



UPDATE on illegal bird trapping activity in Cyprus

Covering the autumn 2015 findings of BirdLife Cyprus' continuing monitoring programme for illegal bird trapping in Cyprus and providing an overview of the latest developments regarding the problem

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Date: March 2016

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Περίληψη

Η παρούσα αναφορά παρουσιάζει τα τελευταία ευρήματα του συνεχόμενου και συστηματικού προγράμματος παρακολούθησης της παράνομης παγίδευσης πουλιών του Πτηνολογικού Συνδέσμου Κύπρου για το φθινόπωρο 2015, ενώ παράλληλα κάνει και μια ανασκόπηση της κατάστασης που επικρατεί για αυτό το θέμα στο νησί. Η αναφορά αυτή έχει ως κύριο στόχο τους υπεύθυνους στα κέντρα λήψης αποφάσεων και τους πολιτικούς, με σκοπό την ενημέρωση, την ευαισθητοποίηση και την κινητοποίηση για πιο αποτελεσματική δράση για αντιμετώπιση αυτού του χρόνιου και επίμονου οικολογικού προβλήματος.

Η ανάλυση των δεδομένων από την έρευνα πεδίου δείχνει ότι 19 χιλιόμετρα διαδρομών για δίκτυα ήταν ενεργά εντός της περιοχής της έρευνας πεδίου το φθινόπωρο 2015 – η έρευνα πεδίου καλύπτει περιοχές στη Λάρνακα – Αμμόχωστο και Άγιο Θεόδωρο - Μαρώνι. Με αυτά τα επίπεδα παγίδευσης εκτιμάται ότι πάνω από 1,6 εκατομμύρια πτηνά μπορεί να θανατώθηκαν εντός της περιοχής έρευνας πεδίου. Η χρήση δικτύων για το φθινόπωρο 2015 μειώθηκε κατά 13% σε σύγκριση με το έτος 2002 σύμφωνα με την ανάλυση που έγινε με το πρόγραμμα TRIM (για την ανάλυση χρησιμοποιήθηκε η προσέγγιση ‘Linear trend model using the stepwise approach’), μια θετική εξέλιξη σε σύγκριση με τα επίπεδα ρεκόρ που καταγράφηκαν το φθινόπωρο 2014.

Παρόλα αυτά, η χρήση δικτύων παραμένει σε πολύ ψηλότερα επίπεδα εν σχέση με πριν μια δεκαετία (το 2006 τα επίπεδα παγίδευσης κατέγραψαν μια μείωση της τάξης του 80% εν σχέση με το έτος 2002 σύμφωνα με το πρόγραμμα παρακολούθησης του Πτηνολογικού Συνδέσμου Κύπρου). Όσο για τα ξόβεργα, κατασχέθηκαν συνολικά πάνω από 5300 σύμφωνα με τα στοιχεία πάταξης των αρμοδίων αρχών, κατά πλειοψηφία σε περιοχές της Κυπριακής Δημοκρατίας, καταδεικνύοντας έτσι πως συνεχίζεται ακόμα η εκτεταμένη χρήση των ξοβέργων.

Ως συμπέρασμα, τα στοιχεία της έρευνας πεδίου και η ανάλυση τους επιβεβαιώνουν τη βιομηχανοποιημένη κλίμακα της παράνομης δραστηριότητας για την παγίδευση πουλιών, τόσο με δίκτυα όσο και με ξόβεργα. Είναι θετικό ότι καταγράφηκε μια μείωση στα επίπεδα παγίδευσης με δίκτυα για το φθινόπωρο 2015 σε σύγκριση με τα επίπεδα ρεκόρ που καταγράφηκαν το φθινόπωρο 2014. Παρόλα αυτά, η κατάσταση συνεχίζει να είναι εκτός ελέγχου τα τελευταία χρόνια, ανατρέποντας όλα τα (συγκριτικά) θετικά αποτελέσματα που επιτεύχθηκαν πριν από το 2007.

Η κλίμακα της παράνομης παγίδευσης πουλιών, και ο αντίκτυπος που έχει η Κύπρος ως χώρα για τα αποδημητικά πουλιά, αναδείχθηκε και στην ‘Αξιολόγηση της παράνομης θανάτωσης πουλιών στη Μεσόγειο’, η οποία δημοσιεύτηκε από το BirdLife International τον Αύγουστο 2015. Ένα επιστημονικό άρθρο έχει επίσης υποβληθεί στο περιοδικό ‘Bird Conservation International’, το οποίο πρόκειται να δημοσιευθεί στην επόμενη έκδοση του περιοδικού για το 2016, συμπεριλαμβάνοντας όλα τα κύρια ευρήματα αυτής της αξιολόγησης. Οι αναφορές που γίνονται για την Κύπρο στο άρθρο είναι ενδεικτικές της τρέχουσας κατάστασης που επικρατεί για την παγίδευση ‘...Στα τέλη της δεκαετίας του 1980, η Κύπρος είχε τη φήμη ότι στο νησί θανατώνονται τα περισσότερα πουλιά ανά κεφαλή από οποιαδήποτε άλλη Μεσογειακή χώρα (Magnin 1987) και τα στοιχεία υποδεικνύουν ότι αυτό μπορεί να ισχύει ακόμα’. Στα ευρήματα αυτής της έρευνας η Κύπρος ήταν στην πρώτη θέση με την υψηλότερη εκτίμηση του μέσου αριθμού των πτηνών που θανατώνονται κατά κεφαλήν, 196 πουλιά ανά 100 άτομα, ακολουθούμενη από το Λίβανο με 44 πουλιά ανά 100 άτομα.

Ο Πτηνολογικός Σύνδεσμος Κύπρου αναγνωρίζει τις προσπάθειες πάταξης από τις τρεις αρμόδιες αρχές (Υπηρεσία Θήρας & Πανίδας, Κλιμάκιο Πάταξης Λαθροθηρίας της Αστυνομίας Κύπρου και Κλιμάκιο Πάταξης Λαθροθηρίας των Βρετανικών Βάσεων). Όσον αφορά την Υπηρεσία Θήρας & Πανίδας και το Κλιμάκιο Πάταξης Λαθροθηρίας της Αστυνομίας Κύπρου, οι προσπάθειες πάταξης ήταν στα ίδια επίπεδα με πέρσι. Κατά τη διάρκεια των μηνών Αύγουστο με Οκτώβριο 2015, η Υπηρεσία Θήρας & Πανίδας έκανε 49 καταγγελίες και έκανε κατάσχεση 230 διχτύων και 1740 ξοβέργων, ενώ το Κλιμάκιο Πάταξης Λαθροθηρίας της Αστυνομίας Κύπρου έκανε 25 καταγγελίες και έκανε κατάσχεση 121 διχτύων και 3359 ξοβέργων. Όσον αφορά το Κλιμάκιο Πάταξης Λαθροθηρίας των Βρετανικών Βάσεων είχε τη χαμηλότερη διωκτική δράση για τα τελευταία 5 χρόνια, κάνοντας μόνο 17 καταγγελίες (σε σύγκριση με 28 καταγγελίες που έκανε το φθινόπωρο του 2014) - ο αριθμός των διχτύων (181) και ξοβέργων (234) που κατασχέθηκαν ήταν παρόμοιος με τα προηγούμενα χρόνια. Αντιθέτως, ο πολύ μεγαλύτερος αριθμός επιχειρήσεων σκούπας (clearance operations) που έγιναν στο Κάβο Πύλα (16 επιχειρήσεις μεταξύ Αύγουστο - Οκτώβριο 2015, σε σύγκριση με μόλις 1 επιχείρηση για την ίδια περίοδο για το φθινόπωρο 2014) από την Αστυνομία των Βρετανικών Βάσεων, με την υποστήριξη από στρατιωτικό προσωπικό, ήταν ευπρόσδεκτος και είχε ως αποτέλεσμα την κατάσχεση μεγαλύτερου όγκου εξοπλισμού για παγίδευση σε σύγκριση με τις προηγούμενες σεζόν φθινοπώρου. Δυστυχώς όμως τα επίπεδα παγίδευσης με δίχτυα στο Κάβο Πύλα παρέμειναν πολύ υψηλά, και στα ίδια επίπεδα με το φθινόπωρο 2014. Η ανοδική ετήσια αύξηση των επιπέδων της παράνομης παγίδευσης πουλιών εντός των Βρετανικών Βάσεων, η οποία ξεκίνησε από το 2011, φαίνεται να έχει σταματήσει για το φθινόπωρο 2015. Αυτό το γεγονός αποτελεί μια απαραίτητη και σημαντική αρχή, και ο Πτηνολογικός Σύνδεσμος Κύπρου ελπίζει ότι θα αποτελέσει την αρχή μιας σημαντικής μείωσης στο άμεσο μέλλον.

Παρόλο που υπήρξε διωκτική δράση κατά της παγίδευσης πουλιών στο πεδίο, η πάταξη κατά των εστιατορίων που σερβίρουν *αμπελοπούλια* ήταν πολύ περιορισμένη και τα τελευταία χρόνια έχει μειωθεί δραματικά. Επισημαίνεται ότι αυτά τα εστιατόρια βρίσκονται σχεδόν αποκλειστικά στη επικράτεια της Κυπριακής Δημοκρατίας. Ο Πτηνολογικός Σύνδεσμος Κύπρου δεν έχει λάβει οποιαδήποτε ενημέρωση ότι έχουν γίνει τυχόν καταγγελίες κατά εστιατορίων σχετικά με το παράνομο εμπόριο πτηνών από τις αρμόδιες διωκτικές της Κυπριακής Δημοκρατίας για το 2015 (για το 2014 είχε γίνει μόνο μια καταγγελία ενός εστιατορίου). Αυτή η αδράνεια είναι αδικαιολόγητη αφού τα εστιατόρια αποτελούν το κυριότερο οικονομικό κίνητρο αυτής της παράνομης δραστηριότητας. Ο Πτηνολογικός Σύνδεσμος Κύπρου πιστεύει ότι η κατά πολύ μειωμένη διωκτική δράση κατά των εστιατορίων είναι αλληλένδετη με την έλλειψη πολιτικής βούλησης από την Κυπριακή Κυβέρνηση για αποτελεσματική αντιμετώπιση της παράνομης παγίδευσης και εμπορίας πουλιών.

Η πολιτική βούληση της Κυπριακής Κυβέρνησης και της Διοίκησης των Βρετανικών Βάσεων δεν ήταν ποτέ προηγουμένως τόσο διαφορετική όσο για το 2015. Η Κυπριακή Κυβέρνηση έχει δείξει ανοχή για την παράνομη παγίδευση πουλιών με την έγκριση ενός Στρατηγικού Σχεδίου Δράσης το οποίο περιλαμβάνει τη δυνατότητα για 'επιλεκτικό κυνήγι αμπελοπουλιών, κατά παρέκκλιση' σύμφωνα με την Οδηγία για τα Πουλιά, ο αποκαλούμενος 'εναλλακτικός σχεδιασμός'. Μια τέτοια πρόνοια αποτελεί κίνδυνο αφού ουσιαστικά νομιμοποιεί τη θανάτωση αμπελοπουλιών. Από την άλλη πλευρά, η Διοίκηση των Βρετανικών Βάσεων έχει δείξει μηδενική ανοχή κατά της παγίδευσης πουλιών στο πεδίο με τη δημιουργία και εφαρμογή ενός σχεδίου δράσης που συμπεριλαμβάνει μια σειρά σημαντικών μέτρων (περίπου 216 στρέμματα με ακακίες έχουν αφαιρεθεί από τον Δεκέμβριο 2014, ο καθορισμός της περιοχής του Κάβο Πύλα (όπου υπάρχουν πολύ ψηλά επίπεδα παγίδευσης)

ως Ειδική Ζώνη Διατήρησης, υποστήριξη του Κλιμακίου πάταξης λαθροθηρίας από στρατιωτικό προσωπικό κλπ). Εντούτοις, αυτά τα μέτρα θα πρέπει να συνεχιστούν για να υπάρξει ουσιαστική μείωση της παράνομης παγίδευσης πουλιών με δίχτυα στο Κάβο Πύλα (υπάρχουν ακόμα περίπου 400 στρέμματα με ακακίες στο Κάβο Πύλα, ενός εισβλητικού και χωροκατακτητικού είδους, οι οποίες χρησιμοποιούνται για την παράνομη παγίδευση πουλιών).

Ο Πτηνολογικός Σύνδεσμος Κύπρου κάνει έκκληση προς την Κυπριακή Κυβέρνηση για την αφαίρεση του 'εναλλακτικού σχεδιασμού' από το Στρατηγικό Σχέδιο Δράσης και ζητάει να ξεκινήσει άμεσα η υλοποίηση του υπόλοιπου σχεδίου, το οποίο εκκρεμεί από τις αρχές του 2014. Το συγκεκριμένο ζήτημα έχει προκαλέσει ένα τεράστιο πλήγμα στο επικοινωνιακό επίπεδο και στο μήνυμα που επικρατούσε για 'μηδενική ανοχή' κατά της παράνομης παγίδευσης πουλιών.

Η αναφορά 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 της έρευνας πεδίου και την ανάλυση από το πρόγραμμα TRIM, τα στοιχεία από τις προσπάθειες πάταξης των αρμοδίων αρχών και το πολιτικό και κοινωνικό κλίμα που επικρατεί, και,
- Κεφάλαιο 4 είναι η συζήτηση, όπου γίνεται μια σύνοψη της κατάστασης της παράνομης παγίδευσης πουλιών και της πολιτικής βούλησης γύρω από το θέμα, και γίνεται έκκληση για την άμεση αφαίρεση του 'εναλλακτικού σχεδιασμού' από το Στρατηγικό Σχέδιο Δράσης, το οποίο εγκρίθηκε από την Κυπριακή Κυβέρνηση.

Τα έξοδα για την εργασία πεδίου του Πτηνολογικού (καύσιμα αυτοκινήτου), καθώς και τα έξοδα των εκάστοτε εθελοντών, καλύφθηκαν από την οργάνωση NABU (BirdLife Γερμανίας), καθώς και το Heinz Sielmann Stiftung Foundation, ενώ το RSPB (BirdLife Ηνωμένου Βασιλείου) κάλυψε τους μισθούς.

Summary

This report presents the latest findings of the on-going and systematic BirdLife Cyprus surveillance programme on illegal bird trapping, relating to the autumn 2015 season, while also providing an overview of the current climate regarding this issue on the island. This report is aimed mainly at top decision makers and politicians, with the aim of informing, raising awareness and generating momentum for more effective action to tackle this chronic and persistent ecological problem.

