird trapping in the last few years and in particular since 2007, based on data from the systematic and continuous surveillance programme of BirdLife Cyprus. The latest results from this monitoring programme are presented in this report.

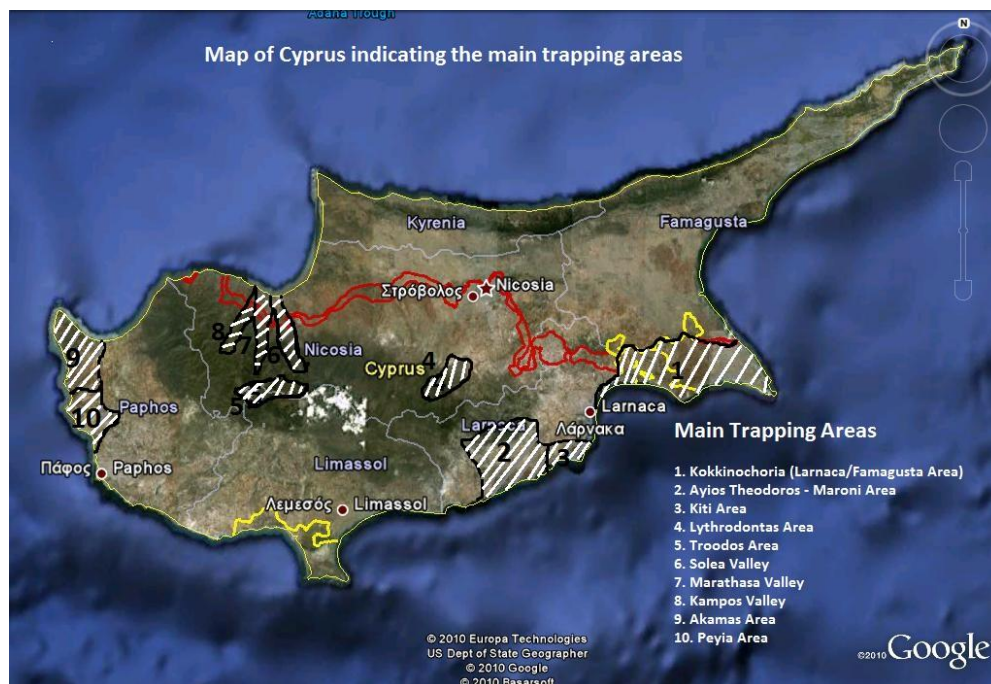
Nowadays, bird trapping in Cyprus is widespread and extensive, contributing to the large scale killing of hundreds of thousands of migratory birds, and survey records show that 152 bird species have been found trapped in mist nets or limesticks, of which 78 are listed as threatened by the EU Birds Directive and / or BirdLife International. This is a clear indication of the non-selective nature of these methods (see Appendix 1 for list of trapped bird species). This illegal activity has become a profitable business which is controlled to a large

extent by the 'big' trappers who are also involved in organised crime, and the Cyprus Game & Fauna Service estimated this illegal business to be of the order of millions of euros.

## 2. BirdLife Cyprus Surveillance programme

BirdLife Cyprus is a non-profit NGO working for the protection and conservation of birds and it is the Partner of BirdLife International in Cyprus. With the support of the RSPB (BirdLife partner in the UK), BirdLife Cyprus has undertaken a systematic surveillance programme regarding illegal bird trapping in Cyprus since 2002, providing a long record of trapping activity and giving the NGO a very good measure of expertise on the issue. The surveillance programme follows a 'Bird Trapping Monitoring Protocol' that was developed by BirdLife Cyprus and the RSPB, in consultation with the Cyprus Game & Fauna Service and the British Sovereign Base Area (SBA) police. Figure 1 shows a map where bird trapping takes place in Cyprus; monitoring is concentrated in the two areas (numbered 1 and 2) where extensive trapping takes place:

1. Kokkinochoria area (Eastern Larnaca/Famagusta area) – this area also includes the Dhekelia Eastern Sovereign Base (ESBA) area), and
2. Ayios Theodoros and Maroni area (Western Larnaca).



**Figure 1 Map of Cyprus showing the main trapping areas**

Although trapping is also an issue in other areas of Cyprus, the survey efforts focus on these two main areas due to resource limitations. As mentioned above the surveillance programme started in autumn 2002. It was revised in 2005 and 2007 to include a larger survey area, bringing the total survey area to 406 km<sup>2</sup>.

The surveillance programme is carried out during spring and autumn seasons when the bird migration is taking place. The main trapping season is the autumn, when the largest numbers of birds pass through Cyprus on their way to wintering grounds. The trappers are mainly after Blackcaps (*Sylvia atricapilla*) and other migrant songbirds, destined to be served as expensive *ambelopoulia* delicacies in local restaurants or for home consumption.

Additionally since 2007, winter monitoring has been undertaken to survey for winter trapping when the wintering Song Thrushes (*Turdus philomelos*) are specifically targeted.

The monitoring is undertaken by visiting a random selection of sample squares (1 km<sup>2</sup>) during daytime hours. The number of squares has been stratified to ensure a representative coverage of areas under SBA administration and the Republic of Cyprus. The survey team visits each square and records trapping activity, both with regards to mist netting and limesticks. However, it is stressed here that the surveillance programme of BirdLife Cyprus focuses mainly on mist netting activity, with limesticks basically recorded if they are found while searching for mist netting activity. This is due to the time needed to locate limesticks and the lack of resources of the organisation.

Appendix 2 contains more details on the methodology and photos of trapping paraphernalia. The methodology focuses on identifying net rides where mist nets could be set and which are classified as active or inactive based on the evidence found *in situ*. The main net classifications for active net rides include Prepared (P), Active No Net (ANN), Active Unset Net present (AUN) and Active Set Net present (ASN) (more details in Appendix 2).

The project is undertaken with the close co-operation of the competent authorities of the Republic of Cyprus (the Game & Fauna Service and the Cyprus Police Anti-poaching unit) and the SBA Police. When trapping paraphernalia is found, the BirdLife Cyprus team immediately contacts the relevant enforcement authorities. It should be highlighted that the BirdLife Cyprus observers never confront suspected trappers and never remove trapping paraphernalia.

BirdLife Cyprus would like to note its particular thanks to the RSPB/BirdLife in the UK, for supporting the project financially since the beginning.

