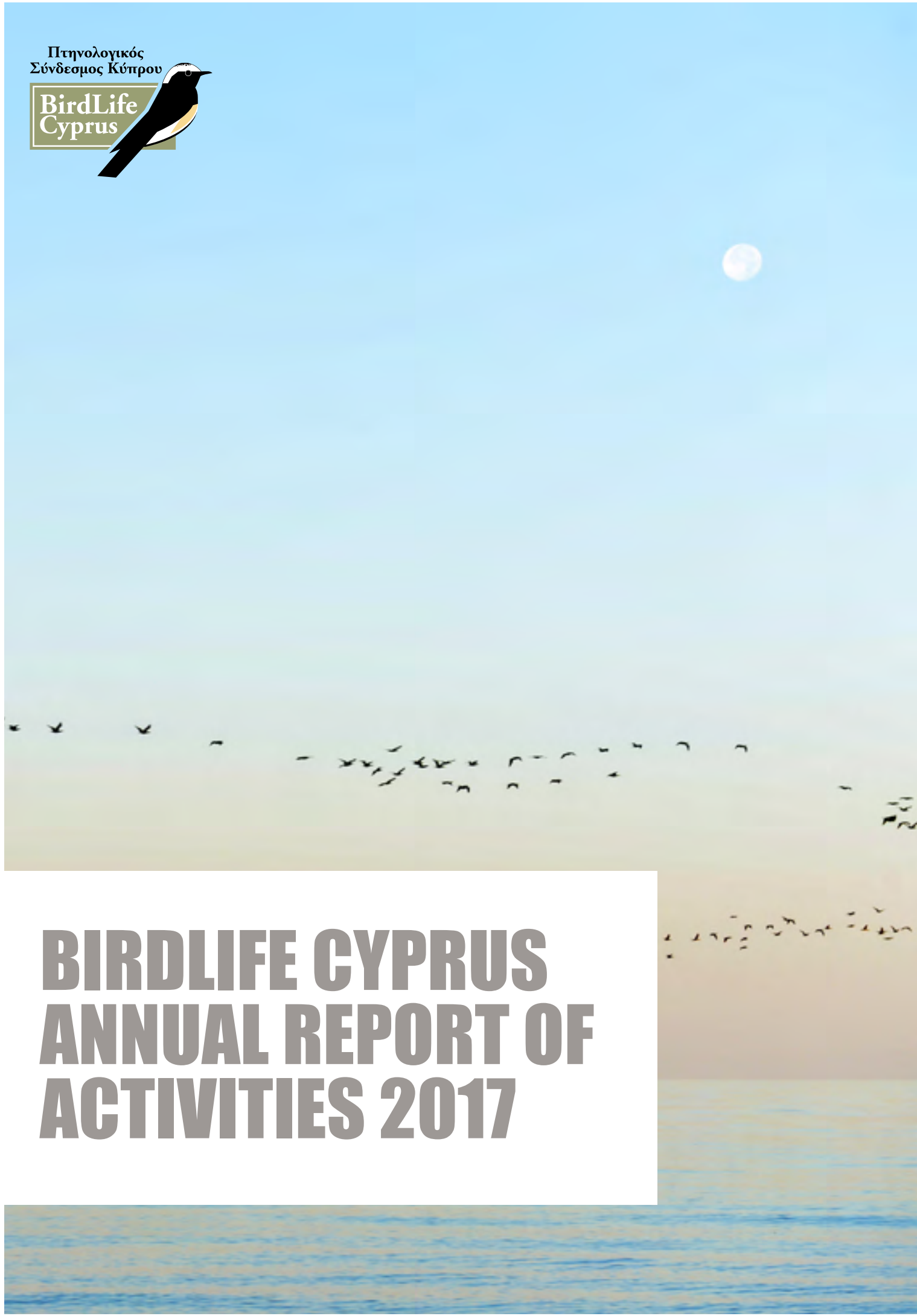


Πτηνολογικός  
Σύνδεσμος Κύπρου

BirdLife  
Cyprus



# BIRDLIFE CYPRUS ANNUAL REPORT OF ACTIVITIES 2017



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# WHO WE ARE

BirdLife Cyprus is a registered, non-profit, non-governmental organization (NGO) that works to conserve wild birds, their habitats and wider biodiversity, and maintain a healthy environment in which people on the island can prosper alongside nature, in Cyprus, through research, monitoring, lobbying and conservation and awareness-raising actions.