The analysis of the survey data shows that 19 km of net rides were active during the autumn of 2015 within the survey area, which covers Larnaka - Famagusta and Ayios Theodoros – Maroni areas. These trapping levels could have resulted in over 1.6 million birds killed within the survey area. Mist netting activity for autumn 2015 has decreased by 13% compared to 2002, based on analysis from the TRIM software (the 'Linear trend model using the stepwise approach' was used for the analysis), a positive outcome compared to the record breaking levels recorded in autumn 2014. However mist netting activity remains at much higher levels compared to a decade ago (in 2006 the levels of trapping were 80% lower compared to the baseline year of 2002 as recorded by the BirdLife Cyprus surveillance programme). With regards to limesticks, more than 5,300 in total were confiscated by enforcement agencies, mostly within the Republic, highlighting the extensive limestick use that is still taking place nowadays.

In conclusion, the survey data and the analysis confirm the industrial scale of illegal bird trapping activity, both with mist nets and limesticks. It is encouraging that a decrease in trapping activity was recorded for autumn 2015 compared to the record breaking levels of autumn 2014. However the situation is still out of control following the pattern of the last few years, reversing all the (relatively) positive results achieved prior to 2007.

The scale of illegal bird trapping, and the impact Cyprus is having as a country on migratory birds, was also highlighted in a 'Review of illegal killing of birds in the Mediterranean' by BirdLife International, published in August 2015. A scientific paper has also been submitted to the journal 'Bird Conservation International' and is due to be published in the magazine's next 2016 edition, with all the key findings of this study. The references to Cyprus in the paper are indicative of the current trapping situation '*...In the late 1980s, Cyprus had a reputation for killing more individual birds per capita than any other country in the Mediterranean (Magnin 1987) and our data indicates that this may remain the case*'. In the findings of the study Cyprus ranked first with the highest estimated mean number of birds killed per capita, 196 birds killed per 100 people, followed by Lebanon with 44 birds killed per 100 people.

The enforcement efforts of all three competent authorities (Cyprus Game & Fauna Service, Cyprus Police Anti-Poaching Unit and SBA Police Anti-Poaching Unit) are acknowledged by BirdLife Cyprus. With regards to the Cyprus Game & Fauna Service and the Cyprus Police Anti-poaching unit, their enforcement actions were similar to last year. During the months August to October 2015, the Game & Fauna Service had 49 prosecutions and confiscated 230 mist nets and 1,740 limesticks, while the Cyprus Police Anti-poaching unit had 25 prosecutions and confiscated 121 mist nets and 3,359 limesticks. With regards to the SBA Police Anti-poaching unit, its prosecution action was the lowest for the last 5 years with only 17 prosecutions (compared to 28 prosecutions for autumn 2014); the number of mist nets (181) and limesticks (234) confiscated was similar to previous years. On the other hand, the much higher number of clearance operations undertaken in Cape Pyla (16 operations between August to October 2015, compared to just 1 operation in autumn 2014) by the SBA Police,

supported by military personnel, was welcome and resulted in the larger volume of trapping paraphernalia confiscated during autumn 2015 in comparison to previous autumns. Unfortunately, mist netting activity in Cape Pyla remained at very high levels, equal to autumn 2014. The persistent upward trend in illegal bird trapping within the SBA, which has been showing year-on-year increase since 2011, appears to have been stopped for autumn 2015. This is a necessary and important start, and BirdLife Cyprus hopes that this will be the start of a significant decline to follow in the near future.

Although enforcement action took place on the trapping fields, enforcement against restaurants serving *ambelopoulia* has been very limited and much reduced in the last few years; it is noted that these restaurants are almost exclusively found in the Republic. BirdLife Cyprus has not been informed of any restaurant prosecutions by the Republic enforcement agencies regarding illegal bird trade in 2015 (in 2014 only one restaurant was prosecuted). This inaction is indefensible as restaurants are the key economic driver of this illegal activity and BirdLife Cyprus believes that this much reduced enforcement action against them is influenced by the lack of political will by the Cyprus Government to tackle effectively illegal bird trapping and trade.

The levels of political will in the Cyprus Government and the SBA Administration have never been as different as they were in 2015. The Cyprus Government has shown tolerance towards illegal bird trapping by approving a Strategic Action Plan which includes the possibility for 'selective hunting of blackcaps, under derogation' under the Birds Directive, so called 'alternative plan'. Such a clause risks legalising bird killing of blackcaps in practice. On the other hand the SBA Administration has shown zero tolerance on the ground against bird trapping with the development and implementation of an action plan that has included a series of important measures (54 acres of acacia removed since December 2014, designation of the key trapping hotspot of Cape Pyla as a Special Area of Conservation, military support to the Anti-poaching unit etc.). This will need to be maintained however if the levels of mist-netting activity at Cape Pyla are to be finally reduced (about 100 acres of invasive acacia used for illegal bird trapping still remain within Cape Pyla).

BirdLife Cyprus calls upon the Cyprus Government to remove the 'alternative plan' from the Strategic Action Plan and to start immediately the implementation of the rest of the plan, which has been pending since early 2014, as this issue has caused a huge setback on a communication level and the messaging of 'zero tolerance' towards illegal bird trapping.

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, and
- Section 3 presents the survey data from the monitoring programme and the analysis from the TRIM software, 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, giving an overview of the illegal bird trapping situation and the political will around this issue, and calls for the urgent removal of the 'alternative plan' from the Strategic Action Plan approved by the Cyprus Government.

All the running costs for the field work (car fuel), as well as all the volunteer costs were covered by NABU (BirdLife in Germany), together with the Heinz Sielmann Stiftung Foundation, while the RSPB covered salaries.

1. Overview of bird trapping in Cyprus

Trapping with non-selective methods (mist nets and limesticks) and the trade of wild birds were prohibited since 1974 under the Cyprus legislation, when the law 'Protection and Development of Game and Wild Birds Law of 1974 (39/1974)' was introduced¹. Moreover, in 1988 Cyprus ratified the 1979 Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, adopting a long list of birds as protected, including the Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*), hence prohibiting the killing (hunting) and consumption of blackcaps (blackcaps are the main target species of illegal bird trapping in Cyprus). With Cyprus joining the EU, 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, as well as the possession of trapping equipment, trapped birds and the trading and eating of trapped birds.

Historically, trapped birds – mostly Blackcaps - were a food supplement for the mostly poor island inhabitants living off the land. 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.

Nowadays, bird trapping in Cyprus is widespread and extensive, contributing to the large scale killing of hundreds of thousands of migratory and wintering birds, and survey records show that 153 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 International². This is a clear indication of the non-selective nature of these methods. 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 valued in the order of 15 million euros per year³.

Apart from the extensive use of non-selective methods for illegal bird trapping in Cyprus, organised trappers nowadays use calling devices that have imitating calls of migratory birds. These calling devices are normally played during night-time, luring the birds into the trapping sites and hence increasing the catch for each trapper. Academic studies have shown that tape luring can increase the capture probability of birds from 3 to 13 times (Schaub M. *etal*, 1999) and that various species are attracted by song playback, including target species for the trappers such as Eurasian reed warblers, sedge warblers, garden warblers, blackcaps and grasshopper warblers (Mukhin A. *etal*, 2008). The field report for Autumn 2013 of the Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS, March 2014, pages 7 & 18) highlighted the extensive use of calling devices and their intensity within the trapping areas during night time, which are often heard easily from hundreds of metres away from each trapping site.

¹ The specific articles of Law 39/1974 that prohibited the trapping and trade of wild birds include: Article 10 ('prohibition of hunting etc. of certain bird species', without including the blackcap either in the protected or the game species), Article 14 ('prohibition of offering game or wild birds in restaurants etc.') and Article 15 ('prohibition of the use of light projectors, traps, luring methods, limesticks and flushing of birds).

² BirdLife Cyprus 'List of birds recorded trapped in mist nets and on limesticks', Latest update February 2016. http://www.birdlifecyprus.org/upload/Trapping%20Docs/Consolidatedlistoftrappedbirds_FINAL153.pdf.

³ Game and Fauna Service (17th March 2010), Position paper presented at the Committee of Environment of the Cyprus House of Parliament during a discussion to change the legislation on the protection and management of wild birds and game species

This report presents the latest survey results for autumn 2015, when trappers are after migratory birds, with the main target species being blackcaps (*Sylvia atricapilla*) and other migrant songbirds. Trapped birds are either served as expensive *ambelopoulia* 'delicacies' in local restaurants or are used for home consumption.

2. Surveillance programme of BirdLife Cyprus

BirdLife Cyprus is a non-profit NGO working for the protection and conservation of birds, their habitats and wider biodiversity, and is the Partner of BirdLife International in Cyprus. With support from the RSPB (BirdLife partner in the UK), BirdLife Cyprus has undertaken a systematic surveillance programme of illegal bird trapping in Cyprus since autumn 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 at the start of the programme. 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).

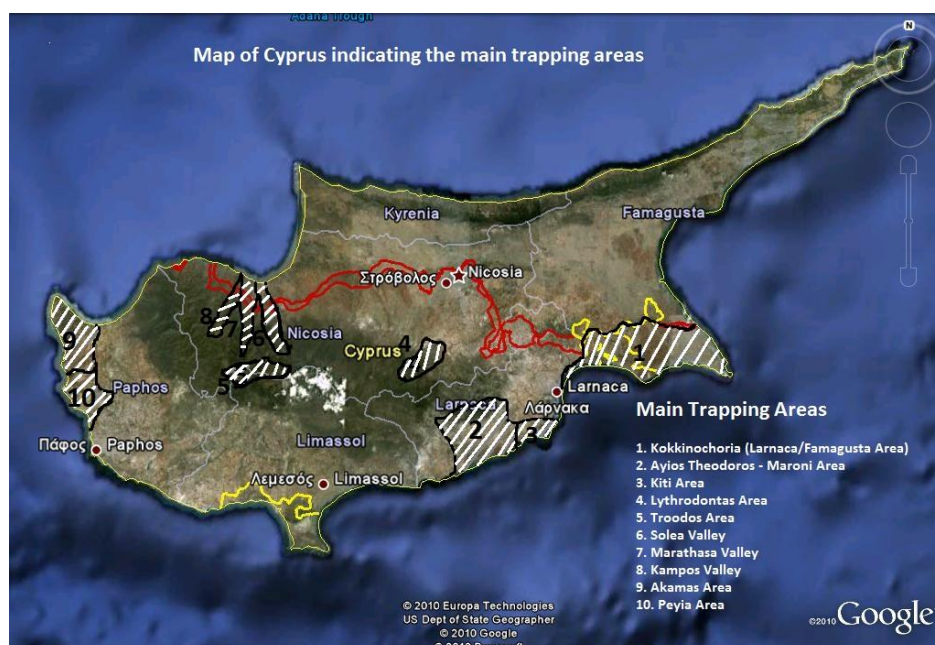


Figure 1 Map of Cyprus showing the main trapping areas

Although trapping is also an issue in other areas of Cyprus, the survey efforts focus on these two main areas due to resource limitations and because they hold the highest trapping activity. The monitoring is undertaken by visiting a random selection of sample squares (1 km²) during daytime hours, with a focus on detecting mist netting activity. Limesticks are recorded if they are found while searching for mist nets. The squares selected are stratified to ensure a representative coverage of areas under SBA administration and the Republic of Cyprus. For more details on the methodology of BirdLife Cyprus read Appendix 1.

The project is undertaken in close co-operation with 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 noted that the BirdLife Cyprus observers never confront suspected trappers and never remove trapping paraphernalia.

BirdLife Cyprus would like to express its particular thanks to the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK) for supporting the project financially since the beginning. Furthermore BirdLife Cyprus would like to thank NABU (BirdLife in Germany) and the Heinz Sielmann Stiftung Foundation for their financial support from 2013 onwards. NABU and the Heinz Sielmann Stiftung Foundation cover the running costs and volunteer costs of the surveillance programme, whereas the RSPB covers related salaries.

3. Results

Survey results and data analysis

Field survey data

The field survey for autumn 2015 was carried out between September and October 2015 following the standard survey protocol. In total 59 squares were surveyed during this period and BirdLife Cyprus reported all trapping finds to the relevant enforcement authorities, either the SBA Police Anti-poaching Unit, or the Game & Fauna Service or the Cyprus Police Anti-poaching Unit, depending on the location of the finds. Additional squares within the SBA were added to the sample in 2015, following the July 2015 workshop recommendation of independent science expert Alison Johnston (British Trust for Ornithology - BTO), to improve the precision of the trend within the SBA over time.

A summary of the field data for autumn 2015 is presented in Appendix 2. In total the findings of the survey included 3,669 metres of active net rides (these are 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) and 23 mist nets found *in situ* (either classified as Active Set Nets or Active Unset Nets⁴). Opportunistic checks outside the survey squares detected an additional 246 metres of active net rides and 2 mist nets *in situ* (see Appendix 2).

The total length of active mist net rides within the 406 km² survey area (Larnaka - Famagusta and Ayios Theodoros – Maroni areas) can be extrapolated at nearly 19 km (3,669 m x 301 / 59)⁵.

In terms of limesticks, BirdLife Cyprus detected 335 limesticks this autumn (compared to 168 limesticks in autumn 2014) within the surveyed squares and 106 limesticks during opportunistic checks (compared to 37 limesticks in autumn 2014) (see Appendix 2). However, as already explained BirdLife Cyprus does not focus its field survey on the detection of limesticks, as other organisations do. For example, during the autumn 2015 camp of the Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) / SPA Foundation which was undertaken from 5th September to 18th October, a total of 3,115 limesticks, 163 mist nets and 79 decoys were detected and/or seized^{6,7}. It is highlighted that the majority of the limesticks detected by CABS / SPA Foundation were in areas controlled by the Republic of Cyprus, with 3,040 limesticks detected in the Republic and 75 limesticks detected in the ESBA.

Based on the data gathered in the field this autumn, BirdLife Cyprus estimates that over **1.6 million birds could have been killed within the survey area** and just over 2.2 million could have been killed

⁴ 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.

⁵ There are 301.1 km² squares in the survey area that are classified as suitable for trapping activity (on the basis of vegetation characteristics) and 59 of these squares were surveyed in Autumn 2015. Out of these 301.1 km² squares, 236 squares are found in the Republic areas and 65 are found in the Dhekelia SBA.

⁶ Survey data provided on 20th January 2016 from CABS representative via email correspondence.

⁷ The CABS camp was undertaken in close cooperation with the Cyprus Police Anti-poaching unit and the SBA Police Anti-Poaching unit. The breakdown of the overall results of the camp include: a) 37 prosecutions, 43 confiscations, 163 mist nets detected / seized, 3,115 limesticks detected / seized and 79 decoys detected / seized.

across the whole of Cyprus⁸. It is noted that the estimated death toll does not take into consideration any net rides that have been classified as 'Prepared' (previously this net ride classification was also considered for the death toll estimation), following the recommendation included in the BTO assessment report (July 2015) to revise slightly the equation⁹ (read Appendix 3 for more details).