### 3. Results

#### ***Survey results***

Overview of key findings:

- An estimated total of nearly **17 km of mist net rides** were active during the autumn 2012 in the main trapping areas of Eastern Larnaca / Famagusta and the Maroni-Ayios Theodoros areas.
- Mist netting activity was up by 11% compared to autumn 2011 and a new 11-year high (an average of 56 metres of active net ride was found per 1km<sup>2</sup> surveyed) was set for the period of the BirdLife Cyprus surveillance programme (2002-12). The trends show a **sharp increase in mist net use since 2007/8 and very high levels for the last 3 years.**
- **Mist netting levels in the last three autumns can be estimated to have reached around 45% of the alarming levels in the 1990s, when enforcement was basically non-existent. This represents a serious conservation setback, especially when one considers that levels of mist net use were down to around 10% of 1990s levels in the period 2002-06.**
- **Mist netting levels were dramatically higher in the SBAs than in the Republic**, in keeping with the pattern of recent years. **Limestick use was much higher in Republic** areas, with the Game & Fauna Service, the Cyprus Police Anti-poaching Unit and other NGOs reporting thousands of limesticks located and confiscated this autumn.

The field survey for autumn 2012 was carried out between September and October 2012 following the standard survey protocol. In total 58 squares<sup>1</sup> were surveyed during this period and BirdLife Cyprus reported all trapping finds to the relevant enforcement authorities, either the SBA Police, the Game & Fauna Service or the Cyprus Police Anti-poaching Unit, depending on the location of the finds.

A summary of the field data for autumn 2012 is presented in Appendix 3. In total the findings of the survey included 3,266 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), 38 mist nets found *in situ* (either classified as Active Set Nets or Active Unset Nets<sup>2</sup>), 275 limesticks and 58 birds found trapped including species such as Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*), Garden warbler (*Sylvia borin*), Willow warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*), Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) and Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca*). Opportunistic checks outside the survey squares detected an additional 1,098 metres of active net rides and 11 mist nets *in situ* (see Appendix 3).

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<sup>1</sup> Normally 60 squares are covered during the autumn surveys but for safety reasons 2 squares had to be abandoned and left uncovered this season.

<sup>2</sup> Active Set Net (ASN) is a net ride where the mist net is *in situ* and is set and ready for catching birds. Active Unset Net (AUN) is a net ride where the mist net is *in situ* but is furled i.e. the mist net is not stretched up for catching birds but lowered down.

The total length of active mist net rides within the 406 km<sup>2</sup> survey area (Larnaka - Famagusta and Ayios Theodoros – Maroni areas) can be estimated at about 17 km (3,266 m x 301 / 58)<sup>3</sup>.

Figure 2 shows the trends in autumn trapping activity (using mist nets and limesticks) since 2002. It is noted that the sample size for each autumn period is different and is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1 Number of squares surveyed each autumn period since 2002**

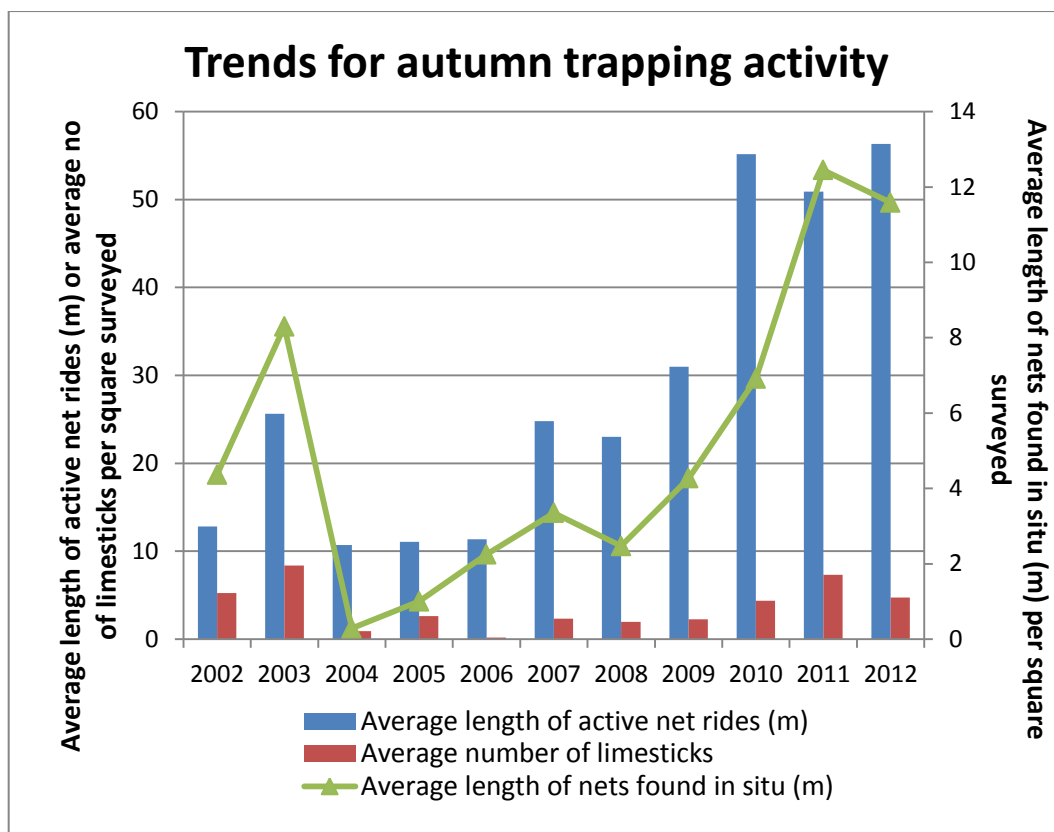
Autumn season	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
No of squares surveyed	60	60	59	60	80	100	100	100	98	60	58

The analysis from Figure 2 shows that:

- Mist netting activity (i.e. average length of active net rides) for autumn 2012 increased by 11% compared to autumn 2011. As shown from the data analysis mist netting activity for autumn 2012 has reached a new record high (an average of 56 metres of active net ride per square surveyed) since the start of surveillance programme in 2002, exceeding even autumn 2010 trapping levels.
- The average length of nets found *in situ* (this includes both set and unset nets, coded as ASN and AUN respectively) for autumn 2012 decreased by 7% compared to autumn 2011, but remained much higher than levels prior to autumn 2010.
- The average number of limesticks per square surveyed for autumn 2012 decreased by 35% compared to autumn 2011. However, it is noted here that BirdLife Cyprus does not focus its field survey on the detection of limesticks, as other organisations do. For example, a total of 4,529 limesticks were located in autumn 2012 during a joint field survey by Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) and Friends of the Earth (FoE) Cyprus, of which the majority were found in the Republic (4,475 limesticks) and the remaining in SBA areas (54 limesticks), highlighting the widespread use of limesticks in autumn 2012. This is also confirmed from survey data from the MBCC (Migratory Birds Conservation in Cyprus) organisation who located around 1,000 limesticks in the Republic controlled areas during their autumn 2012 bird trapping survey.