It was formed in 2003 through the merger of two Cyprus Ornithological Societies, and now has offices in Strakka, Nicosia.



© M. Evripidou



BirdLife Cyprus is the official partner of **BirdLife International** in Cyprus. BirdLife International is the world's largest nature conservation Partnership and is widely recognised as the world leader in bird conservation, with 119 BirdLife Partners worldwide – one per country or territory – and growing. The BirdLife Partnership works locally to deliver high impact and long-term conservation for the benefit of nature and people.



# SAVING SPECIES

## Systematic Species Monitoring

Thanks to the dedication of our team of volunteer bird recorders, we continued our systematic bird monitoring work during 2017. More than 40 volunteers, including visitors from abroad, were involved in counts for Common Breeding Birds, Atlas work (including nocturnal bird surveys), waterbirds, migrating raptors and other soaring birds, European Rollers, Griffon Vultures and the Audouin's Gull. In total, over 600 surveys were carried out at more than 200 different sites/locations.

The 2017 monitoring effort was funded through a service contract to the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment for production of the Farmland Bird Indicator and Common Bird Indicator for 2017 and the ROLLERLIFE project (LIFE13/NAT/HU/000081) coordinated by MME / BirdLife Hungary. A grant from the MAVA Foundation administered by Schweizerische Vogelwarte Sempach (Swiss Ornithological Institute) on behalf of the European Bird Census Council for work under the new European Breeding Bird Atlas project (EBBA2), funded Atlas work in the area north of the dividing line.

The year 2017 was the final year of data collection for the new European Breeding Bird Atlas (EBBA2), as well as the ROLLERLIFE project.







## Bird Recording

In 2017, local and visiting birders, volunteers, survey workers and BirdLife Cyprus Council members submitted nearly 70,000 records to the BirdLife Cyprus Bird Recorder, Jane Stylianou.

Low rainfall seems to have affected the variety of species recorded over the year, but two new species were added to the Cyprus list. The first Desert Finch *Rhodospiza obsoleta* was found at Apostolos Andreas on 5 April followed by another at Cape Greco on 20 April, and then a male and female at that location on 30 April. An adult White-eyed Gull *Larus leucophthalmus* was found resting on the coast near Larnaka Airport on 23 June where it remained until the following day.

The BirdLife Cyprus Google Group and the BirdLine continued to update local and visiting birders on the latest sightings during the year. The sightings received by the Recorder were collated and published in the Monthly Checklist throughout 2017.



White-eyed gull © J. Stylianou

## Bird Ringing

The baton of BirdLife Cyprus Ringing Officer passed to Michaela Moysi, a PhD student in the Department of Biological Sciences at the University of Cyprus, who continues to manage the ringing scheme with support from BirdLife Cyprus staff.



© M. Moysi

BirdLife Cyprus continued running the Cyprus ringing scheme, which is registered with EURING. The majority of the ringing effort occurred in the Polis/Pafos area, however ringing activities took place elsewhere also, such as Troodos. During the year, 3,467 birds were ringed, and 331 were re-trapped i.e. birds that were ringed on other occasions and were re-caught. There were also four birds controlled in 2017, these are birds ringed in other countries. The birds came from Hungary (a Reed Warbler, which was caught at Akrotiri, and two White Storks that were seen in Larnaka) and Denmark (a Lesser Whitethroat which was caught in Larnaka).

There were also a few projects that included bird ringing, such as a project targeting Cyprus Wheatears on which geo-locators have been fitted, as well as a project, funded by the Tasso Leventis Conservation Foundation, about the breeding species in Cyprus including the endemic species and subspecies.

## Monitoring the Griffon Vulture population



Griffon Vulture © R. Gregoriou

Following a year of no nesting of Griffon Vultures, 2017 offered a glimmer of hope for Cyprus' most threatened bird species. During the spring Vulture census, not one, but three active nests were identified. In even better news, one of the nests belonged to a pair of birds that were brought from Crete and released as part of the 2012-2014 GYPAS Project. Furthermore, this nest was located in the Xeros Valley IBA, at the site of a former colony.

Despite the good news during spring, 2017 was also marred by the discovery of four dead birds. One was a Cretan bird that most likely died during the large-scale poisoning event of winter 2015-2016, which killed at least seven other Griffon Vultures. Another was a young bird, probably a 2017 fledgling, which sadly never made it to adulthood, possibly due to natural mortality. The post-mortem of the last two carcasses worryingly showed that the birds had been shot at, and for one them, which was also a vulture brought from Crete, shooting was determined as the cause of death.

