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Field Report:  
**CABS & SPA AUTUMN 2020**  
**BIRD PROTECTION CAMP**  
**CYPRUS**

(30<sup>th</sup> August – 15<sup>th</sup> November 2020)



**Photo on the cover:** Wryneck rescued from a net during CABS & SPA Autumn Bird Protection Camp (Photo: CABS)

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## SUMMARY

Between August and November 2020, the Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) and the Foundation Pro Biodiversity (SPA – Stiftung Pro Artenvielfalt) conducted their 10<sup>th</sup> successive autumn bird protection camp in Cyprus. The camp took place from 30<sup>th</sup> August – 15<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

Eleven bird protection activists from 4 countries participated in the camp to monitor and investigate illegal bird trapping and illegal bird hunting activity in the southern and eastern part of the island: in Famagusta and Larnaca Districts within Republic of Cyprus and in the Sovereign Base Areas, the British overseas territory on Cyprus.

During the camp, CABS and SPA teams confirmed 217 cases of bird trapping activity across 117 trapping sites in south-eastern Cyprus. Immediate actions to stop the on-going trapping activity were taken for 151 trapping cases. CABS & SPA teams reported 101 cases of bird trapping to the enforcement agencies and 84 of these cases were subsequently investigated by enforcement officers. 26 suspects were caught and issued fixed penalty notices by the enforcement officers. Traps were seized at 59 of the reported cases.

During the camp, a total of 50 mist nets, 1987 limesticks and 36 electronic callers were removed from active trapping sites found during the camp. 324 protected wild birds, belonging to 27 different species, were rescued from traps and a further 476 wild birds were found dead in traps or in the suspects possession.

Bird trapping trends, derived from the percentages of checked trapping sites confirmed as active during the camp for the period 2012-2020, are showing an increase of trapping activity for Republic of Cyprus in comparison with autumn 2019, while bird trapping activity in the British ESBA remains similar to that observed during autumn 2019.

During the camp, 166 cases of illegal bird hunting activity were confirmed across 99 hunting sites. The use of electronic callers was detected in 131 cases, while shooting of protected bird species was confirmed in 34 investigated cases. Immediate actions to stop and prevent on-going illegal hunting activity were taken for 153 cases.

CABS & SPA teams reported 85 cases of illegal hunting to the enforcement agencies and 57 of these cases were subsequently investigated by enforcement officers. In 17 of the cases reported, hunters were issued fixed penalty notices by the enforcement officers for

committing hunting violations. A total of 85 electronic callers, were seized during the investigations of illegal hunting cases confirmed this autumn. 273 shot birds, belonging to 12 protected and non-huntable species were found during the investigations of sites with confirmed illegal hunting activity this autumn.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Cyprus lies on one of the key migratory routes that wild birds use during their journey between Europe, Asia and Africa: The Eastern Mediterranean Flyway (BirdLife International) and is an important stopover for a large number of bird species feeding and resting during their migration (Roth 2008, Richardson 2014).

The widespread trapping and indiscriminate hunting of migratory birds in Cyprus poses a significant threat for migratory birds passing through the island. Cyprus is one of the main hotspots for the illegal killing of migratory birds in the Mediterranean (Brochet et al. 2016). In autumn 2019, CABS and SPA teams confirmed bird trapping and illegal bird hunting activity across 224 locations in the south-eastern part of the island (Debersek 2020). As only small part of Cyprus was investigated, it can be reasonably deduced that trapping took place in several thousand locations across the island during autumn 2019.

Illegal bird trapping in Cyprus is affecting a large number of bird species with many of them considered endangered and/or species of conservation concern. Since 2001, birds belonging to 86 different species have been rescued from traps found by CABS & SPA activists in Cyprus (CABS 2021). Eleven of these species are conservation priority species in the EU and listed on Annex 1 of the EU Birds Directive (European Union 2009).

Each year, CABS together with support from SPA, coordinate and conduct several extensive field operations in Cyprus, called 'bird protection camps' to prevent illegal killing of migratory birds passing through Cyprus with a particular focus on the peak migration periods during spring, autumn and winter.

## 2 WORKING METHODS

Autumn 2020 marks the 10th successive autumn Bird Protection Camp organised by CABS & SPA in Cyprus. It took place from 30<sup>th</sup> August – 15<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

Eleven bird protection activists from Germany, Great Britain, Italy and Slovenia participated at the camp. Eight activists had previous experience of participation at CABS & SPA bird protection camps in Cyprus, while 3 participated for the first time.

## 2.1 FIELD INVESTIGATIONS AND ACTIONS AGAINST ILLEGAL BIRD KILLING METHODOLOGY

Field investigations conducted during the camp were carried out with the intention of identifying active cases of illegal bird killings and stopping them in shortest possible time. Priority was given to the investigations of areas with the highest density of trapping and illegal hunting activity recorded in previous years, known also as poaching 'hotspots'. Investigations were mostly carried out during the night and early mornings, when bird trapping and illegal bird hunting are in progress and therefore easiest to detect and stop.

Field investigations were carried out covertly, both to avoid confrontations with poachers and to prevent jeopardising the operations, made by the enforcement officers at the reported sites.

When trapping or illegal hunting activity was confirmed, it was immediately reported by phone to the relevant enforcement agencies in order to get their support and attendance in shortest possible time. As each illegal bird killing incident usually lasts just few hours, quick response from enforcement officers is vital to disrupt the killings and to apprehend suspects. If enforcement officers were not available to attend and investigate the cases reported by the participants of the camp, the participants either took no action until intervention could be ensured at a later date, or they took proportionate action on their own to stop illegal bird killing there and then.

Preventative actions taken by the activists under their own initiative were taken only as a last resort for cases where postponement of anti-poaching operations to a later date was considered illogical; due to probable lack of available enforcement patrols also at a later date or it was unlikely that illegal bird killing would occur again on the same location in the near future.