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<sup>3</sup> There are 301 1 km<sup>2</sup> squares in the survey area that are classified as suitable for trapping activity (on the basis of vegetation characteristics) and 58 of these squares were surveyed in Autumn 2012.



**Figure 2 Trends for autumn bird trapping activity**

From the above graph it is clear that mist netting activity has increased sharply since 2007, and has remained at very high levels for the last 3 years. This pattern of increase is also true for limesticks use (based mostly on data from CABS, FoE Cyprus and MBCC).

The levels of mist net use recorded in recent years (2010-12) are around 45% of estimated levels in the 1990s, before the BirdLife survey began. In the 1990s enforcement was, by general admission, lax, with increased effort only coming with the start of Cyprus' EU accession process.

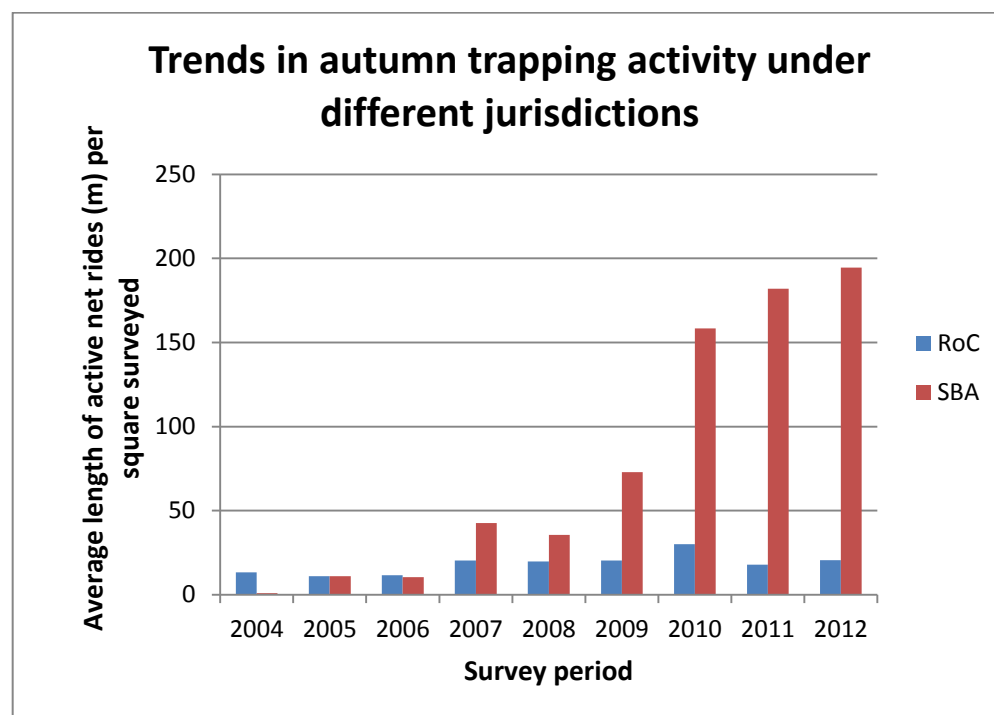
The baseline for pre-2002 mist net use levels can be estimated based on the total number of active and inactive net rides located in the field in the first survey season, autumn 2002. It is assumed all these rides were active in the 1990s, in the absence of any effective enforcement. A total of 7,174 m of active and inactive net rides were recorded in the 2002 autumn survey, in 60 1km<sup>2</sup> survey squares (see BirdLife's relevant 2002 report). This averages at 120 m of net ride per survey square, compared to averages ranging from 51 to 56 m in 2010-12 (see Figure 2 above).

This rough analysis suggests trapping levels (mist nets) in recent autumns have been around 45% of levels in the 1990s. This represents a serious backward step if one considers that in the years 2002-06 trapping levels were generally down to about 10% of 1990s levels (with the exception of 2003, average of 11-13 m of active rides per surveyed square – see Figure 2 above).

Overall it is estimated that 1.6 million birds could have been killed within the survey area and over 2.1 million could have been killed across the whole of Cyprus<sup>4</sup> (see Appendix 5 for details) during autumn 2012. If one were to split the potential death toll estimate between jurisdictions within the survey area (1.6 million birds) based on the trapping paraphernalia found, then 400,000 would be the potential killed in the Republic and 1.2 million in the SBAs. Note however, that the limestick toll is not fully covered in this estimate and is concentrated in the Republic.

Figure 3 summarises autumn mist netting activity under different jurisdictions for all the squares surveyed since 2004. It is noted again that the sample size for each period is different and is shown in Table 1.

- For the Republic areas, autumn 2012 showed an increase of 15% compared to autumn 2011.
- For the SBA areas, autumn 2012 showed an increase of 7% compared to autumn 2011.
- It is clear from the graph that mist netting activity in the Eastern SBA areas is much higher (about ten times) than in RoC controlled areas, a pattern that has held in recent years (the average length of active net rides per square surveyed in SBA areas was 194m while in the Republic was 20m for Autumn 2012).



**Figure 3 Autumn trapping activity under different jurisdictions**

<sup>4</sup> The estimate also includes any bird trapping that takes place in the occupied parts of Cyprus, although trapping levels are relatively low based on information provided to BirdLife Cyprus by other organisations and our joint survey work in the occupied areas with the Turkish Cypriot bird protection society, KUSKOR. This is also the reason why the occupied areas are not presented as a main trapping area in Figure 1.

## Enforcement

There are 3 competent authorities that are responsible for enforcement against illegal bird trapping in Cyprus: the Game & Fauna Service and the Cyprus Police Anti-Poaching unit that are responsible for areas controlled under the Republic of Cyprus, and the SBA Police Anti-Poaching unit responsible for areas within the UK sovereign base areas. The resources of the above-mentioned enforcement bodies are as follows:

- Game & Fauna Service, the responsible body for the implementation of the Birds Directive, has about 90 wardens in total across the whole of island. The Larnaca & Famagusta district, where most of the bird trapping takes place in Cyprus and where the survey area of BirdLife Cyprus is focused, has in total 20 game wardens.
- Cyprus Police Anti-Poaching Unit has 7 officers (used to be 10 police officers but resources were reduced due to additional police escort needed for official visitors during the six-month Cyprus Presidency of the EU Council, July to December 2012)
- SBA Police Anti-Poaching Unit is a team of 4 officers to cover the Eastern Dhekelia Sovereign Base Area.