With only around 20 vultures left on the island, each death comes at a great cost for the species' survival. We continue to sound the alarm and to push the government authorities to take all necessary measures to combat the illegal killing of our vultures.



## Campaign against illegal bird trapping

As every year, we continued our systematic monitoring programme for illegal bird trapping. Autumn showed a significant decrease of nearly 80% in trapping levels with mist nets within the survey area, a very welcome development reaching the low levels of a decade ago.

We believe that these positive results were primarily the result of more effective enforcement, deterrent sentencing of offenders and targeted on the ground operations in key trapping hotspots. Moreover, the covert surveillance operations between the SBA Police and the RSPB investigations team continued for a second consecutive year, following the successful results and the prosecution of trappers from autumn 2016. This work did not only improve enforcement on the ground, it has also provided evidence to the court to hand out heavier sentences.

A less encouraging development was the adoption by the Cyprus House of Representatives of the amendment to the Law on '*The Protection and Management of Wild Birds and Game Species*' in late June 2017. From the very beginning, we objected to the adoption of this amendment, mainly because of a series of relaxations that were introduced, such as very low fines for limesticks and the possibility of game consumption at restaurants by hunters. The introduction of on-the-spot fines for all offences has been effective so far and during the last six months of 2017, the competent authorities applied and issued high, deterrent fines of the order of thousands of euros. There have been however attacks against personnel of the competent authorities, hence the long-term effectiveness of this new system remains to be seen.

Overall, the developments on the illegal bird trapping front were encouraging for 2017, but it cannot be assumed that this problem has been solved. A similar reduction was recorded a decade ago, when Cyprus was joining the European Union and more enforcement was put on the ground resulting from behind-the-scenes pressure from the EU to tackle this problem. A few years later, the zero tolerance approach was no longer applied and trapping levels increased dramatically. It is therefore vital that the positive results of 2017 are built upon and 'nailed down'. We will continue lobbying the authorities to ensure no slide back to higher trapping levels takes place.

## Invasive Alien Species

Acacia *Acacia saligna* is an Invasive Alien Species, native to Australia, which was introduced to Cyprus and widely planted in the past. It is recognised as probably the most problematic invasive alien plant species on the island. Not only does Acacia impact negatively on ecosystem services and biodiversity by out-competing and smothering native vegetation and changing the soil chemistry and hydrology where it grows, it is also intentionally planted and illegally irrigated by bird trappers in some areas.

For the above reasons, BirdLife Cyprus worked together with the RSPB, with the support of BirdLife Europe, to push for listing of Acacia on the List of Invasive Alien Species (also known as the IAS List) of the EU Invasive Alien Species Regulation 1143/2014. With this aim, a team of independent academic experts were contracted to prepare a detailed risk analysis for *Acacia saligna* and two external peer reviewers were recruited to review it. In 2018, efforts will be made so that this document is submitted to the EU for consideration of inclusion of Acacia on the IAS List.

The above work was funded by the RSPB.

© Alvegaspaspar / Wikimedia Commons



## Awareness raising work to combat illegal bird trapping

Throughout the year, we continued with our education and awareness-raising activities for schools and other organised groups. In 2017, over 1300 children and young people had the opportunity to learn about the magical world of birds through our presentations and events.

With funding from NABU (BirdLife in Germany) and the Heinz Sielmann Foundation, we created an educational documentary titled 'Wings on the Wind'. The film explains the wonder of bird migration as well as the challenges that birds face on this long journey, such as the serious and persistent issue of illegal bird trapping in Cyprus. After a series of successful screening events both in Cyprus and Greece, the documentary is continuing its journey online.