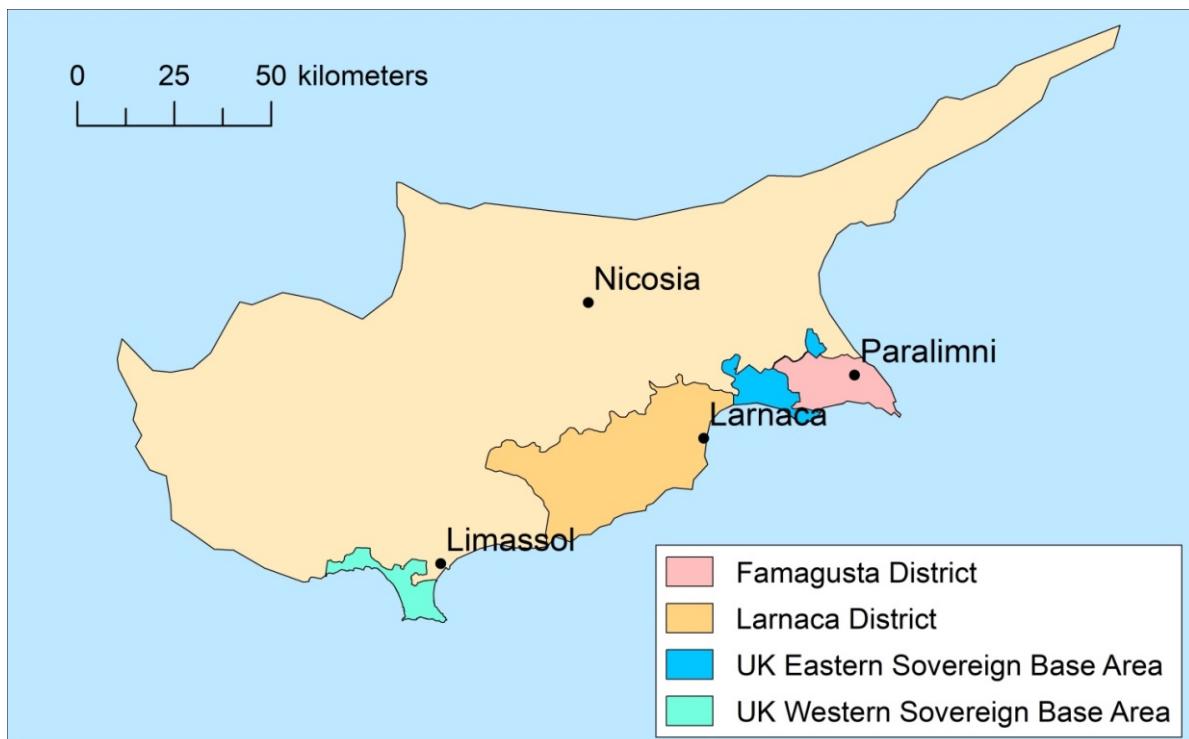
As the actions, taken by the participants of the camp against illegal bird killings have the central role at bird protection camps, the participants are referred to as 'activists' in the report. It has to be noted that all actions, taken by the activists during the camp were completely legitimate and were taken to assist the competent enforcement agencies in the prevention of illegal bird killing activity.

Bird trapping activity is defined as 'any activity involving the use of traps to actively catch wild birds'. A case of bird trapping activity was counted for each individual occasion, where CABS & SPA teams found set traps or evidence of recent, previously unknown, trapping activity at the investigated site. Evidence of recent trapping activity includes fresh feathers on the ground or remnants of glue on branches, as they indicate recent use of traps. Use of electronic bird callers at trapping sites, even if there are no traps set out at the time caller is in use, is also recorded as trapping activity. These callers are sometimes used solely during the night to attract birds to the trapping site and the trappers subsequently set their traps in-situ in the early morning.

Illegal bird hunting activity is defined as 'any activity that does not comply with regulations for bird hunting in Cyprus, defined in 'Protection and Management of Wild Birds and Game Species Law' (Republic of Cyprus 2003) and in the EU Birds Directive. The most common method of illegal hunting in Cyprus is hunting with use of electronic callers, which are used to lure birds within range of the hunters by playbacks of conspecific songs. The hunting of bird species, which are listed on Annex 2 of the EU Birds Directive and prohibited to hunt, is also a common practice of illegal hunting in Cyprus.

## 2.2 FIELD INVESTIGATIONS AREA

During the camp, CABS & SPA teams investigated bird trapping and illegal bird hunting activity in the southern and south-eastern part of Cyprus: in Famagusta and Larnaca Districts within the Republic of Cyprus and in the Eastern Sovereign Base Area (ESBA) and the Western Sovereign Base Area (WSBA), the British Overseas Territories on Cyprus (figure 1).