Table 2 summarises the enforcement data of the 3 competent authorities regarding illegal bird trapping for the months of August, September and October, the main period for bird trapping in Cyprus, for years 2011 and 2012.

**Table 2 Summary of illegal bird trapping statistics for the months of August, September and October of 2011 and 2012 for the competent authorities**

	Game & Fauna Service – Larnaca & Famagusta district <sup>2</sup>		SBA Police Anti-Poaching Unit <sup>3</sup>		Cyprus Police Anti-Poaching Unit <sup>4</sup>	
<i>Years</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>
<b>No of prosecutions</b>	54	58	23	21	NA	22
<b>No of trappers arrested</b>	57	70	23	22	NA	NA
<b>No of mist nets<sup>1</sup></b>	204	311	361	275	NA	116
<b>No of limesticks<sup>1</sup></b>	2,550	5,372	290	314	NA	4,799

Note 1: The total number includes both trapping paraphernalia (mist nets and limesticks) collected as court evidence when an arrest takes place and confiscations.

Note 2: Data provided from the District Head Officer of Game & Fauna Service of the Larnaca & Famagusta district (November 2012).

Note 3: Data provided from Intelligence analyst of SBA Police (November 2012).

Note 4: Data provided from Head of Cyprus Police Anti-Poaching Unit (November 2012).

- Game & Fauna Service – Larnaca & Famagusta district: From the enforcement data it is clear that more cases have been reported, more trappers have been arrested and a larger number of mist nets and limesticks have been confiscated for autumn 2012

compared to autumn 2011. This could be due to increased enforcement effort, increased trapping activity or a combination of both.

- It is also obvious that the Republic has become a hotspot for limestick use, confirmed both by the enforcement data in this table but also from other organisations that reported locating thousands of limesticks this autumn.
- SBA Police Anti-Poaching Unit – Dhekelia Sovereign Base: The enforcement data show that a similar number of trappers have been arrested, a lower number of mist nets and a slightly higher number of limesticks confiscated for autumn 2012 compared to autumn 2011. It is clear from this table and the pattern shown in Figure 3 above, that enforcement efforts have not been sufficient to reverse the upward trend in mist net use and more resources need to be allocated towards this end by the SBA administration.
- Cyprus Police Anti-Poaching Unit: The enforcement data are only available for autumn 2012 but the extensive scale of trapping in the Republic areas, particularly in relation to limesticks is again obvious.

**From the enforcement data it is clear that nowadays illegal bird trapping is taking place on a near-industrial scale, with confiscated limesticks between the 2 competent authorities of Cyprus exceeding 10,000 while the Dhekelia SBA, and particularly the Cape Pyla area, has become a real mist netting hotspot. The large number of confiscated mist nets by the Game & Fauna Service (Larnaca & Famagusta district) is also notable.**

Table 3 summarises the number of reports that BirdLife Cyprus provided to the competent authorities regarding active trapping sites and the overall feedback given by the competent authorities. It is noted that the information presented in the table below refers to active trapping sites as recorded by the survey team (this includes all net codes, P, ANN, AUN and ASN – see Appendix 2 for net classification - and sites where limesticks were found) and were reported to the competent authorities for further action.

**Table 3 Summary of trapping reports provided to competent authorities from BirdLife Cyprus during Autumn 2012**

	<b>Game and Fauna Service – Larnaca &amp; Famagusta</b>	<b>SBA Anti-Poaching Police Unit</b>	<b>Cyprus Police Anti-Poaching Unit<sup>2</sup></b>
Number of reports	50	52	-
Prosecutions / Arrests	17 (34%)	9 (17%)	-
Confiscations	10 (20%)	22 (42%)	-
Nothing found <sup>1</sup>	23 (46%)	21 (40%)	-

Note 1: 'Nothing found' refers to cases where the competent authority checked the trapping location but reported it inactive (no nets or limesticks in situ) upon its visit, therefore no prosecution or confiscation has taken place.

Note 2: No report was made to the Cyprus Police Anti-Poaching Unit in autumn 2012, as the unit was fully occupied escorting CABS activists in the field.

It is clear from the table above that the cooperation and information exchange between the Game & Fauna Service and BirdLife Cyprus has been quite successful, since more than 50% of the reports given resulted in either prosecutions of trappers or confiscations of trapping paraphernalia. It should be highlighted that the response time could still be much shorter, as it ranges from 1 day to more than 1 week, and a quicker response time might lead to more arrests / confiscations. However, the enforcement efforts of the Game & Fauna Service are acknowledged. Furthermore, it is clear that the Game & Fauna Service focuses its resources and effort more on prosecutions and arrests rather than on confiscations, an approach that is also confirmed from Game & Fauna officers during discussions with BirdLife Cyprus.

With regards to the Dhekelia SBA Police Anti-poaching unit, a similar overall picture is shown, with nearly 60% of the reports BirdLife Cyprus made resulting in prosecutions or confiscations. However, the response data also show that a large proportion of the BirdLife Cyprus reports have resulted in confiscations rather than prosecutions, revealing a different strategy to the Game & Fauna Service, with more focus given on the removal of paraphernalia and the undertaking of clear up operations. The response time of the SBA Police unit has been particularly poor this autumn, especially for cases where big trapping sites in Cape Pyla were reported and no action had resulted even 1 week later.

BirdLife Cyprus believes that both competent authorities, and in particular the SBA Police unit, should prioritise and use more efficiently their resources in order to achieve a quicker response time to any reported trapping sites.

As for the Cyprus Police Anti-poaching police unit, BirdLife Cyprus did not report any cases to them, mainly because of the limited resources this unit had and the fact that this autumn the unit collaborated very closely with the CABS and FoE Cyprus organisations by providing them with a police escort during their survey, in order to secure the safety of the activists. It should be acknowledged however that the cooperation of this unit with the activists has resulted in a number of arrests and a significant amount of mist nets and limesticks confiscated, as shown in Table 2. On the other hand it has limited the capacity of this unit to focus and to undertake targeted raids on restaurants serving *ambelopoulia* or against 'big' trapping operations.