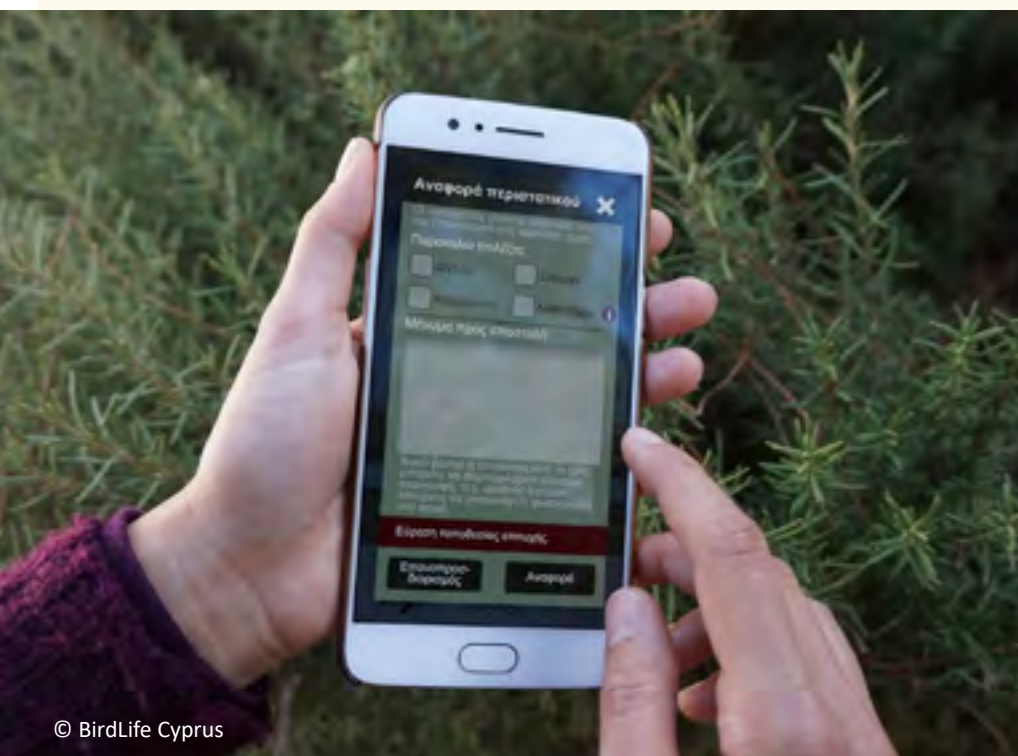
© BirdLife Cyprus



© BirdLife Cyprus

Our successful educational boardgame, 'Our feathered friends', funded by NABU and the Heinz Sielmann Foundation, was also made available to a larger audience through an application (app) for mobile devices.

In 2017, BirdLife Cyprus also launched its 'Feathered journeys' application, funded by MAVA through BirdLife International. The application consists of three parts: a game where a user can try their luck as a migratory bird, a small 'encyclopaedia' section with information about 49 bird species affected by illegal bird trapping, and a tool that allows the public to report incidents of illegal bird trapping to BirdLife Cyprus. The application is available for free for both Android and iOS devices.



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© BirdLife Cyprus

“Download  
our new  
mobile app  
**Feathered  
Journeys**”





## Awareness raising work to combat illegal bird trapping

In spring, our exhibition '153 birds' flocked to the Archaeological Site of Kato Pafos, one of the 34 Important Bird Areas (IBA) of Cyprus, in collaboration with the Department of Antiquities, after the success of the drawing and photography exhibition in Nicosia in December 2016. This exhibition was a great opportunity for visitors to learn about birds and the wonder of migration, in a birdwatching hotspot of the island, which is also a spring migration 'hub'.



© E. Haralambous

Notable in 2017 was the launch of our Greek-language beginners' bird guide, 'What's that bird? A bird guide for young explorers'. The guide, aiming to bring children closer to the world of birds and birdwatching, presents 63 more common and easy-to-identify species and proved a huge success with children during school visits and family birdwatching events.

The bird guide was launched at Athalassa Park in Nicosia, with families joining us for birdwatching and a ringing demonstration and was successfully promoted on social media and in the press. The colourful new guide has also proved popular with adults and there are plans to print more copies and make it available in English also. The creation of the bird guide was funded by the OAK Foundation.



© BirdLife Cyprus

# CONSERVING SITES AND HABITATS

## Completion of Akrotiri Marsh restoration project



2017 was the year when the project for the restoration of Akrotiri Marsh was completed. The project, which was funded by the Darwin Initiative, started in 2015 with BirdLife Cyprus as a lead partner in collaboration with Akrotiri Environmental Education Centre and the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK).



Thanks to the creation of two birdwatching hides, the installation of information signs and the creation of information material and touristic map for the whole of Akrotiri Peninsula, the project managed to enhance visitor experience at the wetland.

One of the most important tools the project created is the Management Plan that outlines the management actions that need to be taken to ensure the long-term protection of the site. The Management Plan takes into consideration the various land uses and users of the wetland as well as the conservation targets for important bird species, rare plants of the Red Data Book of the Flora of Cyprus as well as for habitats.