**Figure 1: Cyprus and the areas investigated during CABS & SPA Autumn 2020 BPC**

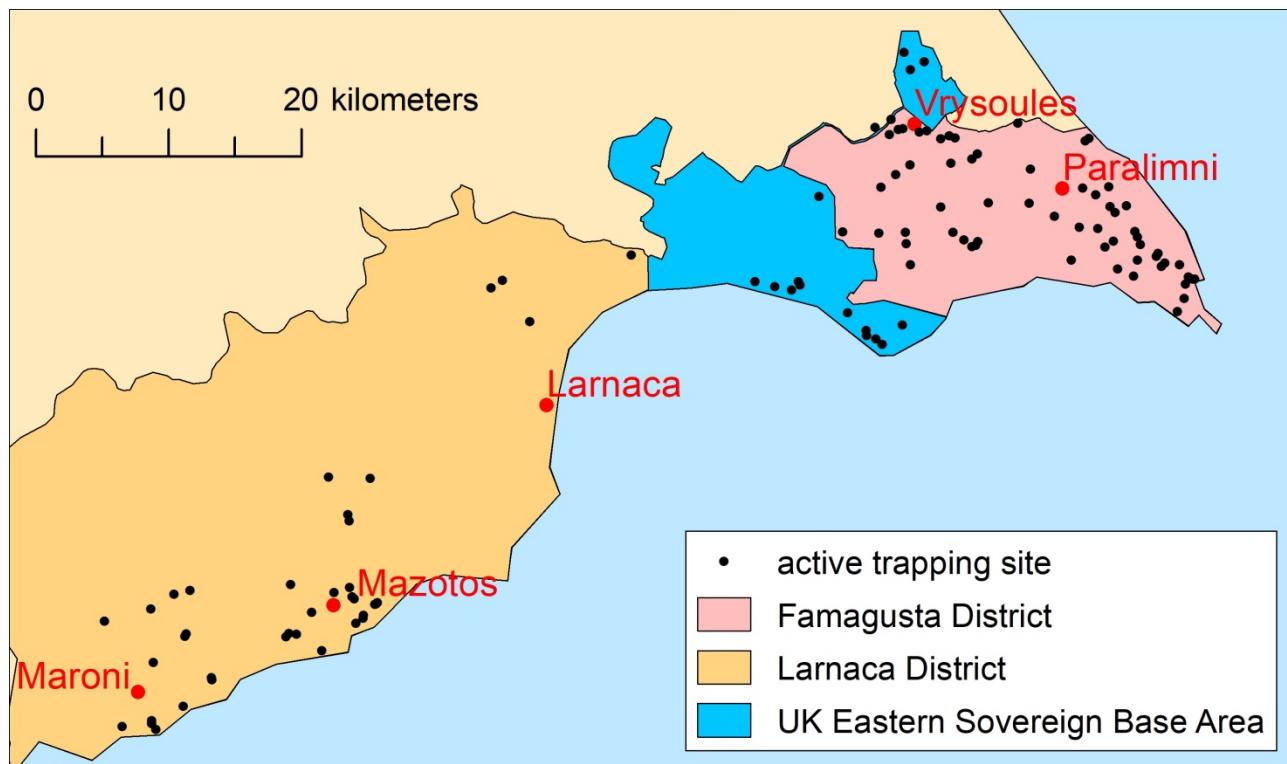
### 3 RESULTS OF BIRD TRAPPING FIELD INVESTIGATIONS

#### 3.1 OVERALL RESULTS

Field investigations carried out during CABS & SPA Autumn 2020 Bird Protection Camp confirmed 217 cases of bird trapping activity across 117 trapping sites in south-eastern Cyprus (table 1, figure 2).

**Table 1: Results of bird trapping field investigations, carried out during CABS & SPA Autumn 2020 Bird Protection Camp in Cyprus**

Duration of field investigations (days)	77
Total no. of activists conducting field investigations	11
No. of trapping sites checked	253
No. of active trapping sites confirmed	117
No. of cases of trapping activity confirmed on active trapping sites	217



**Figure 2: Distribution of active trapping sites confirmed during CABS & SPA Autumn 2020 Bird Protection Camp**

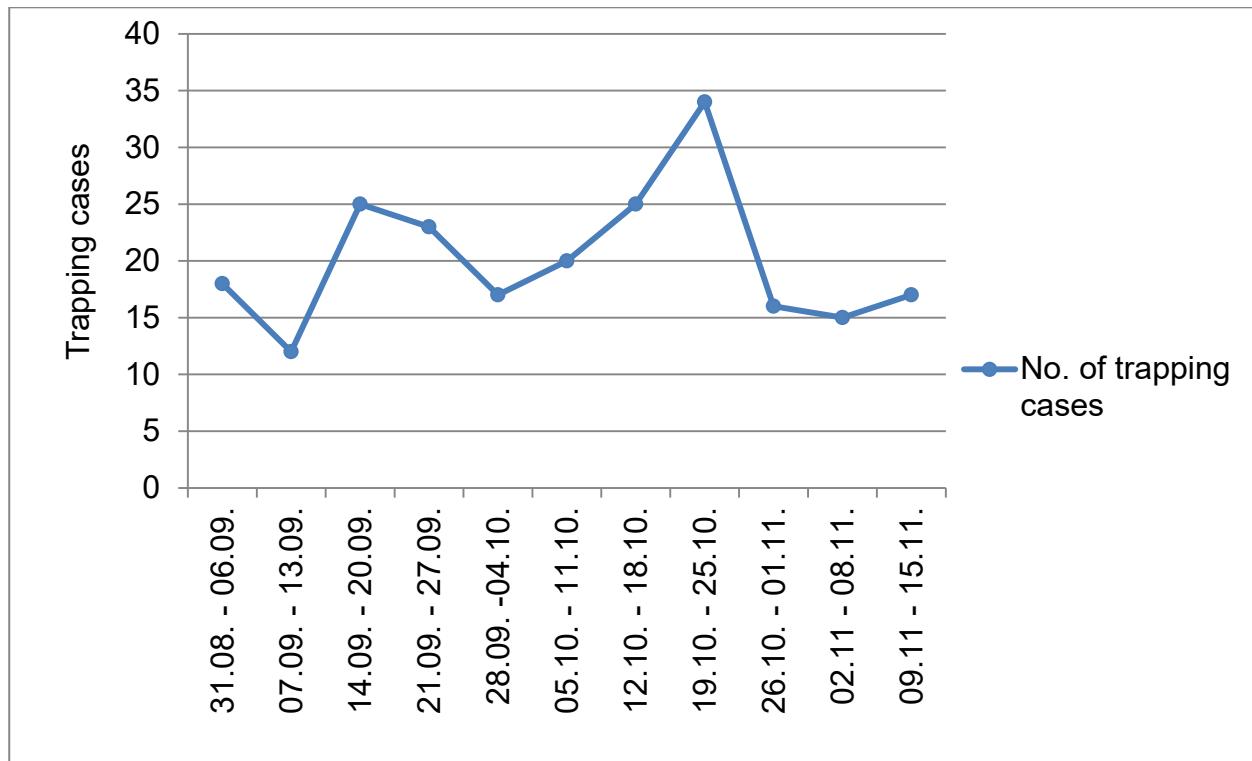
**Table 2: Comparison of the results of field investigations, carried out at CABS & SPA Autumn Bird Protection Camps 2012-2020**

Autumn Bird Protection Camp	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Duration of field investigations (days)	17	24	28	40	47	60	75	84	77
Total no. of activists conducting field investigations	13	15	14	22	28	28	29	24	11
No of trapping sites checked	227	247	186	260	519	355	305	283	253
No. of active trapping sites confirmed	132	170	135	162	315	188	132	126	117