BirdLife Cyprus received many reports of *ambelopoulia* being served in restaurants in autumn 2012, especially in late autumn. In at least one case (see Appendix 4) the sale of *ambelopoulia* is still advertised openly.

There is good news to report on a new, additional enforcement tool. Farmers receiving per hectare payments under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) are obliged to comply with cross compliance regulations and requirements, including obligations under the Birds Directive to keep their plots clear of any illegal bird trapping activity/equipment. Survey data from the monitoring programme indicate that a significant part of illegal bird trapping takes place in agricultural plots, hence the Cyprus Agricultural Payments Organisation (KOAP) has

been cooperating with the Game & Fauna Service to identify such agricultural plots and penalise the recipients for failing to meet cross compliance requirements. To date, almost 100 CAP payment recipients have been penalised for year 2012 in the Republic, providing an additional enforcement tool that gives the correct message of 'zero tolerance' on illegal bird trapping. With regards to areas controlled by the SBAs, cross compliance penalties without a conviction (i.e. the penalty is applied after a farmer is convicted of bird trapping) have not taken place yet, an issue that BirdLife Cyprus has discussed with the SBA Administration and has made clear to it that a conviction on trapping is not necessary under cross compliance regulations for imposing a penalty on a farmer / trapper.

### ***Social and political attitudes***

Illegal bird trapping was covered quite extensively by the media this autumn, particularly in the newspapers but also in some radio shows. The majority of the articles have been supportive of the anti-trapping effort and they report the non-selective and large scale killing of birds. Alternatively, they report on the issue in a neutral manner, providing an update on this illegal activity as reported by BirdLife Cyprus and other environmental NGOs.

On the other hand, there have also been newspaper articles that are supportive of illegal bird trapping, presenting it as a 'traditional' practice documented in various historical sources and claiming that it should be maintained, reporting on the reduced prices of *ambelopoulia* that are served illegally in restaurants and on rumours of trapped birds being served at wedding parties. This coverage, regardless of its reliability, reflects to a great extent the prevailing, uncaring and unconcerned social attitude to this destructive practice.

Furthermore, there is a clear lack of political will to tackle the issue of illegal bird trapping at its root. Two out of the 3 main candidates for the February 2013 presidential elections publicly stated in a newspaper article<sup>5</sup> that they would, if elected, try to legalise bird trapping in Cyprus! This sort of statement sends a contradictory message to the pledged 'zero tolerance' approach that was agreed by the Cyprus government at the Bern conference on illegal bird killing of last year (Larnaca, Cyprus), and is counterproductive to the enforcement efforts made by the competent authorities.

In July 2012, the Cyprus law (152(I)/2003) on the 'Protection and management of wild birds and game' has been amended by the Cyprus Parliament. Although BirdLife Cyprus was positive regarding most of the amendments introduced, an amendment was also included to regulate the use of bird calling devices via on-the-spot fines instead of a court prosecution (a court penalty could reach up to 17,000 euros and/or 3 years of imprisonment for an offender). This proposal was supported by some Members of the Parliament known for their support of the hunting lobby. It was also supported by the Cyprus hunting association, and the Cyprus Parliament approved this amendment in an extraordinary meeting of the Plenary that took place at the end of July. BirdLife Cyprus lobbied against this amendment from the start as we believe that in practice it makes the law less strict and essentially ineffective, allowing offenders that are in possession of or use bird calling devices when hunting to get

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<sup>5</sup> Article in Politis newspaper on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2012, page 18.

away with an on-the-spot fine, rather than face a court conviction and risk getting a criminal record if convicted.

Although the Cyprus legislation (152(I)/2003) foresees sufficiently strict penalties, an average court fine for illegal bird trapping is of the order of 600 – 800 euros<sup>6</sup> while organized trappers are making thousands of euros per year by selling the trapped birds to restaurants or for domestic consumption. To this date no restaurant license has been revoked from a restaurateur convicted for illegally offering trapped birds and no offender has been sentenced to imprisonment, although the Cyprus law allows for such penalties. The Game & Fauna Service has estimated that the illegal bird trapping 'business' is of the order of 15 million euros per year; with these huge profits being made, the current court fines are clearly non-deterrent.

On a final note, the issue of cross compliance penalties for bird trapping farmers was discussed in the Parliamentary Agriculture Committee in early November 2012. The discussion was essentially an attempt by a group of MPs, from the Famagusta area, to halt the implementation of the cross compliance penalties, which have caused an outcry in the known bird trapping areas.

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<sup>6</sup> Based on information from the presentation of Game & Fauna Service during the Bern Convention Conference on illegal bird killing in July 2011 at Larnaca (Cyprus).

## 4. Discussion

Illegal bird trapping activity with the use of mist nets and limesticks has seen a dramatic increase in the last few years. Levels of mist net use are now around 45% of levels in the 1990s, when enforcement was basically non-existent. Given that trapping levels were down to 10% of 1990s levels in the period 2002-06, there has been a disastrous loss of conservation ground in recent years.

BirdLife Cyprus made calls towards the competent authorities to take greater action to reverse this increasing trapping trend during the Cyprus Presidency but the situation appears to be getting out of control, threatening to reverse all the positive results achieved in the run up to and just after Cyprus' accession into the EU (2002-2006). The autumn 2012 survey results show that the 'zero tolerance' approach promised at a high-profile seminar in July 2011 has not materialised, casting into doubt the determination of Cyprus and the UK to tackle this chronic problem.

There are a number of reasons for the increase in illegal bird trapping.

**Lack of political will** to tackle the issue at its root, with some politicians and Members of the Cyprus Parliament publicly supporting bird trapping. Some presidential candidates have even supported decriminalization of bird trapping. The current political attitude does not reflect the 'zero tolerance' message signed up to by the Cyprus and UK competent authorities at the Bern Convention Conference on illegal bird killing that took place in July 2011 at Larnaca (Cyprus).

**Non-deterrent penalties** – Cyprus legislation foresees sufficiently strict penalties (up to 17,000 euros and / or 3 years imprisonment could be imposed) but an average court fine for illegal bird trapping is of the order of 600 – 800 euros<sup>7</sup>. On the other hand organized trappers are making thousands of euros per year from the illegal trade of trapped birds. With these huge profits being made, the current court fines are non-deterrent and courts should make use of the full force of the law to deter trapping offenders. BirdLife Cyprus believes that the recent amendments of the hunting legislation, approved by the Cyprus Parliament in late July 2012, are in essence a relaxation to the law and will make its implementation less effective (this is referring to the amendment for on-the-spot fines for calling devices).