The completion of the project was celebrated in May 2017 during an inauguration event. The hide was inaugurated by the Commander British Forces Cyprus, Major General James Illingworth OBE, RSPB Global Conservation Director, Martin Harper and BirdLife Cyprus Council Chairman, Melis Charalambides.

For more information about the project please visit [www.akrotirimarsh.org](http://www.akrotirimarsh.org).





## Developments at Akamas Peninsula

For the second year in a row, developments around the Akamas Peninsula were at the centre of our attention, and received much coverage in the media. This protected Natura 2000 site, known for its flora and fauna, is one of the few remaining areas on the island that is still relatively pristine. However, the pressure for its development remained and increased in 2017.

The two major issues on the Akamas Peninsula, which started the previous year and continued in 2017, were:

- The declaration of the National Forest Park of Akamas by the Ministerial Council,
- The drawing up of the Local Plan for Akamas, a process led by the Department of Town Planning and Housing.

The collaboration with other environmental NGOs continued on the Akamas issue, forming a united front when meeting the competent authorities and decision makers on these issues. The Department of Forests assigned a consultancy to prepare a 'Plan for the Sustainable Development of the Akamas National Forest Park'. The NGOs argued against some provisions in the study, and managed to have proposals for accommodation facilities within the park removed. The finalisation and more importantly the implementation of this study was still pending at the end of 2017. The NGO Akamas coalition also worked hard to influence the Local Plan for Akamas.

We are at a crucial time when business people and developers eagerly want to 'jump in' and develop one of the best natural and most biodiverse areas on the island. This is a top priority area and we will continue our fight for the protection, conservation and proper management of the Akamas Peninsula.



© M. Apostolidou



Renewable energy sources can play a major part in the fight against climate change and can be a driver for decarbonisation i.e. moving away from fossil fuels towards cleaner energy production, something that BirdLife Cyprus supports. However, it is also necessary to ensure that such projects do not undermine protected areas such as the Natura 2000 sites, and that relevant environmental studies are undertaken and assessed properly.

A case study where a renewable energy project was approved and built without undertaking the relevant environmental impact assessment is the Oreites windfarm in Cyprus, the largest such project on the island, built within the Cha Potami Natura 2000 site. The Commission has been following this case for years and has asked the Cyprus Government to propose and to implement compensation measures for the wildlife of the area.

After years of silence from the Department of Environment on this issue, in 2017 we were invited to participate in the drawing up of a compensation action plan for the site. However, what the Cyprus government has done to date is not sufficient with regards to the impacts of the windfarm on key species found in the Cha-Potami Natura 2000 site, particularly for the Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*, Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciata*, Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* and Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*.

Sadly, and while no tangible compensations measures have been put in place for this area and for these species, we have seen proposals for villas developments in the Natura 2000 site. We have already expressed our objection to further development and we will continue to lobby the competent authorities for proper management of this important protected site.



# ENCOURAGING SUSTAINABILITY

## The future of CAP: The 'Living Land' campaign

In 2017, the European Commission launched a major online Public Consultation on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The CAP, which takes up almost 40% of the EU budget, is a major driver of unsustainable farming in Europe, as it continues to stimulate industrial food production that causes environmental degradation. Unsustainable agriculture is the single biggest driver of biodiversity loss in Europe, causing the depletion of species like farm birds and bees.

A large mobilisation was generated by 'Living Land', an online campaign launched by WWF, Birdlife Europe and the European Environmental Bureau, calling for an EU agricultural policy that protects our climate and environment, is fair for farmers and consumers, and contributes to healthy and sustainable food production.



© D. Vetsikas

258,708 people and 600 organisations and businesses representing consumers, the food sector, drinking water providers, and those promoting environmental protection, development, health, and animal welfare joined 'Living Land', sending a clear message to the European Commission: the EU's agricultural policy needs to be radically changed.

BirdLife Cyprus participated in this EU-wide campaign as part of our ongoing effort to support truly sustainable and wildlife-friendly agriculture, in a CAP system that benefits small producers and rural communities instead of industrial, environmentally-damaging, farming.

The European Commission will publish a communication on the future of the CAP in 2018. The new EU Common Agricultural Policy has to be implemented in all Member States by 2021.

## BirdLife Capacity Building workshop held in Cyprus



© K. Mwangi

Cyprus was the meeting point for BirdLife partners across the Mediterranean Basin to work together on building capacity. The building capacity workshop held in December 2017 was hosted by BirdLife Cyprus and coordinated by BirdLife Europe.