### 3.1.1 TRAPPING ACTIVITY OVER THE DURATION OF THE CAMP

**Table 3: Number of confirmed cases of trapping activity recorded per week of CABS & SPA Autumn 2020 Bird Protection Camp**

Week	31.08. - 06.09.	07.09. - 13.09.	14.09. - 20.09.	21.09. - 27.09.	28.09. - 04.10.	05.10. - 11.10.	12.10. - 18.10.	19.10. - 25.10.	26.10. - 01.11.	02.11. - 08.11.	09.11. - 15.11.
No. of trapping cases confirmed	18	12	25	23	17	20					
No. of trapping cases confirmed	25	34	16	15	17						



**Figure 3: Number of trapping cases confirmed per week of CABS & SPA Autumn 2020 Bird Protection Camp**

Number of trapping cases, confirmed by the activists per week fluctuated between 12 and 34 cases over the duration of the camp. As the number of confirmed cases never dropped below 12, we can conclude that autumn bird trapping activity in south-eastern Cyprus was high for the whole duration of the camp and it peaked twice, first time in mid-September and again in late October.

### 3.1.2 ACTIVITY OF THE TRAPPING SITES WITH PREVIOUS PROSECUTIONS

CABS & SPA activists frequently confirm trapping activity at sites where trappers have been caught and prosecuted in the past. In autumn 2020, the activists checked 54 trapping sites with previous prosecutions for trapping known to CABS & SPA and 29 of them were active (table 4).

**Table 4: Activity of the trapping sites with previous prosecutions for trapping, checked during CABS & SPA Autumn 2020 Bird Protection Camp**

No. of sites with previous prosecutions for trapping checked	54
No. of active trapping sites with previous prosecutions (reactivated prosecuted sites) confirmed	29
Percentage of reactivated sites	53.7

**Table 5: Comparison of the activity of trapping sites with known previous prosecutions for trapping at CABS & SPA Autumn Bird Protection Camps 2013-2020**

Autumn Bird Protection Camp	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
No. of previously prosecuted sites checked	22	30	42	62	48	56	55	54
No. of previously prosecuted sites confirmed as active	15	19	35	35	24	27	24	29
Percentage of reactivated prosecuted sites	68.2	63.3	83.3	56.5	50.0	48.2	43.6	53.7

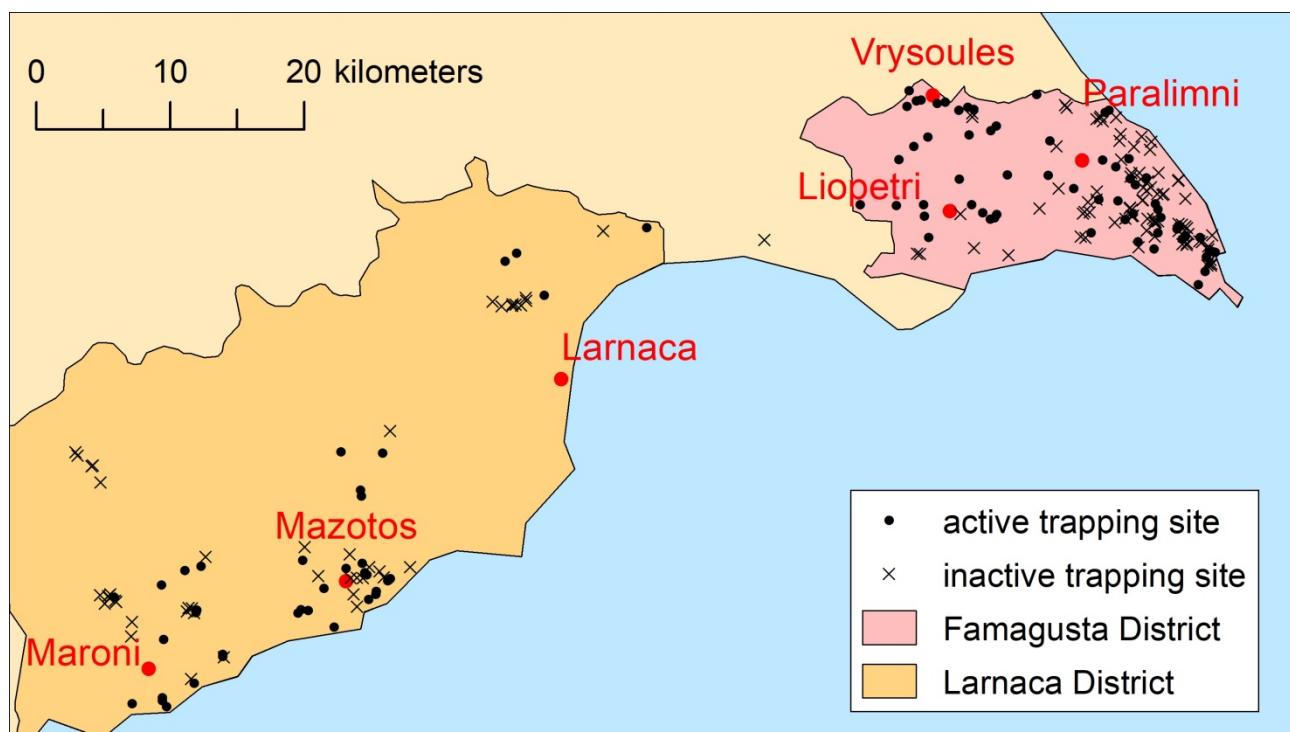
The percentage of checked trapping sites, which have been previously prosecuted and confirmed as active this autumn was above 50 %, after it was decreasing for 4 autumns in a row and it reached a record low 43.6 % last autumn.

### 3.2 RESULTS OF BIRD TRAPPING FIELD INVESTIGATIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

Of 253 trapping sites checked during the camp, 230 sites were checked in Famagusta and Larnaca Districts, two of the six districts within the Republic of Cyprus. 101 of sites checked were confirmed as active (table 6, figure 4).