If one were to split the potential death toll estimate between jurisdictions within the survey area (1.6 million birds) based on the trapping activity detected, then just over 250,000 birds would be the potential killed in the Republic and about 880,000 the potential killed in the SBAs¹⁰ - the 'Joint' squares are not accounted for in the death estimates at the jurisdiction level. Note however, that the limestick toll is not fully accounted for in this estimate (as the methodology of BirdLife Cyprus focuses more on detecting mist netting activity), which would make the potential kill in the Republic higher. The total estimate of birds killed is derived using field-gathered data in combination with expert judgement for some variables (such as the number of birds caught per net) that are too dangerous to measure in the field.

Trends in autumn mist netting activity

BirdLife Cyprus is undertaking the trend analysis using the TRIM program. The organisation has been gathering field data in a systematic manner since 2002 as part of its surveillance programme and hence makes it possible to use such programs for the analysis. BirdLife Cyprus would like to thank the RSPB senior conservation scientist, Mr Simon Wotton, for his help and support in undertaking the TRIM trend analysis.

TRIM (TRENds & Indices for Monitoring data) is a program for the analysis of time series of counts with missing observations. The program can be used to estimate indices and trends and to assess the effects of covariates on these indices and trends. TRIM analyses time series of counts, using Poisson regression and produces estimates of yearly indices and trends (Pannekoek & van Strien 2005). If observations are missing, TRIM estimates the missing values on the basis of changes observed on plots that were monitored.

In other words, TRIM enables us to use the data from all the trapping survey squares ever surveyed under the BirdLife Cyprus surveillance programme during the autumn period, in total 114 squares, even though these squares were not all covered each autumn season. The programme 'fills in' missing values for squares that were not covered in a particular year on the basis of the general trend derived

⁸ 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, carried out in 2008. This is also the reason why the occupied areas are not presented as a main trapping area in Figure 1.

⁹ BirdLife Cyprus organised a workshop with title 'Methodology of surveying illegal bird trapping in Cyprus' in July 2015 (read relevant [e-news article](#)). Independent science experts from the British Trust Ornithology (BTO) were invited to review the monitoring methodology of BirdLife Cyprus and to provide a report of their assessment and recommendations.

¹⁰ From the 3,669 metres of active net rides detected within the survey area, 458 metres were in the Republic of Cyprus (from the 34 squares surveyed), 3,127 metres were in the SBAs (from the 21 squares surveyed) and 84 metres were in 4 'Joint' squares surveyed. For the calculated death estimates at a jurisdiction level, the trapping finds (excluding the 'Prepared' rides) in each jurisdiction are extrapolated to the total number of squares that are classified as suitable for trapping activity (see footnote 5 above).

from the data as a whole. The TRIM software (freely available from <http://www.ebcc.info/trim.html>) is very widely used for analysis of field data from ecological or biological studies. It works as an index, setting the first year of a time series of data the value of 100 (in this case year 2002) and then showing changes up or down in subsequent years relative to this value of 100.

The TRIM program was used to analyse the survey data and to produce trends in autumn bird trapping from 2002 to 2015. The metres of net rides that are recorded as active¹¹ for bird trapping with mist nets within each survey square are used as the response variable, with autocorrelation and overdispersion accounted for as well. The TRIM changepoint model is used with a changepoint in every year (which returns the same result as a fully time-dependent model)¹² (for more details on TRIM approaches read Appendix 4). The TRIM program is a good way of analysing these data and will produce a model of the change in bird trapping activity (with mist nets) between a base year (i.e. 2002) and each subsequent year of sampling.

Another key conclusion from the BTO assessment report on the monitoring methodology of BirdLife Cyprus⁹ is how net rides are classified by different observers: *'It is important to note that even if there are some differences in how certain rides would be categorised by different observers, the trend relies on consistency over time. For this reason, even if there are differences in categorisation between observers, providing that the same observer consistently applies the criteria for classifying rides over time, the trend for illegal bird trapping activity will not be compromised'*. For more details on net categorisation read Appendix 1.

Figure 2 shows the trapping activity levels since 2002 across all 114 squares, with 95% confidence limits, including the additional 10 squares within the SBA (previously the sample size was 104 squares e.g. for Autumn 2014¹³). This extra square coverage within the SBA was a recommendation in the BTO assessment report (July 2015)⁹ to increase the sample size within the SBA. A stratified random sample of 59 of the 114 squares was surveyed in Autumn 2015.

It is important to highlight that the additional squares surveyed have slightly expanded the total square coverage to 114 (compared to 104 squares previously), hence the TRIM program has imputed missing values for these extra squares as well. As a result, if one were to compare the index values presented in Figure 2 below with the trend analysis results reported in the Autumn 2014 trapping report¹³, the index values will vary for the previous autumn seasons (i.e. for Autumn 2014 and earlier).

¹¹ This includes all 4 categories of net ride classification: P – Prepared, ANN – Active No Net, AUN – Active Unset Net and ASN – Active Set Net. Read Appendix 1 for details on net ride classification.

¹² This is a linear trend model using the stepwise approach and with all years selected as changepoints.

¹³ See Figure 2 in Section 3. Results, p 14 of BirdLife Cyprus [Autumn 2014](#) trapping report (March 2015).

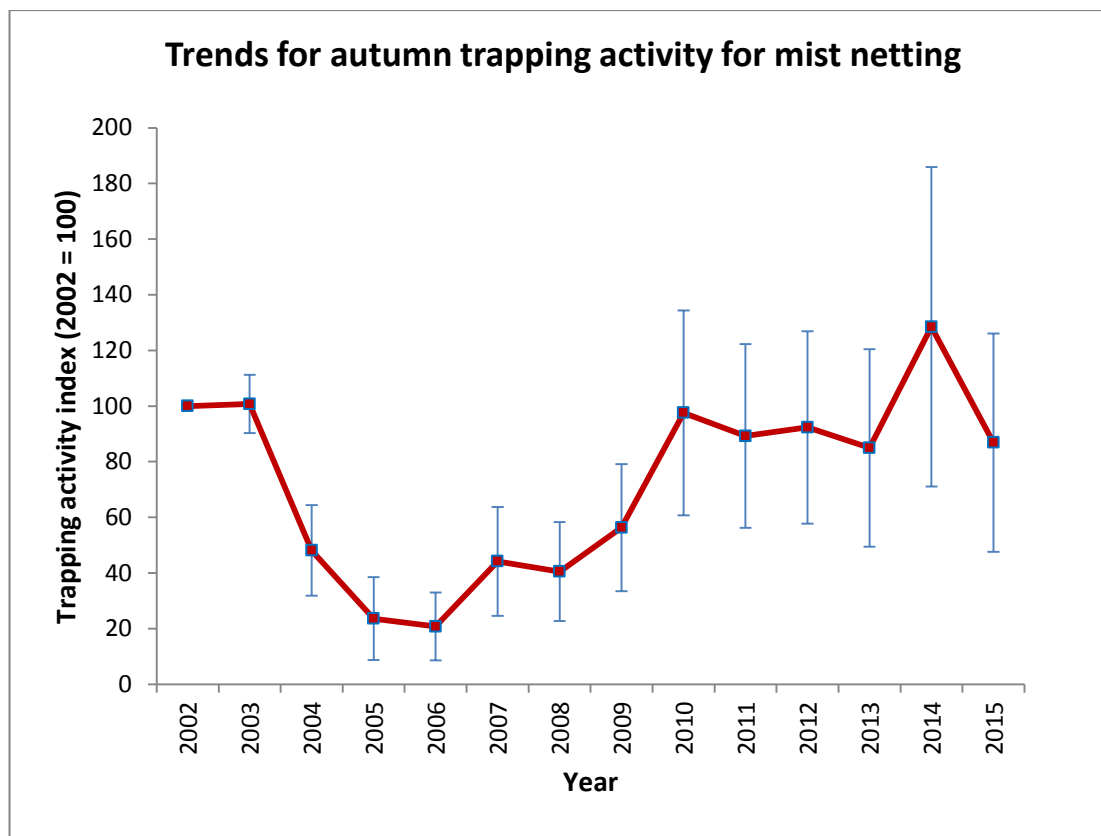


Figure 2 Trends for autumn bird trapping activity with the use of mist nets

Table 1 Statistics for trend for autumn trapping levels based on Figure 2

	Multiplicative trend	Standard error	95% confidence interval	Significance
All squares	1.0577	0.0154	0.030184	Moderate increase (p<0.01)

Note 1: The multiplicative trend reflects the changes in terms of the average percentage change per year i.e. if the trend is equal to 1 then there is no trend. Hence value 1.057 calculated above indicates an overall increase of around 6% per year in mist netting activity.

Mist netting activity for autumn 2015 has decreased, recording a **13% decrease this autumn compared to 2002** (index value is 87 for autumn 2015). As shown in the graph above, trapping activity for this autumn has dropped compared to the record breaking levels of autumn 2014, a positive outcome. In comparison to the findings of last year, there has been a decrease of 32% by comparing the indexes 2014 and 2015. As mentioned earlier the difference in the index value for Autumn 2014 (value of 128) presented in the graph above, compared to the index value for the same autumn season presented in last year's autumn report (value of 147)¹³ is due to the slightly expanded (from 104 to 114 squares) total square coverage.

Figure 3 summarises autumn mist netting activity under different jurisdictions applying the same 'Linear trend model using the stepwise approach' in the TRIM program. The sample of 114 squares surveyed at various seasons during the surveillance programme includes 79 squares within the Republic of Cyprus (RoC), 28 within the Eastern Dhekelia Sovereign Base Area (SBA) and 7 squares that

cover areas in both jurisdictions (referred to as 'Joint' squares, including one that covers the SBA and UN buffer). For autumn 2015, the breakdown of the squares randomly selected and surveyed at a jurisdiction level were as follows:

- 34 squares within the Republic of Cyprus,
- 21 squares within the Dhekelia SBA, and
- 4 'Joint' squares.

It is noted that in previous autumn seasons the number of squares covered within the ESBA was smaller (13 squares in 2014; 12 squares in 2013). Following the methodology workshop organised by BirdLife Cyprus⁹ (read relevant [e-news article](#)), BTO science experts provided a concise report of their assessment and recommendations regarding the BirdLife Cyprus monitoring programme. **The BTO report highlighted that the methodology and the analysis undertaken by BirdLife Cyprus is robust and valid for the development of trapping activity trends.** One of the few recommendations was '*...In order to calculate trends within the ESBA that have a reasonable precision, the number of survey squares sampled within the ESBA will need to be increased. A suggested minimum number of survey squares would be 20 or 30*'. Hence this recommendation was adopted for autumn 2015 season.

For the analysis shown in Figure 3 we have excluded the 7 'Joint' squares that are part of the total sample of 114 squares, in order not to skew the account for neither the RoC nor the SBAs, i.e. any mist netting activity found in 'Joint' squares has not been included. It is worth highlighting again that the slightly expanded total square coverage to 114 (compared to 104 squares previously) would explain the differences in index values between the graph below and the trend analysis results per jurisdiction reported in the Autumn 2014 trapping report¹⁴, particularly for the SBA trend analysis as the extra 10 squares surveyed were within the SBA jurisdiction (e.g. for Autumn 2014 an index value of 226 is presented in the graph below, while in last year's autumn an index value of 299 was calculated for this same season). Despite these apparent differences in index values, particularly for the SBA, the statistical analysis as reported in Table 2 below shows that there is *strong increase* (significance level) and a yearly increase of 16% (multiplicative trend value 1.1618) in the trend for mist netting activity within the SBA; very similar statistical results were reported for the trend analysis for the SBA in the Autumn 2014 trapping report¹⁴.

¹⁴ See Figure 3 in Section 3. Results, p 15-16 of BirdLife Cyprus [Autumn 2014](#) trapping report (March 2015).

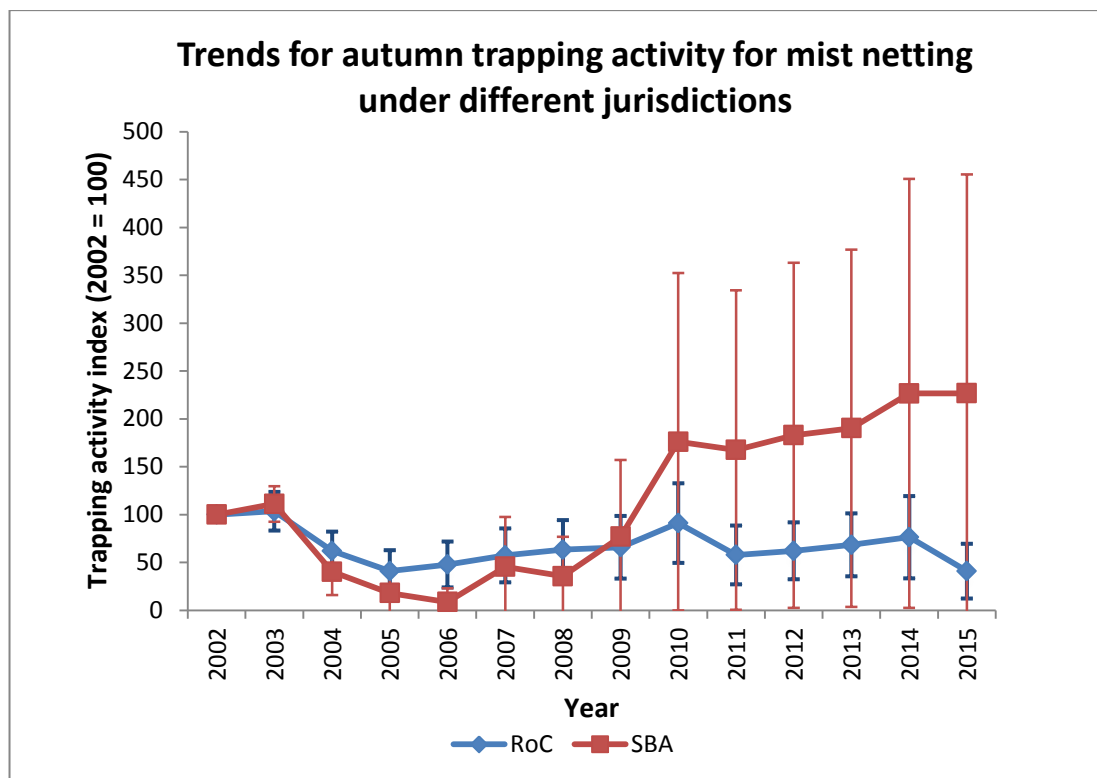


Figure 3 Trends for trapping activity for mist netting within the Republic of Cyprus and within the UK Dhekelia Sovereign Base Area.