This opportunity came through funding from the MAVA Foundation as an effort to strengthen the organisational development of BirdLife Partners in the Mediterranean Basin. The workshop brought together 12 BirdLife Partners and Secretariat staff to discuss and agree how they will achieve the objectives of the project.

This was an opportunity for BirdLife partners to identify common challenges and work together to overcome them.

# EMPOWERING PEOPLE

## Symbolic bird adoptions and BirdLife Cyprus' new website

In 2017 we redesigned our website as part of our constant efforts to spread our message as widely and as effectively as possible. The new website is more user-friendly and responsive and a range of new features were introduced that aim to make user-experience seamless and enjoyable, and make it easier to become a member and renew subscriptions.

2017 was also the year when we launched a new fundraising and awareness-raising effort, offering people the chance to symbolically adopt a bird and make a real contribution to the conservation of priority species and their habitats in Cyprus.

Thanks to unique bird illustrations of three bird species, the Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus*, the Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus* and the European Roller *Coracias garrulus*, people receive a tangible symbol of their offer to nature and their support for our work. The adoption package includes the illustration of the 'adopted' bird species, an adoption certificate and postcards with information about the bird to help the 'adoptive parent' learn more and spread the word. In less than a year, we managed to raise almost 2,000 euros through symbolic adoptions which will contribute towards conservation actions.





## Promoting Cyprus as a birdwatching destination



© BirdLife Cyprus

Continuing our efforts to promote Cyprus as a birdwatching destination, in 2017 we began the production of three short videos (one for autumn, one for winter, one for spring) to promote Cyprus as a birdwatching destination. Cyprus attracts many European birdwatchers who come to the island to enjoy a rich variety of bird species, especially during spring and autumn migration, including the endemics as well as species that occur on the edge of their range and nowhere else in the EU. The videos highlight birdwatching hotspots of the island and bird species of interest to the European birdwatcher. The videos will be finalized and launched in 2018.

The videos were funded by the Cyprus Tourism Organisation.

## Our events



© BirdLife Cyprus

With funding from the Cyprus Tourism Organisation, we were once more present at the UK Birdfair, the biggest wildlife event in the world, to raise awareness about our campaigns and projects as well as promote Cyprus as a birdwatching destination. In 2017, we engaged with over 400 people at the BirdLife Cyprus' stand.

Our 2017 presence at the Birdfair was further reinforced by a talk that we gave on 'Birding in Cyprus: Where East meets the West'. The talk presented the amazing variety of bird species and habitats found in Cyprus with a focus on the Cyprus endemics, several other species that occur in Cyprus on the edge of their European range as well as some of the iconic IBAs of the island.

© Πρωτοκόλλος Συνεργασίας Κοινοβίου

## Our events

As every year, we organized and participated in **EuroBirdwatch**, the biggest European birdwatching event hosted by 40 national partner organisations of BirdLife International in Europe and Central Asia three birdwatching events were organized in Nicosia, Limassol and Paphos, which were attended by 95 people.

We also continued our **field trips** and our **family birdwatching events**, at Athalassa Park and at Oroklini Lake, to introduce both adults and children to the enchanting world of birds and birdwatching. Through various educational and fun activities, participants were able to learn the ABC's of birdwatching, enhance their observation skills and enrich their knowledge about the natural world.

Finally, we also gave **talks and presentations** to many interested groups and schools, reaching more than 1,300 children, and we participated in many **fairs** such as the Annual Environment and Culture Festival and the Street Life Festival in May, the NGO fair in September, the Environmental Youth Festival in October, as well as Christmas fairs such as the Goethe Fair, where we had the chance to promote our work and inform the public about our projects and activities and also exchange ideas.



© D. Walker



© BirdLife Cyprus

## Our publications

- **Monthly Checklist:** During 2017, we published the Monthly Checklist with the latest bird records and with many articles on bird identification, species to see, which also of course includes all the bird sightings of the previous month. This was sent electronically once a month, to all members.
- **Quarterly Magazine 'Cyprus Wheatear':** We also produced the quarterly magazine 'Cyprus Wheatear' keeping our members updated with the latest news and informed about Cyprus birds.
- **Electronic newsletter:** BirdLife Cyprus sent to its 4,000 newsletter subscribers its monthly e-newsletter.
- **Cyprus Bird Report:** We produced the Cyprus Bird Report for 2015, which like every year, includes species charts and tables and a full Cyprus bird list.
- **Birds of Cyprus Checklist:** The Birds of Cyprus Checklist for 2017 was also produced with tables of monthly sightings and yearly occurrences for 2011 – 2016.