**Mist nets in SBAs** - In relation to the UK Eastern SBA of Dhekelia, the survey data reveal that it has become a mist netting hotspot, particularly in areas such as Cape Pyla. It is clear that the current enforcement effort is not having any real results and the SBA administration and UK government need to change its strategy in order to reverse the near-industrial scale bird trapping that takes place under its watch.

**Stretched enforcement bodies & lack of effective action against offending restaurants** - It has also become apparent that despite all the enforcement effort on the trapping sites,

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<sup>7</sup> Based on information from the presentation of Game & Fauna Service during the Bern Convention Conference on illegal bird killing in July 2011 at Larnaca (Cyprus).

which BirdLife Cyprus acknowledges, it is clear that enforcement resources on the ground are severely stretched and the strengthening of competent authorities is urgently needed. A few targeted operations have been successfully undertaken by the Cyprus Police Anti-Poaching Unit and the Game & Fauna Service on 'big' trappers during this period (August – October), both in Eastern & Western Larnaca and the Famagusta district. However, there has been no systematic and targeted enforcement action on the restaurants serving *ambelopoulia*, with a few and late in season raids taking place at the end of November and early December by the Cyprus Police Anti-Poaching Unit and the Game & Fauna Service in Nicosia, Larnaca and Famagusta districts. Prior to this, the last restaurant raid was in February 2012. Restaurants are the main economic driver of this illegal business and they are all to be found in the Republic of Cyprus, and in some cases restaurateurs still advertise that birds are served (see Appendix 4). This is clearly not enough enforcement to have any real impact on the illegal trading and selling of trapped birds in restaurants. The Cyprus Police Anti-poaching unit, with its specially trained personnel, must take a more active lead on restaurant enforcement, particularly during the main trapping season, in cooperation with the Game & Fauna Service.

**Limestick problem** - Apart from the restaurants serving *ambelopoulia* illegally, the Republic of Cyprus also needs to address the issue of limesticks. Surveys by other organisations which focus on limestick detection (BirdLife Cyprus surveillance programme focuses mainly on mist netting activity), report thousands of limesticks; this is also confirmed from the enforcement data of the competent authorities as shown in Table 2. BirdLife Cyprus believes that this is connected to the fact that many still consider the use of limesticks a 'traditional practice'. A more lenient approach to limesticks has at times been adopted by competent authorities, creating a more permissive climate, despite the fact that limesticks can be as ecologically damaging as mist nets.

On the positive side cross compliance penalties with regards to bird trapping farmers have started to be imposed in the Republic. The SBA Administration still needs to apply cross compliance regulations correctly and to start imposing penalties without a court conviction being a prerequisite on farmers who undertake trapping on their plots.

**In conclusion, it is clear that Cyprus and the UK are not meeting their obligations under the Birds Directive for the protection of wild birds and the prohibition of methods that contribute to non-selective and / or large scale killing of birds. More political will and more enforcement resources are required to reverse the alarming recent trapping trend.**

It is clear that all the stakeholders (including NGOs) need to step up their efforts against illegal bird trapping and a strategic action plan needs to be drawn up to make the best possible use of available resources. The action plan should set out targets, key milestones and the role that each relevant body has to play in order to tackle this issue collectively, at its root. It should target direct and indirect means of tackling the problem.

Finally, a **large-scale and long-running awareness campaign** is needed to change public opinion and thus generate the political will for greater action on this matter. BirdLife Cyprus has focused on raising awareness on this issue during the Cyprus Presidency via a series of press releases, anti-trapping advertising messages on highway billboards and in raising

awareness on this issue using the internet and other visual material. However, an awareness campaign needs to be long-term, targeted and requires the involvement of all relevant bodies in order to be successful and BirdLife Cyprus calls upon the Cyprus and UK governments to allocate more resources for such a campaign.

## Appendixes

### Appendix 1

#### List of birds recorded trapped in mist nets and on limesticks

BirdLife Cyprus has been undertaking a systematic surveillance programme regarding illegal bird trapping in Cyprus since 2002, in conjunction with the RSPB (BirdLife partner in UK), as part of its anti-trapping campaign. The following table is a consolidated list of bird species that have been found trapped in mist nets and on limesticks during the field surveys undertaken for the surveillance programme of BirdLife Cyprus since 2002 and from various other data sources including: Hubbard J.P. (1968), Magnin G. (1987), Flint & Stewart (1992), CABS & FoE Cyprus (2010). In total the list includes 152 bird species, of which 78 are listed as threatened by the EU Birds Directive and / or BirdLife International.

No	Common English name	Scientific name	Common Cypriot name	Indicates threatened species (Note 1)
1	Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	Νανορωδιός	*
2	Black-crowned Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	Νυκτοκόρακας	*
3	Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	Βορτακοφάγος	*
4	Pallid Harrier	<i>Circus macrourus</i>	Ασπροσιάχινο	*
5	Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	Ορνιθοσιάχινο	*
6	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	Βαλτοσιάχινο	*
7	Montagu's Harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>	Καμποσιάχινο	*
8	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	Τζικλοσιάχινο	
9	Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	Διπλοσιάχινο	
10	Lesser kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>	Κιρκινέζι	*
11	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Κίτσης	*
12	Red-footed falcon	<i>Falco vespertinus</i>	Μαυροφάλκονο	*
13	Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>	Νανοφάλκονο	*
14	Eurasian Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	Δενδροφάλκονο	

15	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Τζάνος	*
16	Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	Ορτύκι	*
17	Chukar	<i>Alectoris chukar</i>	Περδίκι	*
18	Black Francolin	<i>Francolinus francolinus</i>	Φραγκολίνα	*
19	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	Μαυροπουλλάδα	
20	Little Crake	<i>Porzana parva</i>	Μικροπουλλάδα	*
21	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Αρκοπετείναρο	
22	Spotted Crake	<i>Porzana porzana</i>	Στικτοπουλλάδα	*
23	Eurasian Stone-curlew	<i>Burhinus oedichnemus</i>	Τρουλλουρίδα	*
24	Eurasian Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	Μπεκάτσα	*
25	European Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	Τρυγόνι	*
26	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Φιλικουτούνη	
27	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	Κούκος	
28	Great Spotted Cuckoo	<i>Clamator glandarius</i>	Καλοχρονιά	
29	Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	Ανθρωποπούλλι	*
30	Cyprus scops owl	<i>Otus scops cyprius</i>	Θουπί	*
31	Little Owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	Κουκκουφκιάος	*
32	Short-eared owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>	Βαλτόθουπος	*
33	Long-eared Owl	<i>Asio otus</i>	Αρκόθουπος	
34	European Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	Νυκτοπούλλι	*
35	Common swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	Πετροχελίδονο	
36	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	Πουπούξιος	*
37	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	Αλκυόνη	*
38	European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	Μελισσοφάγος	*
39	Blue-cheeked Bee-eater	<i>Merops persicus</i>	Πράσινος Μελισσοφάγος	
40	European Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i>	Κράγκα	*