**Table 6: Results of bird trapping field investigations in Republic of Cyprus during CABS & SPA Autumn 2020 Bird Protection Camp**

No. of trapping sites checked	230
No. of active trapping sites confirmed	101
No. of trapping cases confirmed on active trapping sites	190
No. of active limestick trapping sites confirmed	65
No. of active netting trapping sites confirmed	35
No. of active trapping sites with both (or unknown) trapping method used, confirmed	1



**Figure 4: Distribution and activity of the trapping sites checked in Republic of Cyprus during CABS & SPA Autumn 2020 Bird Protection Camp**

The highest concentrations of active trapping sites in Republic of Cyprus were confirmed in the area south-east of Paralimni and in the areas around Vrysoules, Liopetri, Mazotos and Maroni.

**Table 7: Comparison of the results of bird trapping field investigations in Republic of Cyprus, carried out during CABS & SPA Autumn BPCs 2012-2020**

Autumn Bird Protection Camp	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
No. of all trapping sites checked	197	226	176	220	350	277	273	231	230
No. of active trapping sites confirmed	109	148	124	122	164	116	107	82	101
No. of trapping cases confirmed on active trapping sites	117	196	146	164	238	188	202	142	186
No. of active limestick sites confirmed	65	111	80	66	105	90	71	60	65
No. of active netting sites confirmed	33	35	39	50	51	21	33	22	35
No. of active trapping sites with both (or unknown) trapping method used, confirmed	10	2	5	6	8	5	3	0	1

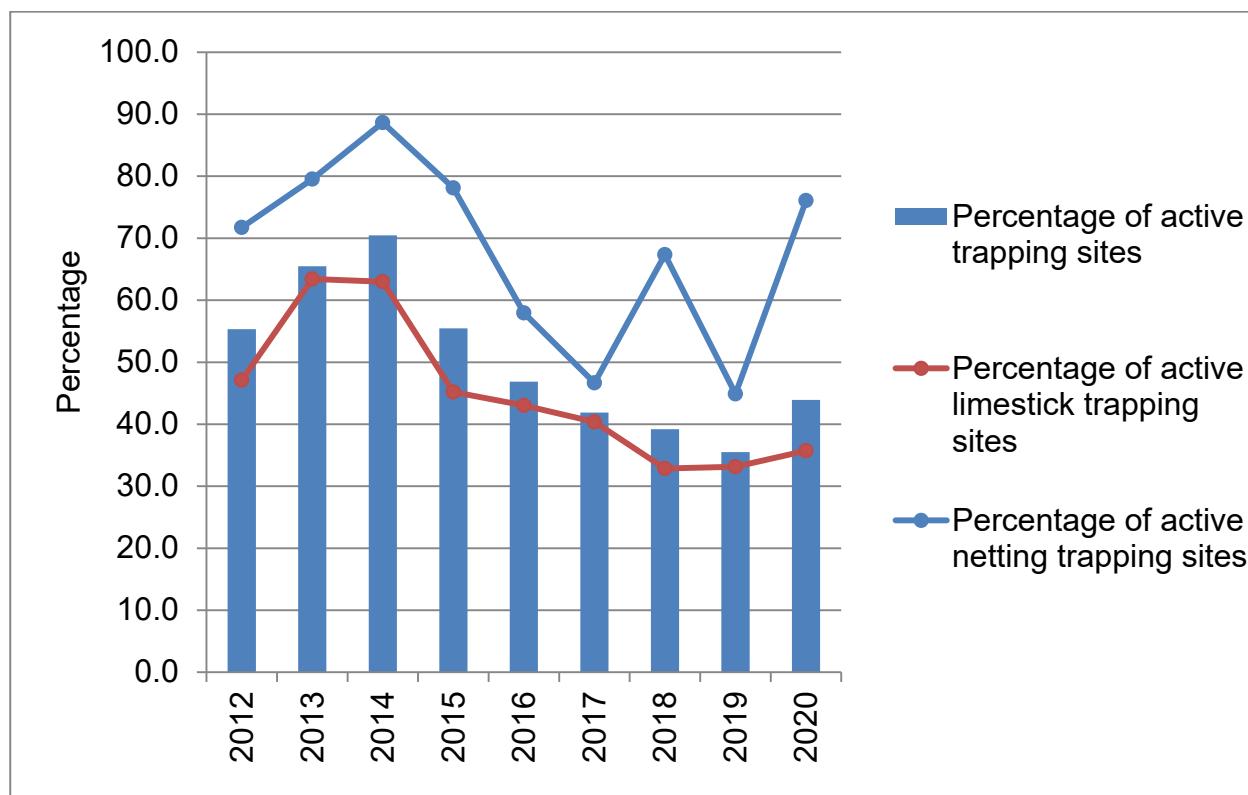
### 3.2.1 TREND OF AUTUMN TRAPPING ACTIVITY IN THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS FOR PERIOD 2012-2020

The number of active trapping sites confirmed in the Republic of Cyprus is with 101 the second lowest for autumn camps 2012-2020. As autumn bird protection camps vary in duration and in number of activists participating, a direct comparison between numbers of confirmed active sites found per camp is not an effective method to determine the overall trend of autumn trapping activity in Republic of Cyprus for the period 2012-2020. It is considered more effective to compare the percentage of active trapping sites out of all trapping sites checked during the camp (table 8).