© BirdLife Cyprus

© K. Panayiotou

© BirdLife Cyprus



# SUMMARY INCOME AND EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2017

Income (€)	2017	2016
Contribution from A. P. Leventis Conservation Foundation	160,000	160,000
Income from projects	157,271	304,458
Income from services rendered	22,591	36,696
Subscriptions from members	10,546	10,857
Subsidies	58,029	56,042
Other income	27,000	25,415
<b>Total</b>	<b>435,437</b>	<b>593,468</b>
Expenditure (€)		
Payroll cost	233,347	237,331
Office administration expenses	46,383	67,144
Project costs	96,902	205,934
Costs of services rendered	11,549	17,233
Third party services	5,827	24,674
Printing and publications	9,787	11,695
Campaign against illegal bird trapping	0	1,665
Transportation and travelling expenses	8,607	5,911
Obsolete and free stock	2,437	1,251
Diminution in value of shares	393	56
Finance cost	1,288	1,521
Purchase of bird rings	0	1,701
<b>Total (€)</b>	<b>416.520</b>	<b>576.116</b>
<b>Surplus for the year (€)</b>	<b>18.917</b>	<b>17.352</b>



## Governance

### Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting took place on 12 March 2017, at the Akrotiri Environmental Education Center in Limassol, with 40 members attending. At the AGM, there was a report on activities for 2016 and a presentation of the Audited Statements for 2016, and a presentation of the workplan and budget for 2017. These were approved by the members.

### Council

The BirdLife Cyprus Council met four times during 2017, and the Council members were as follows:

Melis Charalambides, Chairman  
Dave Walker, Vice Chairman  
Stavros Christodoulides, Secretary  
Christakis Charalambides, Treasurer  
Eugene Benjamin, Member / Publications / Fundraising Officer  
Loria Phylakti, Member / Social Secretary  
June Neal, BirdLine Officer  
Dave Walker, Member / Fieldtrips Officer  
Filippos Georgiades, Member

### Staff

The BirdLife Cyprus staff during 2017 were as follows:

Martin Hellicar, Director  
Christina Ieronymidou, Monitoring and Research Coordinator  
Melpo Apostolidou, Project Coordinator  
Tassos Shialis, Campaigns Coordinator  
Natalie Stylianou, Campaign Officer against Illegal Bird Killing (from January 2017)  
Elena Markitani, Development Officer  
Filio Ioulidou, Natura 2000 Officer  
Myria Achilleos, Accountant  
Yiannis Christodoulides, Research Assistant (until October 2017)  
Romina Constantinou, Secretary



## Acknowledging our Donors and Supporters

A number of people have helped BirdLife Cyprus during the year through their voluntary work.

First and foremost the members of the Council with their hard work, offering their time and experience to BirdLife Cyprus. BirdLife Cyprus depends a lot on volunteers, who give their time and expertise generously, and participate in the numerous surveys BirdLife Cyprus organises, help in events but who also watch over the IBAs of Cyprus through the network of IBA Caretakers. A big thank you is due to them.