Table 2 Statistics for trends for autumn trapping activity levels based on Figure 3

	Multiplicative trend	Standard error	95% confidence interval	Significance
RoC squares	0.9809	0.0176	0.034496	Uncertain
SBA squares	1.1618	0.0426	0.083496	Strong increase (p<0.01)

At a jurisdiction level, the trapping activity trends indicate that:

- For the Republic areas, autumn 2015 mist netting activity (index value 41) showed a decrease of 46% compared to autumn 2014 (index value 76). **In comparison to 2002 there has been a decrease of 59% for autumn 2015**, reaching the low mist netting levels recorded a decade ago in 2005. These low trapping levels within the RoC jurisdiction are very encouraging.
 - For the 34 squares covered within the Republic, the range of counts was from 0 to 108 metres of active net rides, while no trapping at all was recorded in 25 squares. The average within the Republic was 13 metres of active net rides per square surveyed (458 metres / 34 squares surveyed within the Republic = 13).
- For the SBA areas, autumn 2015 mist netting activity remained at the same record breaking levels as for autumn 2014 (index value of 227 for both autumns). **In comparison to 2002 there has been an increase of 127% for autumn 2015.**

- As seen in Figure 3 the confidence limits for the SBA trend are noticeably wide. This is due to the following factors: the relatively small sample size (21 squares surveyed), the large number of zero counts (9 out of the 21 squares surveyed recorded no trapping activity at all) and the wide range of counts (from 0 to 1,210 metres of active net rides). It is anticipated that the larger sample size in the SBA will only start to have an impact on the confidence limits after two years.
- It is noted that the two highest counts for mist netting activity were recorded in squares located in Cape Pyla area, with 1,210 and 678 metres of active net rides. These values are much higher than the average per square, 149 metres of active net rides per square (3,127 metres / 21 squares surveyed within the SBAs = 149), highlighting that Cape Pyla is still a hotspot for mist netting activity within the SBAs.
- The five-year trend of annual increases in illegal bird trapping within the Eastern SBA appears to have been stopped for autumn 2015, which is a necessary and important start, and BirdLife Cyprus hopes that this will be the start of a significant decline to follow in the near future.

Overall it is clear from Figure 3 that mist netting activity has increased dramatically within the Dhekelia SBA since 2010 and for the last two autumn seasons record breaking levels have been recorded. These levels are much higher compared to the Republic, a pattern that has held in recent years, primarily due to the mist netting hotspot of Cape Pyla and its peripheral areas.

As for the Republic the situation is better regarding mist netting activity in comparison to the SBAs, and in autumn 2015 mist netting levels were at the lowest recorded during the past decade, an encouraging outcome. However the proposed ‘alternative plan’ included in the Strategic Action Plan against Illegal Bird Trapping, for the ‘selective hunting of *ambelopoulia*’ under derogation, that was approved by the Ministerial Council in May 2015¹⁵, and more importantly the continued inaction by the Cyprus Government to respond to the EU Commission’s reply and request to withdraw this ‘alternative plan’ from the Strategic Plan¹⁶ (read more in the section

Social and political attitudes) is extremely worrying and could reverse this positive result in the coming years.

Furthermore the Republic areas are a real hotspot for limestick use, as confirmed by the survey data of other environmental NGOs (CABS) and the enforcement data provided by the competent authorities (see section *Enforcement*). In addition, the main economic incentive of organised trappers i.e. the restaurants serving *ambelopoulia*, are found almost exclusively in the Republic, hence the Cyprus authorities have a major role to play in clamping down on the supply – demand business chain.

¹⁵ [Announcement](#) by the Ministry of Interior, dated 14th May 2015, for the approved Strategic Plan.

¹⁶ Letter from the EU Commission (dated 18th August 2015) to Cyprus Government – read relevant [enews article](#) of BirdLife Cyprus.

[Announcement](#) by the Press Officer Mr Enrico Brivio of the EU Commission on the 15th December 2015, calling upon the Cyprus Government to remove the ‘alternative plan’ derogation from the Strategic Plan. As clearly stated by the Press Officer ‘...the enactment of such a derogation would trigger the need for the Commission to take appropriate measures’.

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 8 officers, and
- SBA Police Anti-Poaching Unit is normally comprised of 5 officers to cover the Eastern Dhekelia Sovereign Base Area. However, according to press reports, in late September 2015, the team doubled to 11 police officers to respond to the peak trapping period (end Sept to mid-October)¹⁷. BirdLife Cyprus would like to thank the SBA Administration and SBA Police APU team for its willingness and support in undertaking joint field monitoring of illegal bird trapping with the BirdLife Cyprus team.

Table 3 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 - 2015.

¹⁷ Newspaper article 'SBA Police doubles size of anti-bird trapping team', CYPRUS WEEKLY, 25/9/2015, p76.

Table 3 Summary of illegal bird trapping statistics of the competent authorities for the months of August, September and October for years 2011 - 2015

	Game & Fauna Service – Larnaca & Famagusta district ²					Eastern SBA Police Anti-Poaching Unit ³					Cyprus Police Anti-Poaching Unit ⁴				
Years	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
No of prosecutions	54	58	76	57	49	23	21	22	28	17	N/A	22	N/A	27	25
No of trappers arrested	57	70	78	64	54	23	22	22	30	17	N/A	NA	N/A	27	28
No of mist nets ¹	204	311	287	235	230	361	275	227	184	181	N/A	116	N/A	116	121
No of limesticks ¹	2,550	5,372	3,830	1,577	1,740	290	314	516	256	234	N/A	4,799	N/A	3,950	3,359

N/A: Not available

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

Note 2: Data provided from Game & Fauna Larnaca & Famagusta district officer (December 2015).

Note 3: Data provided from Intelligence analyst of Eastern SBA Police (December 2015 and January 2016).

Note 4: Enforcement data were provided from Head of the Cyprus Police Anti-poaching unit via telephone on 5th February 2016.

- Game & Fauna Service – Larnaca & Famagusta district: The enforcement data for autumn 2015 show the lowest number of prosecutions and trappers arrested for the last 5 years for the Game & Fauna Service. The total numbers of mist nets and limesticks confiscated for autumn 2015 are similar to autumn 2014, but lower than previous years. Based on the analysis of the findings of BirdLife Cyprus from its field survey, mist netting activity levels within the RoC jurisdiction were the lowest recorded for the past decade (see Figure 3), which could be considered to be in agreement with the lower number of prosecutions from the Game & Fauna Service (i.e. lower mist netting activity would suggest a lower number of trappers undertaking this illegal activity). BirdLife Cyprus acknowledges the enforcement action against mist netting activity of the Game & Fauna Service, particularly if one were to consider the limited resources available. However the low number of limesticks confiscated is disappointing, especially if one were to consider that the majority of limesticks are found within the Republic controlled areas (based on the CABS findings that worked closely with the Cyprus Police APU)⁷. Both mist nets and limesticks are illegal due to their non-selective nature and a zero tolerance approach must be applied for both.
- SBA Police Anti-Poaching Unit (APU) – Dhekelia Sovereign Base: The enforcement data show the lowest number of arrests and the lowest number of confiscated mist nets and limesticks

for the last 5 years. The efforts of the SBA Police are acknowledged, in particular the much higher number of clearance operations in Cape Pyla (for the months August to October, a total of 16 operations took place for autumn 2015 compared to 1 operation for autumn 2014), which were supported by military personnel. The SBA Police also undertook joint field monitoring with both BirdLife Cyprus and with CABS / SPA Foundation organisations. However, the overall enforcement action of the SBA Police for the autumn migration period was disappointing, especially since mist netting activity remained at the very high levels recorded last autumn (see Figure 3), and despite the fact that its resources were doubled in late September¹⁷.

- The field data of BirdLife Cyprus showed that Cape Pyla remained a mist netting hotspot, despite the acacia clearances (December 2014 and July 2015), the doubled police force and the military support. The SBA Police and SBA Administration need to apply a combination of measures and tactics in order to be effective at significantly reducing mist netting activity within their jurisdiction.
- Cyprus Police Anti-Poaching Unit: During the Autumn 2015 trapping season this enforcement agency worked closely with the CABS / SPA Foundation organisations, which undertook their survey camp from the 5th September to 18th October 2015. The enforcement data of this agency show a similar enforcement action in Larnaca and Famagusta districts in autumn 2015 as in previous autumns, both in terms of the number of prosecutions and of mist nets and limesticks confiscated. BirdLife Cyprus acknowledges the consistent effort of this agency against illegal bird trapping. The results also highlight that its resources are overstretched and more resources are needed to enable further enforcement on the ground.

From the enforcement data provided by the 3 agencies, it is clear that illegal bird trapping is taking place on an industrial scale, with confiscated limesticks in the order of thousands (exceeding 5,300) and confiscated mist nets exceeding 530.

Table 4 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. 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 1 for net ride classification - and sites where limesticks were found) and were reported to the competent authorities for further action.

Table 4 Summary of trapping reports provided to competent authorities from BirdLife Cyprus during Autumn 2015

	Game and Fauna Service – Larnaca & Famagusta				SBA Anti-Poaching Police Unit				Cyprus Police Anti- Poaching Unit			
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2012	2013	2014	2015	2012	2013	2014	2015
Number of reports	50	43	33 ⁴	23	52	38	40	51	none	3	13 ⁴	12 ⁶
Prosecutions / Arrests	17 (34%)	19 (44%)	8 ⁴ (24%)	11 (48%) ⁵	9 (17%)	8 (21%)	6 (15%)	4 (8%)	N/R	1 (33%)	2 (15%) ⁴	1 (8%)
Confiscations¹	10 (20%)	8 (19%)	11 (33%)	None	22 (42%)	18 (47%)	5 (15%)	10 (20%)	N/R	N/A	N/A	2 (17%)
Clearance² / Nothing³	23 (46%)	16 (37%)	14 (42%)	12 (52%)	21 (40%)	12 (32%)	29 (70%)	37 (72%)	N/R	N/A	N/A	9 (75%)

N/R – Not relevant; N/A – Not available

Note 1: Confiscations of mist nets, limesticks and/or calling devices.

Note 2: Clearance refers to collection of trapping paraphernalia such as pole bases, poles, loudspeakers, wires etc.

Note 3: ‘Nothing’ refers to reports where the competent authority checked the trapping location but reported it inactive (no nets or limesticks were found) upon its visit, hence no prosecution or confiscation took place, or no feedback was provided.

Note 4: Two sites were reported to both the Game Service and the Cyprus Police (Autumn 2014) – both reports resulted in prosecutions and they are accounted for in the statistics of both enforcement agencies shown above. The feedback for these two sites was provided from the Game & Fauna Service and is used to calculate the % value for the Cyprus Police.

Note 5: Two of the BirdLife Cyprus’ reports that resulted in prosecutions were for illegal shooting of bee-eaters.

Note 6: The feedback for the reported sites to the Cyprus Police APU for Autumn 2015 was provided by CABS, which worked closely with this enforcement agency during the season.

The above table highlights that the cooperation and information exchange between the Game & Fauna Service and BirdLife Cyprus has been quite successful for Autumn 2015, with 48% of the reports resulting in prosecutions, which is commendable. In total numbers 11 prosecutions took place for Autumn 2015 from BirdLife reports, slightly more than Autumn 2014, but significantly fewer than previous years. It is noticeable that no confiscations took place this autumn, in contradiction to previous autumn seasons. The response rate to BirdLife Cyprus reports (based on the feedback provided by the Game and Fauna Service) ranged from 1 – 2 weeks, something that needs to be further improved in order for the enforcement action to be more effective (i.e. 52% of the BirdLife reports resulted in ‘clearance / nothing’ as an outcome).

With regards to the Dhekelia SBA Police Anti-poaching unit, about 28% of the BirdLife Cyprus reports resulted in prosecutions (8%) or confiscations (20%) for Autumn 2015. This total success rate of 28% is the lowest since 2012; it is particularly worrying that the actual number of prosecutions (4 in total) from BirdLife reports is also the lowest in recent years. These results are in agreement with the overall enforcement statistics of this enforcement agency (see Table 3), which indicated that enforcement action was the lowest over the last 5 years. The highest number of clearance operations was undertaken for this trapping season, 16 in total, compared to previous years, which is commendable. This is reflected by the volume of trapping paraphernalia (loudspeakers, poles, pole stands and destroyed pole stands) confiscated, based on the enforcement statistics provided by the SBA Police. The response time of the SBA Police unit (based on the feedback provided) ranged from one week to

two months. For a number of trapping sites reported by BirdLife Cyprus, action by the SBA Police was taken in late November / early December. This late response time highlights that the SBA Police resources were much stretched during the main trapping season; however enforcement action must be focused between August and October if a significant decrease in trapping activity levels is to be achieved within the SBA. From the data provided from CABS / SPA Foundation the SBA Police APU had on average one arrest and two confiscations for each day of joint monitoring during their camp⁷.

As for the Cyprus Police Anti-poaching unit, BirdLife Cyprus reported 12 cases where illegal bird trapping activity was detected. From the feedback received with regards to the BirdLife Cyprus reports from CABS (who worked closely with Cyprus Police), only 8% (1 report) resulted in prosecution and 17% (2 reports) resulted in confiscations, while for the remaining 75% (9 in total) of the reports there was no tangible result. This suggests that resources for this unit are stretched, particularly since for the last few years the Cyprus Police Anti-poaching unit works in close cooperation with CABS / SPA Foundation during their survey camps. The response time of this agency (based on the feedback provided) ranged from a few days to one week, which was the quicker amongst the 3 enforcement agencies. From the data provided from CABS / SPA Foundation, the Cyprus Police APU had on average one arrest and one confiscation for each day of joint monitoring during their camp⁷.

BirdLife Cyprus received numerous reports from the general public of active trapping sites. All the reports were provided to the competent authorities and in some cases they resulted in arrests or confiscations.

Illegal bird trapping has become a demand-supply wildlife crime, with the trading of trapped birds in restaurants being the key economic driver for organised trappers, who make thousands of euros every year. The restaurants selling *ambelopoulia* are primarily within the Republic; however enforcement action against them by the Game and Fauna Service and the Cyprus Police has been very limited, if any, in the last few years as seen in Table 5. For the year 2015 BirdLife Cyprus did not receive any information that any restaurants were prosecuted (or checked). This is very alarming and worrying indeed, and enforcement action against restaurants needs to be prioritised by the Cyprus competent authorities if the illegal trade of trapped birds in restaurants is to be stopped. BirdLife Cyprus believes that this much reduced enforcement action against restaurants is influenced by the lack of political will to tackle bird trapping observed in recent years (read section

Social and political attitudes).

