



PRESS RELEASE

**Latest bird trapping report highlights urgency for removal of ‘alternative plan’
and the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan**

Nicosia, 15 March 2016

BirdLife Cyprus completed its report with the latest findings of the on-going and systematic surveillance programme on illegal bird trapping for the autumn 2015 season. Based on the analysis of the survey data, **19km** of net rides were active during the autumn season of 2015 within the survey area covering Larnaca – Famagusta and Ayios Theodoros – Maroni areas and more than **5,300 limesticks** were confiscated by enforcement agencies. Based on the data gathered, BirdLife Cyprus estimates that over **2 million birds** could have been killed across the whole of Cyprus in autumn 2015 from this illegal activity. Mist netting activity for autumn 2015 has decreased by 13% compared to 2002, a positive outcome comparing to the record breaking levels recorded in autumn 2014.

Regarding the ‘alternative plan’ for the ‘selective hunting of blackcaps by derogation’ which was included in the Strategic Action Plan adopted by the Cyprus Government in May 2015, the European Commission has responded to the Republic of Cyprus stating that it cannot be justified according to the EU legislation. Dr Claire Papazoglou, Executive Director of BirdLife Cyprus, stated *“The European Commission has already asked a number of times for the removal of the ‘alternative plan’ from the Strategic Action Plan. The Minister of Interior committed himself in the Parliament to respect the decision of the European Commission. The Republic of Cyprus must finally withdraw the ‘alternative plan’ and implement the rest of the Strategic Action Plan immediately”*.

The results from autumn 2015 show that the annual increases of the last five years in the levels of illegal bird trapping in the SBAs have been stopped. This is an important start which BirdLife Cyprus hopes will be the start of a significant decline in the near future. Significant efforts were undertaken during 2015 to tackle industrial scale illegal bird trapping, such as the acacia removal programme at Cape Pyla and the designation of SACs. Dr Tim Stowe, the RSPB’s (BirdLife in UK) International Director, said: *“The SBA Administration is to be congratulated for taking important steps to tackle illegal bird killing. Approximately one third of the invasive acacia trees in the designated Special Area of Conservation in Cape Pyla, planted to attract migrant birds, have now been removed. Sadly, the number of birds illegally trapped remains unacceptably high and actions must continue to put an end to this illegal practice”*.

Scientists from BirdLife International made shocking discoveries. A recent report *The Killing* published in August 2015 by BirdLife International revealed that 25 million birds are illegally killed in the Mediterranean every year. In this report the Famagusta area in Cyprus is shown to be the single worst area in the Mediterranean. The paper *Preliminary assessment of the scope and scale of illegal killing and taking of birds in the Mediterranean* published two weeks ago in the scientific journal *Bird Conservation International* presents a detailed analysis of the numbers and species of impacted birds, the 20 worst locations and why different species are targeted in each country.

These 20 places are found in just four countries, which include the Famagusta area in Cyprus. This indicates the urgency for a consistent zero tolerance policy and the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan Against Illegal Bird Killing, with no derogations.

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Notes to the Editors

1. **BirdLife Cyprus** is a registered, non-governmental, not for profit organisation (NGO) that dedicates itself to the conservation of wild birds and their habitats in Cyprus. It was formed in 2003 through the merge of the two Cyprus Ornithological Societies and now has offices in Strakka, Nicosia comprised by professional staff. www.birdlifecyprus.org
2. The full autumn 2015 trapping report can be viewed here: http://birdlifecyprus.org/upload/BirdLifeCyprus_Autumn2015trappingreport_March2016_Final_forpublicuse.pdf
3. More information about illegal bird trapping in Cyprus can be found here: <http://www.birdlifecyprus.org/upload/AmbelopouliainfographicEN.pdf>
4. A scientific report, ***The Killing***, by BirdLife International published in August 2015 reveals “25 million birds illegally slaughtered in the Mediterranean every year”. The same report shows Cyprus in first place with the highest number of killed birds per capita, at 196 birds per 100 people, followed by Lebanon at 44 birds per 100 people. The report can be viewed here: http://www.birdlife.org/sites/default/files/attachments/01-28_low.pdf
5. More information on the paper *Preliminary assessment of the scope and scale of illegal killing and taking of birds in the Mediterranean* published two weeks ago in the scientific journal *Bird Conservation International* can be found here: <http://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/news/eight-million-birds-killed-illegally-20-mediterranean-locations-each-year>