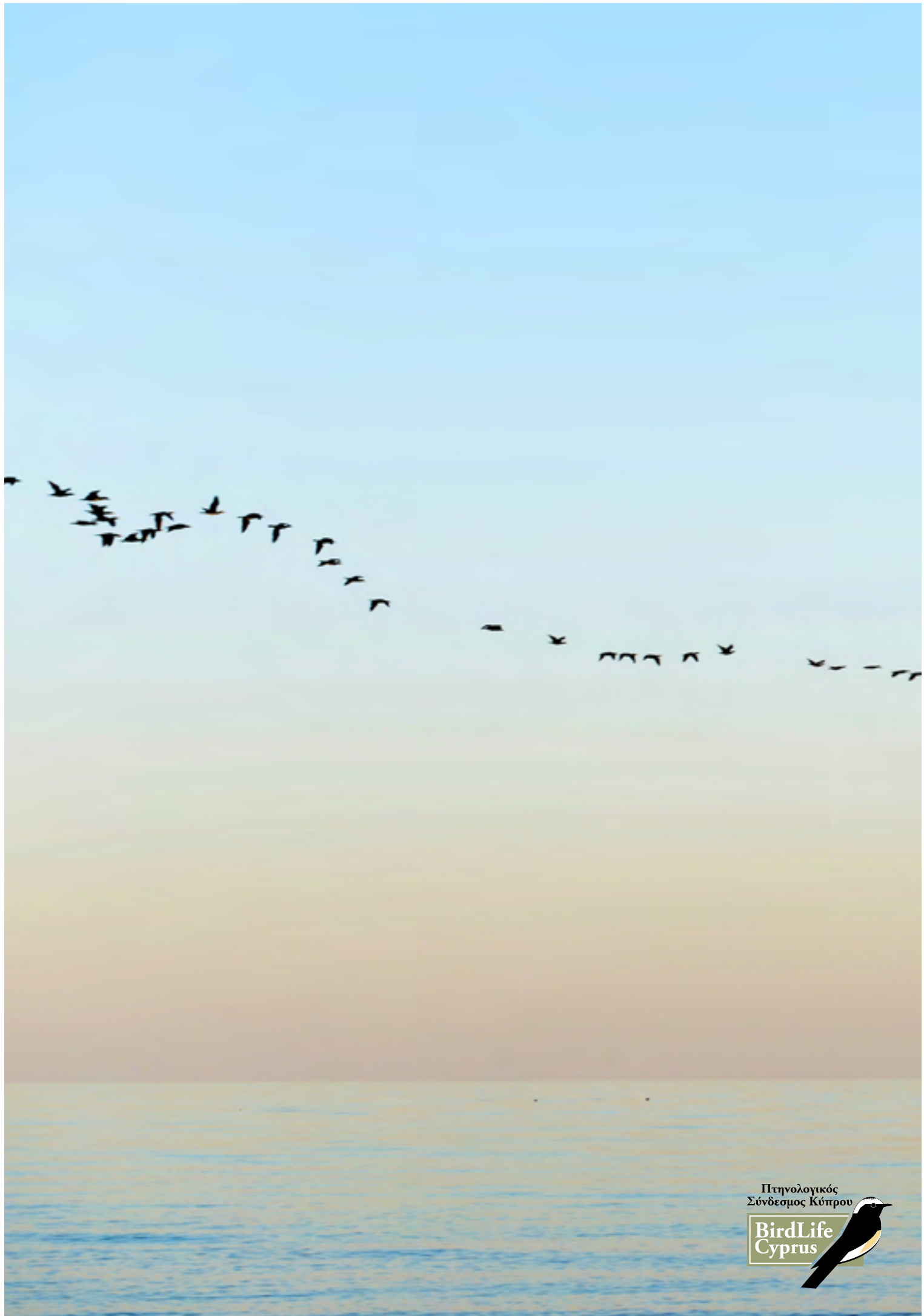
The BirdLife Cyprus Recorder is also a volunteer. Jane Stylianou has worked tirelessly producing the Monthly Checklist, the Annual Checklist and the Annual Bird Report. A big thank you to her for her dedication and hard work.

The work carried out during 2017, could not have been carried out without the valuable and fundamental support from our donors.

### The following were the main BirdLife Cyprus donors during 2017:

- Our President Mr. Tassos Leventis whose funding comes through the Tasso Leventis Conservation Foundation and contributes to our office core funding. Mr Leventis is acknowledged also for his invaluable general support and guidance to BirdLife Cyprus.
- The RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds / BirdLife in the UK)
- NABU (BirdLife in Germany)
- The Heinz Sielmann Foundation
- The Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment for production of the Farmland Bird Indicator and Common Bird Indicator for 2017
- The MAVA Foundation, through BirdLife International and through the European Bird Census Council for work under the new European Breeding Bird Atlas project (EBBA2), and ROLLER-LIFE projects (LIFE13/NAT/HU/000081)
- The Oak Foundation for funding various awareness raising actions under the anti-trapping awareness campaign, including the covert surveillance work.
- The A.G. Leventis Foundation for their annual donation
- The Darwin Initiative for the Akrotiri Marsh Restoration project
- The Cyprus Tourism Organisation (CTO) for funding part of our participation in the British Birdwatching Fair and the production of videos to promote Cyprus as a birdwatching destination
- Our members (in Cyprus and abroad) through the subscriptions. Our work would not have been possible without the support from our members who add strength to our voice and help us reach our vision. Heartfelt thanks go to them for their ongoing support.





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