Table 5 Summary of restaurant checks and prosecutions in Cyprus

	2010 ¹	2011 ¹	2012 ¹	2013 ¹	2014 ²
Restaurant checks	20	31	18	7	14
Restaurant prosecutions	13	15	8	3	1

Note 1: Data source for years 2010-2013: Ombudswoman report dated 27/5/2014

(http://www.ombudsman.gov.cy/ombudsman/ombudsman.nsf/index_new/index_new?OpenForm).

Note 2: Data source: Reply from Ministry of Interior to question of Member of the Parliament Mr Perdikes (question dated 15/6/2015, ref no 23.06.010.04.629) regarding restaurant prosecutions by the Game and Fauna Service for year 2014

(http://www2.parliament.cy/parliamentgr/008_02/by_name/gioryo_perdiki.htm).

Social and political attitudes

Overview for year 2015

The issue of illegal bird trapping has been covered very extensively by the media during 2015. As highlighted in BirdLife Cyprus trapping report of Spring 2015 (October 2015)¹⁸ during the year 2015 BirdLife has witnessed conflicting developments regarding the issue of illegal bird trapping. This issue was even covered by the high profile journal 'Nature' with a news feature article title '*Slaughter of the song birds*', published on 26th January 2016, which described the large scale killing of migratory birds taking place in Cyprus and the political sensitivities and developments that have taken place in 2015¹⁹.

Developments in the Republic of Cyprus

The approval of the Strategic Action Plan (StAP) for tackling illegal bird trapping by the Ministerial Council of the Cyprus government on the 13th May 2015, with the inclusion of the so-called 'alternative plan' for the 'selective hunting of ambelopoulia, under a derogation' has been very damaging and a huge setback for the implementation of a zero tolerance approach against this wildlife crime. The 'alternative plan' measure is a clear indication of tolerance towards bird trapping by the Cyprus Government, which is very likely to reverse the encouraging decrease that has been observed for mist netting activity levels in the last few years within the Republic (see Figure 3).

Developments in the UK Sovereign Base Areas

The SBA Administration has shown political will to stop illegal bird trapping and to enforce a zero tolerance' approach on the ground within its jurisdiction. As part of its acacia clearance programme within the mist netting hotspot of Cape Pyla 54 acres of acacia vegetation have been cleared to date²⁰, a milestone action that BirdLife Cyprus welcomes.

Another major measure for the protection of Cape Pyla was its designation as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) on 30 December 2015. The site was designated, together with another four sites within the SBAs namely Agios Nicolaos, Dhekelia, Akrotiri and Episkopi²¹. Cape Pyla, Agios Nicolaos and Dhekelia are all areas where illegal bird trapping takes place; hence their designation as SACs gives these areas a protected status and the possibility for securing funding for further management and habitat restoration work. BirdLife Cyprus warmly welcomes the designation and congratulates the SBAs for completing a thorough scientific evaluation that led to the protection of those sites. BirdLife Cyprus expects these designations will now lead to better protection of these important areas as well as the implementation of relevant management measures.

¹⁸ BirdLife Cyprus trapping report (October 2015) - 'UPDATE on illegal bird trapping activity in Cyprus' http://birdlifecyprus.org/upload/BirdLifeCyprus_Spring2015trappingreport_Final_forpublicuse.pdf.

¹⁹ Nature journal, News Feature 'Slaughter of the song birds', 26th January 2016 <http://www.nature.com/news/slaughter-of-the-song-birds-1.19222>.

²⁰ December 2014 – 17 acres; July 2015 – 22 acres; January 2016 – 15 acres.

²¹ Sovereign Base Areas Administration website, section 'Special Areas of Conservation' <http://www.sbaadministration.org/index.php/special-ac>.

Cyprus Government continues to show tolerance towards bird trapping, despite EU Commission's call to remove 'the alternative plan' derogation

BirdLife Cyprus has been advocating for the development and the implementation of a Strategic Action Plan (StAP) against illegal bird trapping since 2011, following the adoption of the 'Larnaca Declaration'²² in the 1st Pan-european Conference against Illegal Bird Killing (Council of Europe, Larnaca, July 2011). The 'Larnaca Declaration' was a milestone decision and it was taken at a time that it has become clear also to BirdLife Cyprus that the serious and persistent problem of illegal bird trapping could not be addressed only through enforcement actions, but needed a suite of measures under different areas and with all the key stakeholders involved. The Spring 2015 trapping report (October 2015) describes in detail how BirdLife Cyprus led the initiative for the development of a StAP in 2013 on the principle of a 'zero tolerance' approach against this wildlife crime, with the involvement of all key stakeholders (enforcement agencies, government departments, environmental NGOs), and that in 2014 a final StAP document was sent to the stakeholders for adoption. It is important to highlight that during this democratic, transparent, participatory and integrated consultation the issue of a 'derogation for selective hunting of ambelopoulia' was never brought up for discussion by any stakeholder.

The Spring 2015 report¹⁸ outlines the progress towards the adoption of the StAP document, as sent by BirdLife Cyprus in 2014, by the different stakeholders, and how the Ministry of Interior and the Game and Fauna Service introduced unilaterally this 'alternative plan' measure for 'selective hunting of ambelopoulia, under derogation' in the Strategic Action Plan developed by the Republic of Cyprus. On the 13th May 2015 the Ministerial Council approved the Strategic Action Plan with the 'alternative plan' measure included²³, without being fully briefed of the compatibility of the plan with the EU acquis and it seems without having sought the advice of the legal service of the Republic.

This development has been a serious setback to any progress made against illegal bird trapping and we strongly believe that this strategic plan if implemented would basically lead the way for the legalization of ambelopoulia hunting, instead of aiming to eliminate this phenomenon. Realising the severity of this disastrous development, the environmental organizations BirdLife Cyprus, the Cyprus Conservation Foundation *Terra Cypria*, Friends of the Earth Cyprus, the Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) and the Foundation for the Protection of Biodiversity (Foundation Pro Biodiversity - SPA) formed a network in order to fight it as a united front. The network was very active lobbying and campaigning for the withdrawal of this derogation during 2015, including:

- Various joint Press Releases to express our opposition to the 'alternative plan':
 - 15th May, [Greek](#) and [English](#) titled '*Environmental organisations condemn the "alternative plan" introduced in the Strategic Plan to tackle illegal trapping of birds and its approval by the Council of Ministers on 13 May 2015*'.

²² 'Larnaca Declaration', 7th July 2011.

<https://wcd.coe.int/com.instranet.InstraServlet?command=com.instranet.CmdBlobGet&InstranetImage=2765488&SecMode=1&DocId=1806244&Usage=2>

²³ Ministry of Interior announcement for approval of the Strategic Plan for tackling illegal trapping of wild birds, 14th May 2015.

<http://www.pio.gov.cy/moi/pio/pio.nsf/All/965DEA62D16DDF7AC2257E45003D3CA9?OpenDocument>

- 14th September, [Greek](#) and [English](#) titled '*Clear no by European Commission to selective blackcap hunting*'
- 17th December, [Greek](#) titled '*ENGOS answer to the Statement of the Ministry of Interior regarding illegal bird trapping*'.
- Joint position papers in [Greek](#) and [English](#), explaining the reasons why this derogation cannot be permitted under the Birds Directive. The position paper outlined the reasons why this derogation must be withdrawn, based on scientific, legal, strategic, tactical, violation of good administration and the consultation process reasons and, misinformation of the public opinion on this issue arguments.
- Attendance and submission of a joint position paper on 1st July at the Environmental Committee of the Parliament of Cyprus (read the relevant e-news [article](#) of July 2015), when the StAP and the 'alternative plan' was discussed.
- Publication of pictures of Cypriot celebrities (artists, musicians, poets, actors, journalists etc.) holding signs with messages such as 'Protect Birds, Not Poachers' and 'Zero Tolerance Against Illegal Bird Killing' on Facebook page 'Zero Tolerance Against Songbird Poaching in Cyprus' last December²⁴. In total more than 40 celebrities voiced their opposition to illegal bird trapping in this way.

Over the last few months this network has had meetings with various political parties, members of the parliament and other decision makers, presenting our joint position paper and our key arguments against this 'alternative plan'. Our campaigning has reached out to the general public and to the media, as we have been invited to various TV and radio shows and have given interviews to newspapers and magazines, during which we had the opportunity to voice our strong opposition to this derogation (see Appendix 5). Furthermore the publication of the pictures of celebrities, expressing their opposition against bird trapping, attracted a lot of attention and provided an opportunity for the general public to express for the first time in social media their outcry against this chronic problem.

BirdLife Cyprus strongly believes that the intention through the 'alternative plan' is to legalise blackcap hunting in Cyprus, and to reduce enforcement, purely for political reasons, rather than to stop illegal bird trapping. This has become even more evident from a Facebook post of a Member of the Cyprus Parliament, Evgenios Xamboullas, on 12th December 2015 showing himself with a plate of '*ambelopoulia*' and commenting '*Soon in our restaurants! Happy Holidays!*'. The particular MP has been strongly supportive of the 'alternative plan' since the beginning in May 2015, and has appeared on numerous media shows to 'defend' this derogation as a measure to tackle bird trapping. This provocative post created a massive outcry in the media, including social media, not only because this post was promoting an illegal act, but even more importantly because a Member of Parliament was clearly breaking the law and considered himself 'above the law'. His act received a lot of media attention nationally, and even international press such as The Guardian covered the incident with an article titled '*Anger as Cyprus MP shows off banned dish of songbirds at restaurant*'²⁵. Despite the fact

²⁴ Zero Tolerance Against Songbird Poaching in Cyprus page on Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/AntiBirdPoachingCy/?fref=ts>

²⁵ The Guardian [article](#), 15th December 2015, titled '*Anger as Cyprus MP shows off banned dish of songbirds at restaurant*'.

that many politicians criticised the post of this MP, including his own political party DISY²⁶ and the General Attorney of the Republic of Cyprus, sadly the MP has not been prosecuted for his illegal act, due to his MP impunity. An online petition was created calling upon the General Attorney to lift the MP's Parliamentary immunity and to initiate criminal proceedings against him²⁷, which received a total of 1,274 signatures. Despite the fact that the General Attorney commented in a newspaper article²⁸, as a response to this petition, that there is not sufficient evidence to initiate criminal proceedings against Xamboullas' act, he reiterated that his act was unacceptable and provocative. However, it is important to note that this post has also attracted the attention of pro trapping supporters, and numerous posts have appeared on social media with people eating *ambelopoulia*, since a sense of impunity and of tolerance has been created. This has been a huge setback at a communication level and the messaging of 'zero tolerance' towards illegal bird trapping.

Moreover BirdLife Cyprus believes that the whole incident of MP Hamboullas and his provocative behaviour will affect, directly or indirectly, the implementation and enforcement of the law on the ground. As mentioned in an article published by the well-known journal *Nature* on 26 January 2016¹⁹ by an officer of the Cyprus Game and Fauna Service, there have been at least 30 cases in the past decade in which game-service officers responsible for wildlife enforcement in the republic were harassed by trappers. *"We've had people put bombs in the private cars of game wardens, and cases where the houses of game wardens have been burnt down,"* the same officer mentioned. Another article²⁹ published in a Greek newspaper, on 16 November 2015, interviewed a game warden of the Cyprus Game and Fauna Service and described the dangers that game wardens are faced with on a daily basis during their patrolling to combat illegal bird trapping and poaching. On one occasion the game warden described how a trapper that had set mist nets for catching blackcaps threatened him with a gun, *'...turn around and go. If you insist to arrest me I will kill you. I have three months of life left and two cartridges. One for you and one for me'*, the trapper shouted at the game warden. It is evident that the enforcement agencies have a hard task to enforce the law against trapping and poaching, and Xamboullas' provocative act will worsen their operational work. A Game warden might wonder if an MP is completely indifferent and in fact breaks the law publicly, why should the enforcement agencies strive to enforce it and the rest of the citizens abide by it and face the risks associated as well?

Fortunately the EU Commission has given a very clear, negative opinion with regards to the 'alternative plan' derogation. According to a newspaper article on 2 January 2016³⁰, a press officer of the EU Commission, Mr Enrico Brivio, highlighted that *'...the Commission is concerned about the inclusion of this 'alternative plan', which creates the possibility for granting derogations for bird*

²⁶ DISY announcement with title 'Post and comments of Member of the Parliament Evgenios Xamboullas on social media' - <http://www.disy.org.cy/index.php?id=3593>.

²⁷ Online petition link -

https://secure.avaaz.org/el/petition/Axiotimo_Geniko_Eisaggelea_ko_Kosta_Kliridi_Sas_kaloyme_na_arete_tin_asylia_kai_na_askisete_poiniki_dioxi/?nCCxrbb.

²⁸ Sigmalive newspaper article, 27th January 2016 - <http://www.sigmalive.com/news/303371/eisaggeleas-den-stoixeiotheteitai-poiniko-adikima-xampoulla>

²⁹ Reporter [article](#), 16 November 2015, titled *'I have three months of life left and two cartridges. One for you and one for me'*

³⁰ Article in Greek - <http://www.philenews.com/el-gr/top-stories/885/292764/komision-ampelopoulia-telos-diaforerika-parapompi-sto-dikastirio-tis-ee>.

trapping. This is a measure that cannot be accepted according to the EU legislation...'. In a similar tone, Mr Brivio made an official announcement on behalf of the Commission on 15th December 2015³¹ regarding the same issue, stating that '...this is an option that cannot be justified on the basis of EU legislation...the enactment of such a derogation would trigger the need for the Commission to take appropriate measures'. In this specific announcement, the press officer also mentioned that the Commission had written to the Cyprus Government in August 2015³², making clear that 'the alternative plan' derogation cannot be permitted as the criteria set out by the European Birds Directive are not met.

The Commission has given its final and categorical opinion on this matter. However there has been no official reaction from the Cyprus Government regarding whether it intends to remove the 'alternative plan' from the Strategic Plan, and BirdLife Cyprus calls upon the Cyprus Government to remove this derogation from the Strategic Plan and to start immediately the implementation of the rest of the Plan, which has been pending since early 2014. Finally, it's worth noting that the NGO coalition has written a letter to the Minister of Interior on 26 December 2015, asking what the Minister intends to do about removing the 'alternative plan' and asking for a meeting, but we have no reply or invitation to this date.

SBA Administration continues to implement a 'zero tolerance' approach to illegal bird trapping

SBA Administration (SBAA) has shown political will to stop illegal bird trapping within its jurisdiction and to enforce a 'zero tolerance' approach on the ground in 2015, as shown by the various activities that have been undertaken, including: a) the continuation of the acacia clearance programme in the mist netting hotspot of Cape Pyla, b) the designation of Cape Pyla, Agios Nicolaos and Dhekelia as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), areas where illegal bird trapping takes place, and c) the development of a bird trapping action plan that outlines the various measures that the SBAA will undertake to combat this issue within its jurisdiction³³.