**Table 8: Comparison of the percentages of trapping sites, confirmed as active during CABS & SPA Autumn Bird Protection Camps 2012-2020 in Republic of Cyprus**

Autumn Camp	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
No. of all trapping sites checked	197	226	176	220	350	277	273	231	230
No. of active trapping sites confirmed	109	148	124	122	164	116	107	82	101
Percentage of active trapping sites	55.3	65.5	70.5	55.5	46.9	41.9	39.2	35.5	43.9
<b>LIMESTICK TRAPPING SITES</b>									
No. of limestick trapping sites checked	138	175	127	146	244	223	216	181	182
No. of active limestick trapping sites confirmed	65	111	80	66	105	90	71	60	65
Percentage of active limestick trapping sites	47.1	63.4	63	45.2	43	40.4	32.9	33.1	35.7
<b>NETTING TRAPPING SITES</b>									
No. of netting trapping sites checked	46	44	44	64	88	45	49	49	46
No. of active netting sites confirmed	33	35	39	50	51	21	33	22	35
Percentage of active netting trapping sites	71.7	79.5	88.6	78.1	58	46.7	67.3	44.9	76.1
<b>TRAPPING SITES WITH BOTH (OR UNKNOWN) METHOD OF TRAPPING USED</b>									
No. of active trapping sites with both methods (or unknown) trapping method used, checked	11	6	5	10	18	9	8	1	2
No. of active trapping sites with both methods (or unknown) trapping method used, confirmed	10	2	5	6	8	5	3	0	1

This autumn, the percentage of active trapping sites out of all checked sites was 43.9 %, which is significantly higher than in autumn 2019 (35.5 %) and the highest since autumn 2016.



**Figure 5: Percentages of active trapping sites that were checked during CABS & SPA Autumn Bird Protection Camps 2012-2020 in the Republic of Cyprus**

When we compare the percentages of active trapping sites in relation to the trapping method used, we can see that both, the percentage of active trapping sites with limesticks used for trapping (limestick trapping sites) and the percentage of active trapping sites with mist-nets used for trapping (netting trapping sites) have increased in comparison with the previous autumn (figure 5).

The increase in the use of the nets, observed this autumn in Republic of Cyprus can be attributed to the increased trapping activity of several, well known trapping groups that are trapping professionally with nets. While the majority of trappers, using nets in the past to catch birds for personal consumption, has been inactive this autumn, the professional trappers, known for selling trapped birds on the black market, were very active this autumn.

One of the trapping groups, known to the enforcement officers and the activists was trapping on several different netting trapping sites in the area around Cape Greko and also

on several trapping locations in other parts of south-eastern Cyprus. Another professional trapping group, also known to the enforcement agencies and the activists, was regularly trapping with nets on 5-10 different locations this autumn in the area around Vrysoules, Famagusta District.

The organised trapping groups are successfully avoiding being caught for trapping by guarding their active trapping sites with unregistered off-road vehicles, ready to get away quickly if needed. They often use intimidation and threatening behaviour to deter enforcement officers approaching their trapping sites.

The results of CABS & SPA field investigations are showing that trapping with limesticks is slowly increasing in the Republic of Cyprus since 2018. The primary reason for the increasing trend in the use of limesticks is, in our opinion, the introduction of low, on-the-spot fines for trappers caught with limesticks in 2017. In July 2017, an amendment to the 'Protection and Management of wild birds and game species Law' introduced regulation of all bird trapping and illegal hunting offences with fixed, on-the-spot fines in the Republic of Cyprus. Trapping with limesticks (considered a traditional practice in Cyprus) was decriminalised with the new amendment as it introduced low fines for trapping with limesticks and at the same time implemented much higher fines for trapping with nets.

Trappers caught with up to 72 set limesticks in the Republic of Cyprus face a fine of only 200 € and an additional fine of 200 € for up to 50 caught birds. On the other hand, trappers caught with one set net face a fine of 2000 € and an additional fine of 1000 € for up to 50 caught birds. In practice, two trappers, one using limesticks and the other one nets with both catching the same number of birds, are facing very different penalties for the same offence. Because of the low fines issued for trapping with limesticks, this method remains commonplace in south-eastern Cyprus and it is even increasingly used since 2018.

### 3.3 RESULTS OF BIRD TRAPPING FIELD INVESTIGATIONS IN THE BRITISH EASTERN SOVEREIGN BASE AREA ON CYPRUS

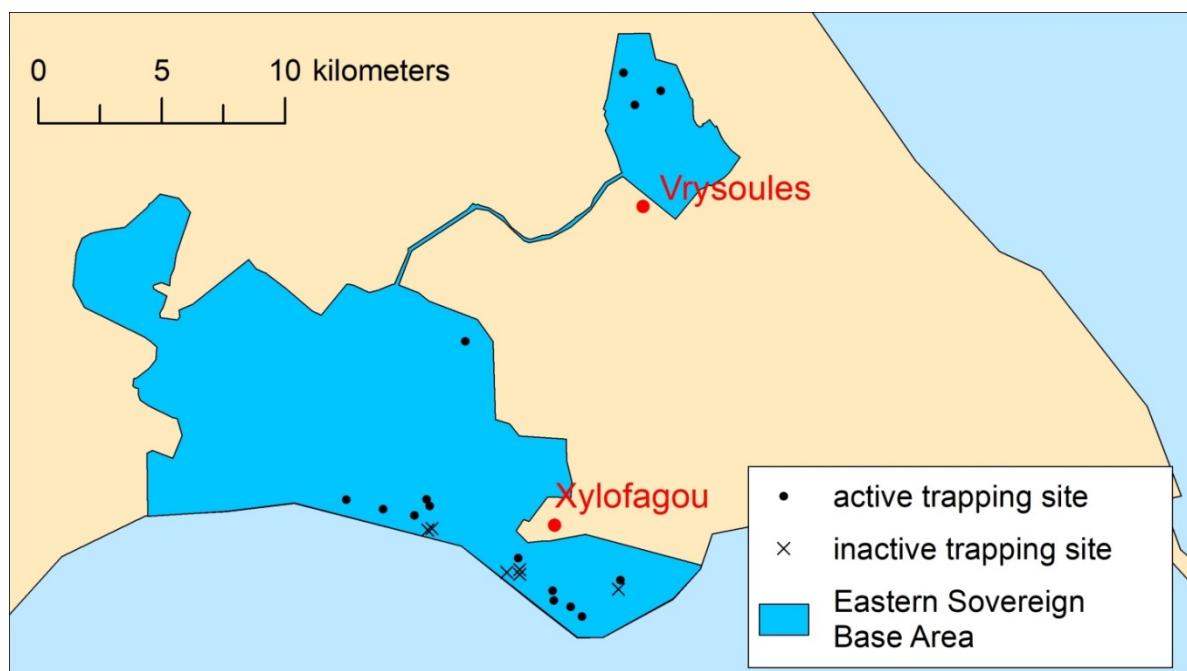
The Sovereign Base Areas (SBAs) of Akrotiri and Dhekelia, usually referred to as Western Sovereign Base Area (WSBA) and Eastern Sovereign Base Area (ESBA), are the parts of the island which have remained under British jurisdiction on the creation of an independent Republic of Cyprus in 1960 (SBA Administration 2019). The areas, which include British military bases and installations, as well as other land, were retained by the British primarily for military purposes. The boundaries of the SBAs were drawn in 1960 to include the major military installations and to exclude villages and towns. There are three Republican

“enclaves” within the Dhekelia SBA – Ormideia, Xylotymbou and Dhekelia power station. However, as a result of the events in 1974 and other developments over the years, approximately 10,000 Cypriots now live within the SBAs.