41	Eurasian Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	Θερκοπούλλι	*
42	Greater Short-toed Lark	<i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>	Τρασηλούδα	*
43	Calandra lark	<i>Melanocorypha calandra</i>	Μαυροτράσιηλος	*
44	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	Τρασιήλα	*
45	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>	Πευκοτρασιήλα	*
46	Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i>	Σκορταλλός	*
47	Bimaculated Lark	<i>Melanocorypha bimaculata</i>	Ασπροτράσιηλος	
48	Lesser short-toed lark	<i>Calandrella rufescens</i>	Στικτοτρασηλούδα	*
49	Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>	Ασπροχελίδονο	*
50	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	Βαλτοχελίδονο	*
51	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Χελιδόνι	*
52	Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Hirundo daurica</i>	Μιτοχελίδονο	
53	Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>	Καμπογαλούδι	*
54	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava flavissima</i>	Κίτρινος Ζευκαλάτης	
55	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba alba</i>	Άσπρος Ζευκαλάτης	
56	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	Χωραφογαλούδι	
57	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Δενδρογαλούδι	
58	Red-throated Pipit	<i>Anthus cervinus</i>	Κοτσινογαλούδι	
59	Water Pipit	<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>	Νερογαλούδι	
60	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	Ποταμοζευκαλάτης	
61	Citrine Wagtail	<i>Motacilla citreola</i>	Ικτεροζευκαλάτης	
62	Richard's Pipit	<i>Anthus richardi</i>	Διπλογαλούδι	
63	Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	Τρυποκάρυδο	
64	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	Κελαηδόστρουθος	
65	Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin	<i>Cercotrichas galactotes</i>	Κοτσινοαήδονο	*
66	Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>	Γαλαζολαίμης	*

67	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	Κοτσινονούρης	*
68	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	Στακτοσκαλιφούρτα	*
69	Cyprus wheatear	<i>Oenanthe cypriaca</i>	Σκαλιφούρτα	*
70	Eastern Black-eared Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe hispanica</i>	Ισπανική Σκαλιφούρτα	*
71	Rufous-tailed Rock-Thrush	<i>Monticola saxatilis</i>	Πετροκότσυφας	*
72	Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>	Γαλαζοκότσυφας	*
73	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	Κοττινολαίμης	
74	Thrush Nightingale	<i>Luscinia luscinia</i>	Τζικλαηδόνι	
75	Common Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	Αηδόνι	
76	Western Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochrurus</i>	Καρβουνίαρης	
77	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	Βοσκαρούδι	
78	Eurasian Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	Παπαθικιά	
79	Finsch's Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe finschii</i>	Βουνοσκαλιφούρτα	
80	Eurasian Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	Μαυρόπουλλος (αρσενικό) Μαυρότζικλα (Θηλυκό)	
81	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	Τζίκλα	
82	Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	Τρυγονότζικλα	
83	Ring Ouzel	<i>Turdus torquatus</i>	Βουνότζικλα	
84	Isabelline Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>	Διπλοσκαλιφούρτα	
85	Eastern Olivaceous Warbler	<i>Hippolais pallida</i>	Τριβιτούρα	*
86	Olive-tree warbler	<i>Hippolais olivetorum</i>	Ελιοτριβιτούρα	*
87	Cyprus warbler	<i>Sylvia melanothorax</i>	Τρυπομάζης	*
88	Ruppell's Warbler	<i>Sylvia rueppelli</i>	Εληοβάτης	*
89	Eastern Orphean Warbler	<i>Sylvia hortensis</i>	Θαμνογιαλλούρα	*
90	Barred warbler	<i>Sylvia nisoria</i>	Γιαλλούρα	*
91	Western Bonelli's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus bonelli</i>	Πευκογιαννούδι	*
92	Wood warbler	<i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i>	Δασογιαννούδι	*

93	Moustached warbler	<i>Acrocephalus melanopogon</i>	Μουστακομουγιούδι	*
94	Savi's Warbler	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>	Νερομουγιούδι	
95	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	Σκλοιnikομουγιούδι	
96	Eurasian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	Καλαμομουγιούδι	
97	Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>	Τζικλομουγιούδι	
98	Icterine Warbler	<i>Hippolais icterina</i>	Κιτρινοτριβιτούρα	
99	Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>	Κηποσυκαλλίδα	
100	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	Αμπελοπούλλι	
101	Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	Διπλοσυκαλλίδα	
102	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>	Συκαλλίδι	
103	Sardinian Warbler	<i>Sylvia melanocephala</i>	Τρυποβάτης	
104	Subalpine Warbler	<i>Sylvia cantillans</i>	Μαυροφτέρι	
105	Spectacled Warbler	<i>Sylvia conspicillata</i>	Κοτσινοφτέρι	
106	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	Θαμνογιαννούδι	
107	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	Μουγιαννούδι	
108	Zitting Cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>	Δουλαππάρης	
109	Marsh Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>	Βαλτομουγιούδι	
110	Cettis Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	Ψευταηδόνι	
111	Eurasian River Warbler	<i>Locustella fluviatilis</i>	Ποταμομουγιούδι	
112	Spotted flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	Μουγιοχάφτης	*
113	Red-breasted flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>	Κοτσινομαντού	*
114	Semicollared flycatcher	<i>Ficedula semitorquata</i>	Πατσαλομαντού	*
115	Collared flycatcher	<i>Ficedula albicollis</i>	Κολλαρομαντού	*
116	Eurasian Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	Μαντού	
117	Eurasian Penduline Tit	<i>Remiz pendulinus</i>	Υφάντρα	
118	Cyprus coal tit	<i>Periparus ater cypriotes</i>	Πέμπετσος	*