BirdLife Cyprus has been calling on the SBA Administration (SBAA) the last years to tackle effectively the mist netting hotspot of Cape Pyla by undertaking acacia clearance, hence removing the habitat used for trapping. This milestone action started in November / December 2014 and continues to date, undertaking acacia removals in phases and a total of 54 acres of acacia vegetation has been removed to date (December 2014 – 17 acres; July 2015 – 22 acres; January 2016 – 15 acres). The reactions from the local residents of the nearby village of Xylofagou, joined by some local Members of Parliament, have been many, but fortunately the SBA Administration has remained undeterred and committed to stopping industrial scale mist netting activity in Cape Pyla. BirdLife Cyprus welcomes and supports the acacia removal programme; however this action must be continued as there are still more than 100 acres of acacias in Cape Pyla military firing range³⁴, which still contain the stronghold of mist netting

³¹ <http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?ref=1114292&videolang=EN&embedder>

³² Relevant BirdLife Cyprus e-news article (September 2015) - http://www.birdlifecyprus.org/en/news-879-A_clear_NO_by_the_European_Commission_to_the_alternative_plan_for_selective_blackcap_hunting.html.

³³ Sovereign Base Areas Administration website, section 'Bird trapping / Poaching Information' <http://www.sbaadministration.org/index.php/bird-trapping-action-plan>

³⁴ A total of 164 acres of acacias has been mapped within the Cape Pyla firing exclusion zone, 54 of which have been removed to this date. http://www.sbaadministration.org/images/AEEIC/bird_trapping/20150819-hq_Bird_%20Trapping_plan_2015_ppo.pdf

activity as recorded during the monitoring field survey and shown in the analysis undertaken (see Figure 3). The SBAA must prioritise where the next acacia removal should take place in Cape Pyla, on the basis of intelligence information regarding mist netting activity, in order to have a bigger impact on this illegal activity.

The designation of Cape Pyla as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) last January 2016, together with the areas of Agios Nicolaos and Dhekelia within the Eastern SBAs²¹, is warmly welcomed. This designation sets the legal framework for the protection of these areas and for the development of management plans for each one of them. This designation will also provide the possibility for securing funding for the protection and restoration of these sites, particularly for Cape Pyla and the acacia removal plan that is ongoing.

It is clear that the SBA Administration has set the issue of tackling illegal bird trapping high on its priority list, having developed a 'Bird Trapping Action Plan' and starting to implement it. A significant amount of resources, both military and police, were utilised during the past year and a mixture of measures were applied during the Autumn 2015 main trapping period. However trapping activity within the SBAs, and particularly in Cape Pyla, remained at very high levels and the Administration and the Police need to draw up an action plan for the coming autumn that will tackle this problem effectively.

4. Discussion

Illegal bird trapping activity with the use of mist nets and limesticks has seen a decrease compared to last year during this last autumn period; however it remained at very high levels compared to the low activity levels recorded during and right after the accession period of Cyprus into the EU (see Figure 2). Mist netting activity for autumn 2015 showed a 13% decrease compared to 2002 (index value is 87 for autumn 2015), an encouraging outcome. However, these levels are much higher than a decade ago (lowest index value recorded from the surveillance programme of BirdLife Cyprus was 20 in 2006, a decrease of 80% compared to baseline year 2002). At a jurisdiction level, mist netting activity for the Republic showed a decrease of 59% for autumn 2015 compared to 2002, while for the SBA an increase of 127% for autumn 2015 compared to 2002 was recorded. Year-on-year increase since 2011 in illegal bird trapping within the SBA appears to have been stopped for this autumn trapping season. This is a necessary and important start, and BirdLife Cyprus hopes that this will be the start of a significant decline to follow in the near future. Enforcement data from the 3 agencies (see Table 3) indicate that illegal bird trapping is taking place on an industrial scale, with confiscated limesticks in the order of thousands (exceeding 5,300) and confiscated mist nets exceeding 530.

The 'Review of illegal killing of birds in the Mediterranean' by BirdLife International, published in August 2015, highlighted the scale of illegal bird trapping and the impact Cyprus is having as a country on migratory birds (read relevant [e-news article](#)). A paper that is due to be published in the next 2016 edition of the journal 'Bird Conservation International' regarding this study mentioned that *'...In the late 1980s, Cyprus had a reputation for killing more individual birds per capita than any other country in the Mediterranean (Magnin 1987) and our data indicates that this may remain the case'*. In the findings of this study Cyprus ranked first with the highest estimated mean number of birds killed per capita, 196 birds killed per 100 people, followed by Lebanon with 44 birds killed per 100 people.

The approval of the Strategic Action Plan (StAP) for tackling illegal bird trapping by the Ministerial Council of the Cyprus government on the 13th May 2015, with the inclusion of the so-called 'alternative plan' for the 'selective hunting of ambelopoulia, under a derogation' under the Birds Directive has been very damaging and a huge setback for the implementation of a zero tolerance approach against this wildlife crime. The 'alternative plan' measure is a clear indication of tolerance towards bird trapping by the Cyprus Government and the legalisation of blackcap hunting. This situation is very likely to reverse the encouraging decrease that has been observed for mist netting activity levels in the last few years within the Republic. BirdLife Cyprus believes that the provocative behaviour of MP Hamboullas, who posted a picture of himself with a plate of 'ambelopoulia' and commenting *'Soon in our restaurants! Happy Holidays'*, will have an impact on the implementation and enforcement of the law on the ground, as a sense of impunity and of tolerance has been created regarding illegal bird trapping.

Fortunately the EU Commission has been categorical with regards to the 'alternative plan' derogation proposed by the Cyprus Government, stating that *'...the Commission is concerned about the inclusion of this 'alternative plan', which creates the possibility for granting derogations for bird trapping. This is a measure that cannot be accepted according to the EU legislation...'*³⁰. Moreover in an official press announcement in December 2015³¹, it was made clear that *'...the enactment of such a derogation would trigger the need for the Commission to take appropriate measures'*. It is also worth noting that

the environmental NGOs coalition, which has been formed to fight against the 'alternative plan', has written a letter to the Minister of Interior on 16 December 2015, asking what the Minister intends to do about removing the 'alternative plan' and asking for a meeting, but there has been no reply or invitation to this date.

On the other hand the SBA Administration has shown political will in 2015 to stop illegal bird trapping within its jurisdiction, and to enforce a 'zero tolerance' approach on the ground. It has continued with its acacia clearance programme in the mist netting hotspot of Cape Pyla and so far has removed 54 acres of acacias, despite all the reactions from the locals and the political pressure exerted. Furthermore, it finalised the process and has announced the designation of Cape Pyla as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) in January 2016, as well as the areas of Agios Nicolaos and Dhekelia. This designation sets out the legal framework for the protection of these areas and for the development of management plans, which would include habitat restoration as a key measure. It is very encouraging that the SBA Administration has developed and is implementing a 'Bird Trapping Action Plan', which shows that this issue is of high priority, and a significant amount of resources were utilised during the past year. However trapping activity within the SBAs, and particularly in Cape Pyla, remained at very high levels, equal to autumn 2014, and the Administration and the Police need to draw up an action plan for the coming autumn that will tackle this problem effectively.

The levels of political will in the Cyprus government and the SBA Administration have never been as different as they were in 2015. The Cyprus government has shown tolerance towards illegal bird trapping by approving a Strategic Action Plan that includes the possibility for 'selective hunting of blackcaps, under derogation' under the Birds Directive. Such a clause risks legalising bird killing of blackcaps in practice. On the other hand the SBA Administration has shown zero tolerance on the ground against bird trapping with the development and implementation of an action plan that has included a series of important measures (54 acres of acacia removed since December 2014, designation of the key trapping hotspot of Cape Pyla as a SAC, military support to the Anti-poaching unit etc.). This will need to be maintained however if the levels of mist-netting activity at Cape Pyla are to be finally reduced (about 100 acres of invasive acacia used for illegal bird trapping still remain within Cape Pyla).

BirdLife Cyprus calls upon the Cyprus Government to remove the 'alternative plan' from the Strategic Action Plan and to start immediately the implementation of the rest of the plan, which has been pending since early 2014, as this development has caused a huge setback on a communication level and the messaging of 'zero tolerance' towards illegal bird trapping.

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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). In terms of the analysis of the survey data BirdLife Cyprus is using the TRIM (Trends & Indices for Monitoring data) programme, which enables the analysis of time series of counts with missing observations (read more about TRIM in Appendix 4).

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.

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 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 ride 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 poles, bases, feathers & signs of trampling in an olive grove



Figure 6: Active Unset Net present (AUN) in an olive grove



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 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

Survey data for autumn 2015

Evidence of illegal bird trapping activity within survey squares

Confidential information – provided upon request

Evidence of illegal bird trapping activity outside survey squares

Confidential information – provided upon request

Appendix 3

Estimation of numbers of birds caught during autumn 2015

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
- 50% scaling factor – applied for spring estimates to account for a lower number of migrating birds passing via Cyprus compared to the autumn
- 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)
- Net ride categories 'ANN' (Active No Nets), 'ASN' (Active Set Nets) and 'AUN' (Active Unset Nets) nets are assumed that they are active every day during the trapping season (read Appendix 1 for details on net ride classification).
 - Note: Net ride category 'P' (Prepared) is not taken into account for the estimation of numbers of birds killed anymore, following the recommendation of BTO science experts (BTO report, July 2015) to revise slightly the equation.

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

For nets = [(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)

$$= [(2,782 + 405 + 20) / (12) \times (20) \times (301/59) \times (60)]$$

= **1,636,114** could have been 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)

$$= 335 \times 0.5 \times (301/59) \times 60$$

= **51.272** birds caught within the survey area on limesticks

In total 1,687,386 birds could have been killed in mist nets and on limesticks within the survey area during autumn 2015. Assuming that the survey area accounts for 75% of the trapping activity in Cyprus, the bird death toll across Cyprus is:

$$= 1,687,386 / 75\%$$

= **2,249,847 birds** could have been killed in nets and on limesticks across all Cyprus during autumn 2015.

Appendix 4

TRIM model description

TRIM (TRENds & Indices for Monitoring data) is a program for the analysis of time series of counts with missing observations. The program can be used to estimate indices and trends and to assess the effects of covariates on these indices and trends. TRIM analyses time series of counts, using Poisson regression and produces estimates of yearly indices and trends (Panneelock & van Strien 2005). If observations are missing, TRIM estimates the missing values on the basis of changes observed on plots that were monitored.

In other words, TRIM enables us to use the data from all the trapping survey squares ever surveyed under the BirdLife Cyprus surveillance programme during the autumn period, in total 104 squares, even though these squares were not all covered each autumn season. The programme 'fills in' missing values for squares that were not covered in a particular year on the basis of the general trend derived from the data as a whole. The TRIM software (freely available from <http://www.ebcc.info/trim.html>) is very widely used for analysis of field data from ecological or biological studies. It works as an index, setting the first year of a time series of data the value of 100 (in this case year 2002) and showing up or down changes in subsequent years relative to this value of 100.

TRIM program allows the user to select various models to undertake the analysis: a) Model 1: No time-effects, b) Model 2: Linear (switching) trend, and c) Model 3: Effects for each time-point. **For the analysis presented in this report BirdLife Cyprus has selected Model 2, following the advice of RSPB senior conservation scientist Mr Simon Wotton.** Below is an explanation of why.

Which model should one use: the time-effects model or the linear trend model? (Panneelock & van Strien 2005)

The time effects model (= year effects model in case the time points are years) estimates parameters for each separate year and should be chosen if one wants to assess indices for each year. The linear trend model should be chosen if one is interested in testing whether a trend has happened across a number of years, by selecting one or more years as changepoints. The linear trend model should also be chosen when the data are too sparse to run the time effects model. Using the linear trend model also allows testing trends before and after particular changepoints. Options are (1) to test trends before and after a priori selected changepoints or **(2) to let TRIM search for the substantial changepoints by using the stepwise procedure.** If all years are selected as changepoints, the linear trend model is equivalent to the time effects model (although it results in a description in terms of trend slope parameters rather than time point parameters). Note that the linear trend model also produces indices for each year, but not necessarily based on yearly parameters as in the time effects model. Instead of yearly parameters, the linear trend uses the trend across a number of years to approximate the indices.

BirdLife Cyprus has used the 'Linear trend model by using the stepwise procedure and with all years selected as changepoints' for the trend analysis presented in this report, following the recommendation of RSPB senior conservation scientist Mr Simon Wotton.

The linear trend model can be run without any changepoints selected. Thereby it imputes missing counts based on the trend over the whole period studied. Be careful in using the model without any changepoints; the resulting indices might be unrealistic (this is the key point why this approach was not recommended and all years were selected as changepoints).