The ESBA is historically infamous for the massive levels of illegal bird trapping in the past, especially in the southern part of the base - Cape Pyla - which is the most notorious trapping area in the whole of Cyprus. This autumn CABS & SPA activists checked 21 trapping sites within the ESBA and 15 sites were confirmed as active (table 9, figure 6).

**Table 9: Results of bird trapping field investigations in the British Eastern Sovereign Base Area on Cyprus (ESBA) during CABS & SPA Autumn 2020 Bird Protection Camp**

No. of trapping sites checked	21
No. of active trapping sites confirmed	15
No. of trapping cases confirmed on active trapping sites	30
No. of active limestick trapping sites confirmed	7
No. of active netting trapping sites confirmed	8
No. of active trapping sites with both (or unknown) trapping method used, confirmed	0

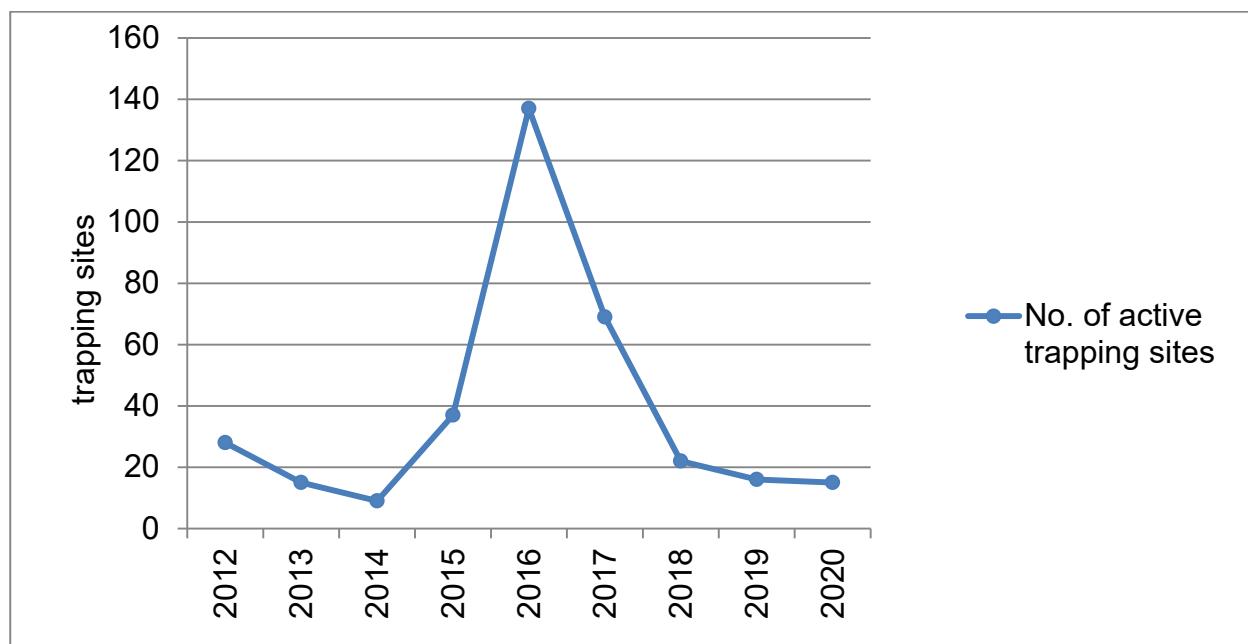


**Figure 6: Distribution and activity of trapping sites checked in the British Eastern Sovereign Base Area (ESBA) during CABS & SPA Autumn 2020 BPC**

**Table 10: Comparison of the results of bird trapping field investigations in the ESBA, carried out during CABS & SPA Autumn Bird Protection Camps 2012-2020**

Autumn Bird Protection Camp	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
No. of all trapping sites checked	30	17	10	38	160	75	26	23	21
No. of trapping sites confirmed as active	28	15	9	37	137	69	22	16	15
No. of trapping cases confirmed on active trapping sites	28	15	9	60	196	135	29	19	30
No. of active limestick trapping sites confirmed	3	0	2	4	7	5	1	2	7
No. of active netting trapping sites confirmed	22	14	6	32	115	59	19	13	8
No. of active trapping sites with both methods or unknown trapping method used, confirmed	3	1	1	1	15	5	2	1	0

### 3.3.1 TREND OF AUTUMN TRAPPING ACTIVITY IN THE BRITISH EASTERN SOVEREIGN BASE AREA FOR PERIOD 2012-2020



**Figure 7: Number of active trapping sites confirmed during CABS & SPA Autumn Bird Protection Camps 2012-2020 within the British Eastern Sovereign Base Area**

Conversely to the evaluation for the Republic of Cyprus, the trapping activity trend for ESBA must be evaluated directly from the number of active trapping sites and not from the ratio between checked sites and number of active sites. This is because field investigations within the ESBA are mainly done during the night, when activists are searching for active trapping sites by monitoring the use of electronic callers, emitting bird songs to attract migrating birds. Very few investigations are done during the day due to safety reasons. Thus, the inspections of the activity of the trapping sites with previous records of trapping are rarely conducted within the ESBA.