119	Great Tit	<i>Parus major aphrodite</i>	Τσαγκαρούδι	
120	Bearded Reedling	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>	Καλαμογιαννίτσαρος	
121	Cyprus short-toed tree-creeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla dorothea</i>	Δενδροβάτης	*
122	Red-backed shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>	Στακτοτζεφαλάς	*
123	Lesser grey shrike	<i>Lanius minor</i>	Διπλοδακκαννούρα	*
124	Masked shrike	<i>Lanius nubicus</i>	Δακκαννούρα	*
125	Woodchat shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>	Κοτσινοτζεφαλάς	*
126	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	Κατσικορώνα	
127	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Λαζούρι	*
128	Eurasian Golden-Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>	Κλορκός	
129	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Στρούθος	*
130	Spanish Sparrow	<i>Passer hispaniolensis</i>	Αρκόστρουθος	
131	Rock Sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>	Πετρόστρουθος	
132	Eurasian Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	Τσακροσγάρτιλο	*
133	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	Σπίννος	
134	European Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	Λουλουδάς	
135	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	Σγαρτίλι	
136	European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>	Μπασταρτοκανάρινο	
137	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>	Κεφαλόσπιννος	
138	Red-fronted Serin	<i>Serinus pusillus</i>	Μαυροκανάρινο	
139	Common Redpoll	<i>Carduelis flammea</i>	Τσακρίλλι	
140	Trumpeter Finch	<i>Bucanetes githagineus</i>	Ερημόσπιννος	*
141	Eurasian Siskin	<i>Carduelis spinus</i>	Θκιολαρούδι	
142	Red Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>	Σταυρομούττης	
143	Cinereous bunting	<i>Emberiza cineracea</i>	Σμυρνοπιτίλλα	*
144	Cretzschmar's Bunting	<i>Emberiza caesia</i>	Σιταροπούλλι	*

145	Black-headed bunting	<i>Emberiza melanocephala</i>	Τιρίλινγκος	*
146	Corn Bunting	<i>Miliaria calandra</i>	Τσακρόστρουθος	*
147	Ortolan Bunting	<i>Emberiza hortulana</i>	Τσακροπιτίλλα	*
148	Pine Bunting	<i>Emberiza leucocephalos</i>	Πευκοπιτίλλα	
149	Yellow-breasted Bunting	<i>Emberiza aureola</i>	Βαλτοπιτίλλα	*
150	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	Κιτρινοπιτίλλα	
151	Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	Καλαμοπιτίλλα	
152	Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>	Βουνοπιτίλλα	*

Note 1: \* indicates threatened species under Annex I of the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) and/or the list of BirdLife International for Species of European Conservation Concern (SPEC category).

### Reference list

- BirdLife Cyprus surveillance programme – Bird trapping reports published since 2002 (<http://www.birdlifecyprus.org/>).
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- Flint & Stewart (1992) 'The birds of Cyprus'.
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Cyprus Scops Owl (*Otus scops cyprius*), Ruppell's warbler (*Sylvia rueppelli*) and European Bee eater (*Merops apiaster*) found trapped in mist nets and on limesticks, all threatened species under the Birds Directive and / or BirdLife International.

## Appendix 2

### 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 km<sup>2</sup> 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 km<sup>2</sup> for Famagusta/Eastern Larnaca area and 111 km<sup>2</sup> for Ayios Theodoros – Maroni area, bringing the total survey area to 406 km<sup>2</sup>. This was done after preliminary surveys in autumn 2006 found evidence of extensive trapping on the margins of the original (261 km<sup>2</sup>) 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 km<sup>2</sup> 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:

- 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
- 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 detected. 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.

<b>Box 1 Key to survey codes used for the field</b>		
<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 with tape lures
IUN – inactive unset net present	O – olive	B – car battery present
	M – maquis	
	P – pomegranate	
	K – carob	
	Cy – cypress	
	L – lentisk	
	S – syrian plum	

The main net classifications are described below:

- Prepared (P): A net ride that is clearly ready to be used but there is no evidence e.g. bird feathers, blood stains, thrown pebbles, to suggest illegal activity was taking place the previous night / morning (see Figure 4),
- Active No Net (ANN): A net ride that from the evidence found e.g. bird feathers, blood stains, thrown pebbles, indicates that illegal activity was taking place the previous night / morning but no net is present (see Figure 5),
- Active Unset Net present (AUN): A net ride where the trapper has left the mist net on the poles but it is furled i.e. the mist net is not stretched up for catching birds but lowered down (or the net is placed e.g. under a tree) (see Figure 6), and
- Active Set Net present (ASN): A net ride where the trapper has left the mist net set on the poles and it is ready for catching birds (see Figure 7).



**Figure 4: Prepared (P) net ride**



**Figure 5: Active No Net ride (ANN) with blood stains found next to pole bases**



**Figure 6: Active Unset Net present (AUN) in acacia plantations managed extensively for mist netting**



**Figure 7: Active Set Net present (ASN) –corridors in orchards are often used for mist netting**

#### 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 km<sup>2</sup> 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 3**

**Survey data for Autumn 2012**

**Evidence of illegal bird trapping activity within survey squares**

Confidential data – provided upon request

**Evidence of illegal bird trapping activity outside survey squares**

Confidential data – provided upon request

## Appendix 4



Figure 8: Restaurant advertising on a road sign that 'birds' are being served (photograph taken in September 2012)

## Appendix 5

### Estimation of numbers of birds caught during autumn 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, 1986 )
- 0.5 birds are caught per limestick per day
- 60 days is the duration of the trapping period for spring and autumn seasons
- 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
- 50% scaling factor – applied for springs to account for a lower number of migrating birds passing via Cyprus compared to the autumn.

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

For nets =  $[(\text{Total length of P category net rides}/2) + (\text{Total length of ANN+AUN+ASN rides})] /$   
(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)  
=  $[(570/2)+2,024+258+414] / (12) \times (20) \times (301/58) \times (60)$   
= **1,547,036 birds** caught within the survey area in **mist nets**.

For limesticks = (Total number of limesticks found) x (0.5 birds per limestick per day) x (total number of 'possible bird trapping area' squares / number of squares surveyed) x (length of trapping season in days)  
=  $275 \times 0.5 \times (301/58) \times 60$   
= **42,815 birds** caught within the survey area on **limesticks**.

**In total 1,589,851 birds** can be estimated to have been caught in mist nets and on limesticks within the survey area during autumn 2012. Assuming that the survey area accounts for 75% of the trapping activity in Cyprus, the bird death toll across Cyprus is:

=  $1,589,851 / 75\%$

= **2,119,801 killed in nets and on limesticks across all Cyprus during autumn 2012.**