Appendix 5

Shortlist of media coverage related to illegal bird trapping for 2015

The list is divided in following categories for 2015 (calendar year), coming up to February 2016:

- TV coverage
- Radio coverage
- Articles quoting BirdLife Cyprus
- Articles on Strategic Action Plan, the 'alternative plan' and illegal bird trapping
- Articles regarding the 'Review of illegal killing of birds in the Mediterranean' by BirdLife International
- Coverage regarding the picture posted by MP Xamboullas on social media
- Coverage on Acacia removal in Cape Pyla
- Coverage on Commission's reply regarding the 'alternative plan' derogation
- Coverage on Celebrity photo campaign

TV coverage

1. Δελτίο ειδήσεων. Mega 15/5/15. Δήλωση: Νάταλη Στυλιανού, Λειτουργός ΜΜΕ, Πτηνολογικός News broadcast. Mega 15/5/15. Quote: Natalie Stylianou, Media Officer, BirdLife Cyprus
2. Ενημέρωση τώρα. Mega 18/5/15. Προσκεκλημένοι: Κλαίρη Παπάζογλου, Εκτελεστική Δ/ντρια Πτηνολογικού, και Ευγένιος Χαμπουλλάς, Βουλευτής και υποστηρικτής «εναλλακτικού σχεδιασμού» Enimerosi tora. Mega 18/5/15.
Invited speakers: Clairie Papazoglou, BirdLife Cyprus Executive Director, and Evgenios Hamboullas, MP and 'alternative plan' supporter
3. Από μέρα σε μέρα. ΡΙΚ1 18/5/15. Προσκεκλημένοι: Κλείτος Παπαστυλιανού, Επιστημονικός Συνεργάτης Ενάντια στη Λαθροθηρία Πουλιών στην Κύπρο Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) & Foundation Pro Biodiversity (SPA), Ευγένιος Χαμπουλλάς, Βουλευτής και υποστηρικτής «εναλλακτικού σχεδιασμού» Απο mera se mera. CYBC1 18/5/15.
Invited speakers: Klitos Papastyliaou, Policy Advisor on Bird Poaching in Cyprus, Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) & Foundation Pro Biodiversity (SPA), and Evgenios Hamboullas, MP and 'alternative plan' supporter
4. Από μέρα σε μέρα. ΡΙΚ1 14/7/15. Προσκεκλημένη: Νάταλη Στυλιανού, Λειτουργός ΜΜΕ, Πτηνολογικός.
Απο mera se mera. CYBC1 14/7/15. Invited speaker: Natalie Stylianou, Media Officer, BirdLife Cyprus

Radio coverage

1. Τάσος Τρύφωνος-Χριστιάνα Αρτεμίου. Love FM 15/5/15. Τηλεφωνική παρέμβαση: Νάταλη Στυλιανού, Λειτουργός ΜΜΕ, Πτηνολογικός.
Tassos Tryfonos-Christiana Artemiou. Love FM 15/5/15. Telephone intervention: Natalie Stylianou, Media Officer, BirdLife Cyprus
2. Πρωινό Δρομολόγιο. Τρίτο πρόγραμμα ΡΙΚ 18/5/15. Τηλεφωνική συνέντευξη: Κλαίρη Παπάζογλου, Εκτελεστική Δ/ντρια Πτηνολογικού, και Ευγένιος Χαμπουλλάς, Βουλευτής και υποστηρικτής «εναλλακτικού σχεδιασμού»
Proino Dromologio. Third programme CYBC 18/5/15. Telephone interview: Clairie Papazoglou, BirdLife Cyprus Executive Director, and Evgenios Hamboullas, MP and 'alternative plan' supporter
3. Πρωινή έκδοση. Ράδιο Άστρα 18/5/15. Τηλεφωνική συνέντευξη: Κλαίρη Παπάζογλου, Εκτελεστική Δ/ντρια Πτηνολογικού, και Ευγένιος Χαμπουλλάς, Βουλευτής και

υποστηρικτής «εναλλακτικού σχεδιασμού»

Proini ekdosi. Radio Astra 18/5/15. Telephone interview: Claire Papazoglou, BirdLife Cyprus Executive Director, and Evgenios Hamboullas, MP and 'alternative plan' supporter 34

4. Tothemaonline.com 19/5/15. Προσκεκλημένος: Ευγένιος Χαμπουλλάς, Βουλευτής και υποστηρικτής «εναλλακτικού σχεδιασμού». Τηλεφωνική παρέμβαση: Κλείτος Παπαστυλιανού, Επιστημονικός Συνεργάτης Ενάντια στη Λαθροθηρία Πουλιών στην Κύπρο Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) & Foundation Pro Biodiversity (SPA) Tothemaonline.com 19/5/15. Invited speaker: Evgenios Hamboullas, MP and 'alternative plan' supporter. Telephone intervention: Klitos Papastilianou, Policy Advisor on Bird Poaching in Cyprus, Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) & Foundation Pro Biodiversity (SPA)
5. Η φάρμα των ζώων. Ράδιο Άστρα 21/5/15. Προσκεκλημένη: Νάταλη Στυλιανού, Λειτουργός ΜΜΕ, Πτηνολογικός Ι farma ton zoon. Radio Astra 21/5/15. Invited speaker: Natalie Stylianou, Media Officer, BirdLife Cyprus
6. Δελτίο Θυέλλης. 107,6 25/5/15. Τηλεφωνική συνέντευξη: Κλαίρη Παπάζογλου, Εκτελεστική Δ/ντρια Πτηνολογικού Deltio Thyellis. 107,6 25/5/15. Telephone Interview: Claire Papazoglou, BirdLife Cyprus Executive Director
7. Ράδιο Άστρα 15/12/15. Τηλεφωνική συνέντευξη: Κλαίρη Παπάζογλου, Εκτελεστική Δ/ντρια Πτηνολογικού Radio Astra 15/12/15. Telephone interview: Claire Papazoglou, BirdLife Cyprus Executive Director
8. Τρίτο Πρόγραμμα. 15/12/15. Τηλεφωνική συνέντευξη: Κλαίρη Παπάζογλου, Εκτελεστική Δ/ντρια Πτηνολογικού Third Programme. 15/12/15. Telephone interview: Claire Papazoglou, BirdLife Cyprus Executive Director
9. 107,6 16/12/15 Τηλεφωνική συνέντευξη: Κλαίρη Παπάζογλου, Εκτελεστική Δ/ντρια Πτηνολογικού 107,6 16/12/15 Telephone interview: Claire Papazoglou, BirdLife Cyprus Executive Director

Articles quoting BirdLife Cyprus

1. Ανοίγει ο δρόμος νομιμοποίησης του κυνηγιού αμπελοπουλιών – Θύελλα αντιδράσεων από περιβαλλοντικές οργανώσεις. 16/5/15 <http://www.philenews.com/el-gr/eidiseisperivallon/51/257144/anoigei-o-dromos-nomimopoiisis-tou-kynigiou-ampelopoulion>
2. Όλα όσα πρέπει να ξέρεις για το κυνήγι των αμπελοπουλιών [που έρχεται σύντομα] 17/5/15 <http://city.sigmalive.com/article/10932/ola-osa-prepei-na-xereis-gia-kynigitonampelopoylion-poy-erhetai-syntoma>
3. «Πόλεμος» για τα αμπελοπούλια. 20/5/15 <http://www.sigmalive.com/news/local/233802/quotpolemosquot-gia-ta-ampelopoulia>
4. BirdLife Cyprus slams government plans to allow bird trapping 15/5/15 <http://www.cyprusexpat.co.uk/blog/read/id:5908/bird-life-cyprus-slams-governmentplans-to-allow-bird-trapping>
5. Deceived by the government. Cyprus Mail 16/5/15 p3
6. Dr Papazoglou: „The Law on Illegal Bird Trapping has not Been Implemented Effectively” 19/8/15 <http://www.goldnews.com.cy/en/companies/dr.-papazoglou--%E2%80%9Cthe-law-on-illegal-bird-trapping-has-not-been-implemented-effectively%E2%80%9D>

General articles on Strategic Action Plan, the 'alternative plan' and illegal bird trapping

1. Απόφαση Υπουργικού Συμβουλίου – Ψάχνουν παραθυράκι για θήρευση αμπελοπουλιών. 14/5/15 <http://www.philenews.com/el-gr/topstories/885/256766/psachnoun-parathyraki-gia-thirefsi-ampelopoulion>
2. Σχέδιο κατά της παράνομης παγίδευσης πουλιών 14/5/15 <http://dialogos.com.cy/blog/schedio-kata-tis-paranomis-pagidefsis-poulion/> 35 3. Κόντρα Χαμπουλλά – Τρύφωνος για τα αμπελοπούλια... με φόντο τα Κοκκινοχώρια 15/5/15 <http://neammochostos.com/ei-champoullas-ke-t-trifonos-kontraristikan-stoaera-gia-ta-ampelopoulia/>
3. Επιτρέπεται το κυνήγι. Πολίτης 16/5/15 σελ 1 & 34 6. Ανοίγει ο δρόμος νομιμοποίησης του κυνηγιού των αμπελοπουλιών. Φιλελεύθερος 16/5/15 σελ 24
4. Διαβάστε ποια θα είναι τα αποτελέσματα νομιμοποίησης του κυνηγιού αμπελοπουλιών 16/5/15 <http://neammochostos.com/diavaste-pia-tha-ine-ta-apotelesmatanomimopiisis-tou-kinigiou-ampelopoulion/>
5. Η μάχη του Ευγένιου Χαμπουλλά. Πολίτης 17/5/15 σελ 20
6. Αεροβόλο φλομπέρ και σφεντόνες. Πολίτης 17/5/15 σελ 1 & 20
7. Μπήκε μπροστά ο Χαμπουλλάς 19/5/15 <http://www.philenews.com/el-gr/eidiseisparaskinio/40/257475/mpike-brosta-o-champoullas>
8. Θα πατάξει τη λαθροθηρία το κυνήγι αμπελοπουλιών ισχυρίστηκε ο Χαμπουλλάς (Βίντεο) 20/5/15 <http://www.tothemaonline.com/filozooi/2015/05/20/ampelopoulia/>
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10. Τα αμπελοπούλια έχουν ισχυρή ψήφο. Σημερινή 23/5/15 σελ 8
11. Τα αμπελοπούλια του κ. Χαμπουλλά. Πολίτης 23/5/15 σελ 12
12. Τα αμπελοπούλια είναι ψευδαίσθηση. Η καθημερινή 24/5/15 σελ 12 <http://www.kathimerini.com.cy/index.php?pageaction=kat&modid=1&artid=207760>
13. Συνέντευξη Ευγένιου Χαμπουλλά στο «ΝΑ»: «Είναι σαφές, επιτρέπεται η θήρευση του αμπελοπουλιού κατά παρέκκλιση». 31/5/15 <http://neammochostos.com/sinentefxievgeniou-champoula-sto-na-ine-safes-epitrepete-i-thirefsi-tou-ampelopoulion-katapareklisi/>
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15. Ήξεις αφίξεις οι τοποθετήσεις κομμάτων – Κάινε οι 11 βουλευτικές έδρες. Τα μασάνε για αμπελοπούλια 2/6/15 <http://www.politis-news.com/cgibin/hweb?-A=293893&-V=articles>
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17. Εκτός «κόκκινου καταλόγου» της Ευρώπης τα αμπελοπούλια! 7/6/15 <http://apokalipsi.com/site/?p=7572>
18. Στην Κομισιόν η απόφαση για υπό όρους θήρευση αμπελοπουλιών 1/7/15 <http://www.sigmalive.com/news/local/245911/stin-komision-i-apofasi-gia-yporousthirefsi-ampelopoulion>
19. Αμπελοπούλια με το ζόρι θέλουν οι Συναγερμικοί 1/7/15 <http://dialogos.com.cy/blog/ampelopoulia-me-to-zori-theloun-i-sinagermiki/>
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21. Στην Κομισιόν ο τελικός λόγος για το κυνήγι αμπελοπουλιών. Φιλελεύθερος 2/7/15 σελ 18
22. Αμπελοπούλια με... φλομπέρ, αεροβόλο και σφενδόνα. 2/7/15 <http://neammochostos.com/ampelopoulia-me-flomper-aerovolo-ke-sdendona/>
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26. Our View: Proposed changes to bird hunting is about catching votes, not saving ambelopoulia. Cyprus Mail 19/5/15 p13 <http://cyprus-mail.com/2015/05/19/our-viewproposed-changes-to-bird-hunting-all-about-votes/>
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32. 2015-08-12 BIRD TRAPPERS ARE FEELING THE PRESSURE - CYPRUS MAIL p1 & 3
33. 2015-08-21 HUNTING CALL - CYPRUS MAIL p4
34. 2015-08-24 ΕΚΤΟΣ ΕΛΕΓΧΟΥ Η ΛΑΘΡΟΘΗΡΙΑ ΣΤΗΝ ΚΥΠΡΟ - ΦΙΛΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΟΣ Σ1 & 3
35. SBA raid on bird trappers at Cape Pyla 27/8/15 <http://famagusta-gazette.com/sba-raid-on-bird-trappers-at-cape-pyla-p29445-69.htm>
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37. «Βιομηχανία» εγκλωβισμού πουλιών με μηχανές και ξόβεργα σε χωράφι 73χρονης 12/9/15 <http://offsite.com.cy/viomichania-egklovismou-poulion-me-michanes-ke-xoverga-se-chorafi-73chronis/>
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39. Poacher arrested and charged in Famagusta area 13/9/15 <http://cyprus-mail.com/2015/09/13/poacher-arrested-and-charged-in-famagusta-area/>
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46. «Γεμάτο» διήμερο για την υπ. Θήρας στα Κοκκινόχωρια 2/10/15
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47. 2015-10-03 ΕΠΙΧΕΙΡΗΣΗ ΣΚΟΥΠΑ ΓΙΑ ΑΜΠΕΛΟΠΟΥΛΙΑ - ΧΑΡΑΥΓΗ Σ7
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50. Δίχτυα παγίδευσης άγριων πτηνών και ξόβεργα εντοπίστηκαν σε τρεις αγροικίες στο Αυγόρου 4/10/15 <http://maxhnews.com/content/58696>
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53. 2015-10-09 ΚΑΤΑΣΧΕΘΗΚΑΝ ΕΙΔΗ ΠΑΓΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ ΠΟΥΛΙΩΝ - ΣΗΜΕΡΙΝΗ Σ19
54. 2015-10-09 ΝΕΕΣ ΕΦΟΔΟΙ ΓΙΑ ΑΜΠΕΛΟΠΟΥΛΙΑ - ΧΑΡΑΥΓΗ Σ12
55. 2015-10-09 ΚΑΤΑΣΧΕΘΗΚΑΝ ΕΙΔΗ ΠΑΓΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ ΑΓΡΙΩΝ ΠΤΗΝΩΝ - ΑΛΗΘΕΙΑ Σ38
56. 2015-10-09 ARRESTS FOR BIRD TRAPPING - CYPRUS MAIL p3 <http://cyprus-mail.com/2015/10/08/arrests-for-bird-trapping/>
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58. 2015-12-02 BIG BUSINESS OF BIRD TRAPPING IN CYPRUS - CYPRUS MAIL Σ2
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60. 2015-12-06 BIRD TRAPPING - SUNDAY MAIL LIVING Σ3
61. Η παγίδευση αμπελοπουλιών απαγορεύεται από το 1974, αναφέρει το Γραφείο Επιτρόπου Περιβάλλοντος 16/12/15 <http://maxhnews.com/content/60868>
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65. Η γνώμη ενός νέου Παραλιμνίτη για τα αμπελοπούλια 6/1/16
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66. Slaughter of the song birds 26/1/16 <http://www.nature.com/news/slaughter-of-the-song-birds-1.19222>
67. “Nature” shames Cyprus on ambelopoulia 27/1/16 <http://in-cyprus.com/nature-shames-cyprus-on-ambelopoulia/>

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<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/aug/21/25m-birds-illegally-killed-in-mediterranean-each-year-says-report>
2. Η Αμμόχωστος χειρότερη τοποθεσία για παράνομη θανάτωση πουλιών στη Μεσόγειο 21/8/15 <http://www.philenews.com/el-gr/koinonia-eidiseis/160/272548/i-ammochoostos-cheiroteri-topothesia-gia-paranomi-thanatosi-poulion-sti-mesogeio>
3. 25 εκατομμύρια πουλιά θανατώνονται παράνομα στη Μεσόγειο κάθε χρόνο 5/9/15
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4. 2015-08-22 ΣΚΟΤΩΝΟΥΜΕ ΤΑ ΠΟΥΛΙΑ ΣΤΗΝ ΚΥΠΡΟ - ΣΗΜΕΡΙΝΗ Σ17
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5. 2015-08-22 2,3 ΕΚΑΤ ΠΟΥΛΙΑ ΘΑΝΑΤΩΝΟΝΤΑΙ ΠΑΡΑΝΟΜΑ - ΦΙΛΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΟΣ Σ14
6. 2015-08-22 ΘΗΣΑΥΡΟΣ ΓΙΑ ΤΟΥΣ ΠΑΓΙΔΕΥΤΕΣ ΠΟΥΛΙΩΝ Η ΚΥΠΡΟΣ - ΧΑΡΑΥΓΗ Σ9
7. 2015-08-22 ΑΡΝΗΤΙΚΗ ΠΡΩΤΙΑ - ΠΟΛΙΤΗΣ Σ34
8. Cyprus' a bird 'trapper's treasure island', according to survey 21/8/15 <http://cyprus-mail.com/2015/08/21/cyprus-a-bird-trappers-treasure-island-according-to-survey/>
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10. Conservationists appalled at illegal killing of 25m birds a year in the Mediterranean 26/8/15 http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/aug/26/conservationists-appalled-at-illegal-killing-of-25m-birds-a-year-in-the-mediterranean?CMP=share_btn_link

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1. Βουλευτής πόσταρε φώτο με αμπελοπούλια [σύντομα και στα εστιατόρια, υπόσχεται!] 13/12/15 <http://city.sigmalive.com/article/14901/voyleytis-postare-foto-me-ampelopoulia-syntoma-kai-sta-estiatoria-yposhetai>
2. Τρώει αμπελοπούλια; Δείτε τη φωτογραφία που δημοσίευσε ο Βουλευτής του ΔΗΣΥ – Τα σχόλια δικά σας (φωτογραφίες – βίντεο) 13/12/15 <http://offsite.com.cy/dite-tin-fotografia-pou-dimosiefse-o-voyleftis-tou-disi-ta-scholia-dika-sas-fotografies-vinteo/>
3. Τα αμπελοπούλια του Χαμπουλλά 14/12/15 <http://www.philenews.com/el-gr/eidiseis-paraskinio/40/290345/ta-ampelopoulia-tou-champoulla>
4. Βουλευτής ΔΗΣΥ ποζάρει περήφανος με μια πιατέλα αμπελοπούλια 14/12/15 <http://www.reporter.com.cy/local-news/article/18853/boyleftis-toy-disy-pozarei-perifanos-me-mia-piatela-ampelopoulia#.Vm5h4FNkZwE>
5. Παίρνει αποστάσεις από Χαμπουλλά ο ΔΗΣΥ 14/12/15 <http://dialogos.com.cy/blog/perni-apostasis-apo-champoulla-o-disi/>
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8. Cypriot MP serves up 'protected' song bird 14/12/15 <http://in-cyprus.com/cypriot-mp-serves-up-protected-song-bird-for-dinner/>
9. Ο Βουλευτής που δημοσίευσε φωτογραφία με αμπελοπούλια χαρακτήρισε «αργόσχολους» όσους ασχολήθηκαν 14/12/15 <http://offsite.com.cy/o-voyleftis-pou-dimosiefse-fotografia-me-ampelopoulia-charaktirise-argoschalous-osous-ascholithikan/>
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12. Σάλος για τα αμπελοπούλια – Κατά του Ευγένιου Χαμπουλλά και το Κόμμα για τα Ζώα 14/12/15 <http://www.philenews.com/el-gr/koinonia-eidiseis/160/290476/kata-tou-evgeniou-champoulla-kai-to-komma-gia-ta-zoa>
13. Χαμπουλλάς: «Άμαν μου τα βάλουν μπροστά μου θα τα τρώω» 14/12/15 <http://www.24h.com.cy/society/item/109595-xampoullas-aman-m-ta-baloun-mprosta-mou-8a-ta-trww.html>
14. Ο Χαμπουλλάς με τα «απαγορευμένα» του 14/12/15 <http://www.sigmalive.com/news/local/292128/o-xampoullas-me-ta-apagorevmena-tou>

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16. «Άναψε φωτιές» η πιατέλα με τα αμπελοπούλια του Χαμπουλλά 14/12/15 <http://apokalipsi.com/site/?p=41813>
17. Anger as Cyprus MP shows off banned dish of songbirds at restaurant 15/12/15 http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/15/anger-as-cyprus-mp-shows-off-banned-dish-of-songbirds-at-restaurant?CMP=twl_a-environment_b-gdneco
18. Και ο Πρόεδρος της Βουλής τα βάζει με τον Χαμπουλλά 15/12/15 <http://www.philenews.com/el-gr/eidiseis-politiki/39/290550/kai-o-proedros-tis-voulis-ta-vazei-me-ton-champoulla-gia-ta-ampelopoulia>
19. 2015-12-15 ΣΑΛΟ ΠΡΟΚΑΛΕΣΑΝ ΤΑ ΑΜΠΕΛΟΠΟΥΛΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΧΑΜΠΟΥΛΛΑ - ΦΙΛΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΟΣ Σ1 & 11
20. 2015-12-15 ΜΕ ΜΙΑ ΠΙΑΤΕΛΑ ΜΕ ΑΜΠΕΛΟΠΟΥΛΙΑ ΠΡΟΚΑΛΕΙ ΝΑ ΤΟΝ ΣΥΛΛΑΒΟΥΝ Ο ΕΥΓ ΧΑΜΠΟΥΛΛΑΣ ΤΟΥ ΔΗΣΥ - ΧΑΡΑΥΓΗ Σ1 & 12
21. 2015-12-15 ΚΑΙΕΙ Η ΦΩΤΟ ΜΕ ΤΑ ΑΜΠΕΛΟΠΟΥΛΙΑ - ΣΗΜΕΡΙΝΗ Σ1 & 16
22. 2015-12-15 DISY MP POSTS PHOTO OF HIS ILLEGAL GAME AT DINNER TABLE - CYPRUS MAIL Σ5
23. Επιμένει ο Βουλευτής για τα αμπελοπούλια – «Δεν θα σας πω ούτε από πού τα προμηθεύομαι ούτε που τα βρίσκω» 15/12/15 <http://offsite.com.cy/epimeni-o-vouleftis-gia-ta-ampelopoulia-den-tha-sas-po-oute-apo-pou-ta-promithevome-oute-pou-ta-vrisko-vinteo/>
24. Ambelopoulia eating MP hits back at ‘hypocrites’ 15/12/15 <http://in-cyprus.com/ambelopoulia-eating-mp-hits-back-at-hypocrites/>
25. Anger after Hamboullas’ songbird image post 15/12/15 <http://www.sigmalive.com/en/news/local/138806/anger-after-hamboullas-songbird-image-post>
26. Αξιόμημπτη πράξη η ενέργεια του Ε. Χαμπουλλά 15/12/15 <http://www.politis-news.com/cgi-bin/hweb?-A=310055&-V=articles>
27. Στην Guardian ο Χαμπουλλάς και τα αμπελοπούλια 15/12/15 <http://www.sigmalive.com/news/local/292283/stin-guardian-o-xampoulas-kai-ampelopoulia>
28. Κίνημα Οικολόγων Περιβαλλοντιστών – Κίνδυνο προστίμου από την Ευρώπη αντιμετωπίζει η Κύπρος για τον βουλευτή που τρώει αμπελοπούλια 15/12/15 <http://offsite.com.cy/kindino-prostimou-apo-tin-evropi-antimetopizi-i-kipros-gia-ton-voulefti-pou-troi-ampelopoulia/>
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30. Αστυνομία: Αναμένει οδηγίες για το θέμα Χαμπουλλά 15/12/15 <http://www.philenews.com/el-gr/top-stories/885/290595/astynomia-anamenei-odigies-gia-to-thema-champoulla>
31. House president, parties condemn MP’s songbird photo 15/12/15 <http://cyprus-mail.com/2015/12/15/71279/>
32. Σφάχτηκαν για τα αμπελοπούλια Χαμπουλλάς – Τσουρούλλης στο Σίγμα 14/12/15 <http://www.reporter.com.cy/local-news/article/19145/sfachtikan-ga-ta-ampelopoylia-champoyllas-tsoyroyllis-sto-siga-binteo>
33. Cypriot MP in songbird super scandal 15/12/15 <http://www.dw.com/en/global-ideas-cyprus-songbird-poaching-environment/a-18919242>
34. Παρακολουθείται από την Αστυνομία το θέμα Χαμπουλλά 15/12/15 <http://www.sigmalive.com/news/local/292298/parakoloutheitai-apo-tin-astynomia-to-thema-xampoula>

35. AG washes hands of ambelopoulia post 15/12/15 <http://in-cyprus.com/ag-washes-hands-on-ambelopoulia-post/>
36. Ευγένιος Χαμπουλλάς: «Κακώς έβαλα τη φωτογραφία με τα αμπελοπούλια» 13/1/16 <http://www.ilovestyle.com/article/60262/eygenios-hampoylas-kakos-evala-ti-fotografia-me-ta-ampelopoylia-sto-facebook>
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39. «Χαμπουλλά μου, κόπιασε...!» 3/2/16 <http://www.24news.com.cy/index.php?pageaction=kate&modid=1&artid=54234>
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Coverage on Acacia removal in Cape Pyla

1. Αποψιλώνουν το δάσος Ξυλοφάγου οι Βρετανοί για... πάταξη της λαθροθηρίας των αμπελοπουλιών 18/12/15 <http://www.philenews.com/el-gr/eidiseis-topika/43/291125/apopsilonoun-to-dasos-xylofagou-oi-vretanoi>
2. Θα πατάξουν τη λαθροθηρία αποψιλώνοντας δάσος! 19/12/15 http://dialogos.com.cy/blog/tha-pataxoun-ti-lathrothiria-apopsilonontas-dasos/?utm_content=buffer315f6&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_campaign=buffer
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Coverage on Commission's reply regarding the 'alternative plan' derogation

1. Καταργήστε την εξαίρεση στην παγίδευση πουλιών, δήλωσε στο ΚΥΠΕ Εκπρόσωπος της Κομισιόν 15/12/15 <http://www.cna.org.cy/webnews.asp?a=79d376a5526b4605a773c9d4578b3c99&window=new>
2. Κόβει κάθε συζήτηση για αμπελοπούλια η Κομισιόν 15/12/15 <http://dialogos.com.cy/blog/kovi-kathe-sizitisi-gia-ta-ampelopoulia-i-komision/>
3. Κομισιόν: «Καταργήστε την εξαίρεση στην παγίδευση πουλιών» 15/12/15 <http://www.24h.com.cy/politics/item/109655-komision-katargiste-tin-exeresi-stin-pagidevsi-poulion.html>
4. Νομικά μέτρα εναντίον της ΚΔ για την παγίδευση πουλιών 15/12/15 <http://www.sigmalive.com/news/europ/292356/nomika-metra-enantion-tis-kd-gia-tin-pagidevsi-poulion>
5. Έρχεται Βαριά Καμπάνα – Εκπρόσωπος της Κομισιόν καλεί την Κύπρο να καταργήσει την εξαίρεση της παγίδευσης πουλιών 15/12/15 <http://offsite.com.cy/ekprosopos-tis-komision-kali-tin-kipro-na-katargisi-tin-exeresi-tis-pagidevsi-poulion/>
6. Κομισιόν: Καταργήστε την εξαίρεση στην παγίδευση πουλιών 15/12/15 <http://www.onlycy.com/articles/kyria-themata/topika/42006-komision-katargiste-tin-exairesi-stin-pagidevsi-poylion>
7. Κομισιόν: Καταργήστε την εξαίρεση στην παγίδευση πουλιών 15/12/15 <http://www.kathimerini.com.cy/index.php?pageaction=kate&modid=1&artid=226778>

8. Κομισιόν: Καμιά παρέκκλιση για αμπελοπούλια 15/12/15
<http://www.philenews.com/el-gr/top-stories/885/290607/komision-kamia-parekklisi-gia-ampelopoulia>
9. Νομικά μέτρα εναντίον της Κύπρου από την Κομισιόν για το θέμα των αμπελοπουλιών 15/12/15 <http://riknews.com.cy/index.php/news/evropi/item/27621-nomika-metra-enantion-tis-kyprou-apo-ti-komision-gia-to-thema-ampelopoulion>
10. Επιμένουν στην επιλεκτική θήρευση – Συνάντηση με την Κομισιόν για τα αμπελοπούλια ζητά ο Χάσικος 17/12/15 <http://www.philenews.com/el-gr/koinonia-eidiseis/160/290960/synantisi-me-tin-komision-gia-ta-ampelopoulia-zita-o-chasikos>
11. 2016-01-01 ΟΡΙΣΤΙΚΟ ΒΕΤΟ ΚΟΜΙΣΙΟΝ ΓΙΑ ΤΑ ΑΜΠΕΛΟΠΟΥΛΙΑ - ΦΙΛΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΟΣ Σ16
12. Κομισιόν: Αμπελοπούλια τέλος, διαφορετικά παραπομπή στο Δικαστήριο της ΕΕ 2/1/16
<http://www.philenews.com/el-gr/top-stories/885/292764/komision-ampelopoulia-telos-diaforerika-parapompi-sto-dikastirio-tis-ee>
13. Cyprus could face EU court over ambelopoulia 2/1/16 <http://in-cyprus.com/cyprus-could-face-eu-court-over-ambelopoulia/>

Coverage on Celebrity photo campaign

1. Επώνυμοι στην εκστρατεία “Protect Birds, Not Poachers”/ «Προστατέψτε τα Πουλιά, Όχι τους Λαθροθήρες» 16/12/15
<http://www.reporter.com.cy/celebrity/people/article/19655/eponymoi-stin-ekstrateia-protect-birds-not-poachers-prostatepste-ta-poylia-ochi-toys-lathrothires#.VnFjjPGP3R1.facebook>
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<http://dialogos.com.cy/blog/prostatepste-ta-poulia-ochi-tous-lathrothires/>
3. Όχι σε ‘εναλλακτικό σχεδιασμό’ της παγίδευσης πουλιών 17/12/15
<http://www.philenews.com/el-gr/koinonia-eidiseis/160/291069/ochi-se-enallaktiko-schediasmo-tis-pagidefsis-poulion>
4. Τα αμπελοπούλια στο επίκεντρο και πάλι 17/12/15 <http://ikypros.com/?p=142539>
5. Γνωστοί καλλιτέχνες κατά της λαθροθηρίας των αμπελοπουλιών 17/12/15
<http://www.onlycy.com/articles/kyria-themata/topika/42474-gnostoi-kallitehnes-kata-tis-lathrothirias-ton-ampelopoylion>
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8. Η επικαιρότητα σε εικόνες – Επώνυμοι κατά της λαθροθηρίας
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