Figure 7 does not accurately reflect the trapping trend within the ESBA for the period 2012-2015 as CABS & SPA field investigations of trapping activity in the ESBA were only done sporadically during this period. It was very dangerous for activists to be out in the ESBA alone during that period as trapping was still largely tolerated by the police and trappers were very aggressive and threatening towards the activists. Therefore, the number of active trapping sites, found by CABS & SPA teams during the period 2012-2015, reflects only a small percentage of the true scale of active trapping sites which is estimated to be in the region of several hundred.

CABS & SPA teams made the first extensive and systematic field investigations of trapping activity within the ESBA during autumn 2016. The investigations, carried out during the night, resulted in confirmation of trapping activity across 143 trapping sites. Upon discovering massive levels of trapping activity within the ESBA in autumn 2016 (and again in winter 2016/2017), CABS & SPA, together with the help of Chris Packham, BirdLife Cyprus and the RSPB, launched a series of actions to expose the lack of enforcement from the authorities against illegal bird trapping. The campaign was successful and it compelled the authorities to start taking the issue of trapping more seriously.

Improvements in the work of SBA Police against bird trapping and good field cooperation between SBA Police officers and CABS & SPA activists in autumn 2017 lead to a strong reduction of trapping activity in the ESBA. In just one year, between autumn 2016 and autumn 2017, trapping activity within the ESBA declined by 50%. In autumn 2018, CABS & SPA investigations revealed another strong reduction in the number of active trapping sites found within the ESBA and since then, the autumn trapping activity within the ESBA is remaining low.

### 3.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TRAPPING METHODS USED IN THE TRAPPING CASES CONFIRMED DURING THE CAMP

**Table 11: Characteristics of the trapping methods used in the trapping cases confirmed during CABS & SPA Autumn 2020 Bird Protection Camp**

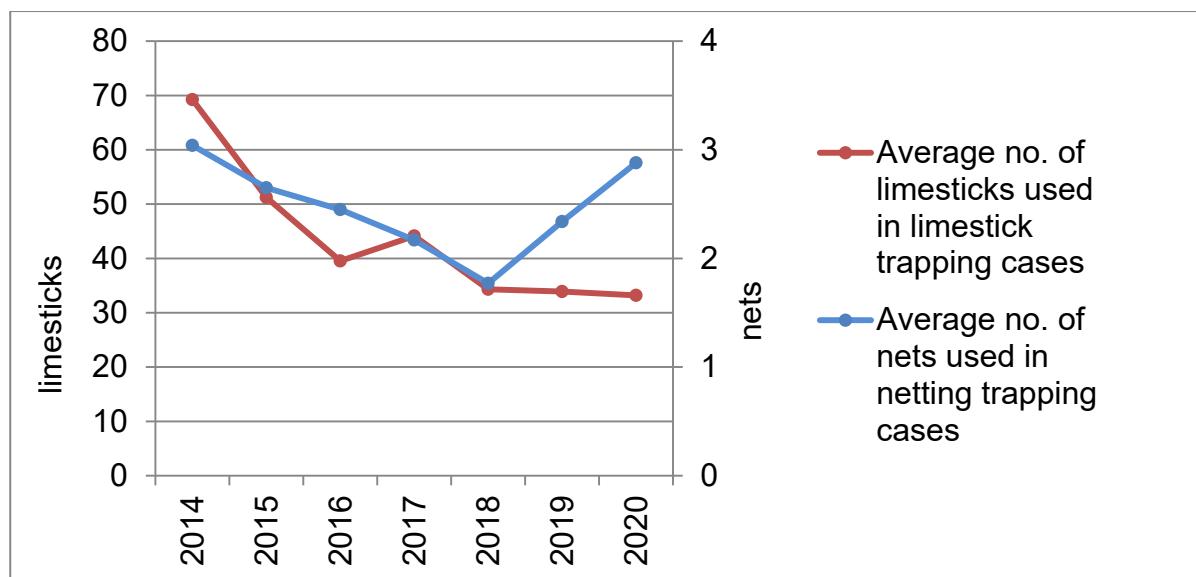
	Republic of Cyprus	ESBA	Northern Cyprus	All regions
No. of all confirmed trapping cases	186	30	1	217
No. of confirmed trapping cases with limesticks in use	106	14	0	120
No. of confirmed trapping cases with nets in use	76	16	1	93
No. of confirmed trapping cases with both methods (or unknown method) in use	4	0	0	4
Average no. of limesticks used in confirmed limestick trapping cases	38.2	13	0	33.2
Average no. of nets used in confirmed netting trapping cases	2.9	2	/	2.9
No. of confirmed trapping cases with electronic caller in use	104	16	1	121
No. of trapping cases with limesticks and electronic caller in use	31	0	0	31
No. of trapping cases with nets and electronic caller in use	71	16	1	88

Limesticks were the predominant method of trapping used in Republic of Cyprus with their use confirmed in 104 out of 186 trapping cases (55.9 %), while in the ESBA both methods were similarly common with use of nets confirmed in 16 and use of limesticks in 14 out of 30 trapping cases confirmed during the camp.

Electronic callers for trapping were used in 121 out of 217 trapping cases (55.8 %) confirmed during the camp. Callers were much more commonly used together with nets than with limesticks: their use was confirmed in almost all (88 out of 93) cases of trapping with nets and only in 25.8 % (31 out of 120) cases of trapping with limesticks this autumn.

**Table 12: Comparison of trapping methods used in the trapping cases confirmed during CABS & SPA Autumn Bird Protection Camps 2014-2020**

Autumn Bird Protection Camp	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
No. of all trapping cases confirmed	157	225	450	327	233	191	217
No. of confirmed trapping cases with limesticks in use	81	81	131	127	112	90	120
No. of confirmed trapping cases with nets in use	48	118	290	165	99	96	93
No. of confirmed trapping cases with both (or unknown) method in use	28	26	29	35	22	5	4
Average no. of limesticks used in confirmed limestick trapping cases	69.2	51.3	39.5	44.1	34.3	33.9	33.2
Average no. of nets used in confirmed netting trapping cases	3.04	2.65	2.45	2.17	1.77	2.34	2.88
No. of confirmed trapping cases with electronic caller in use	103	174	343	229	169	122	121



**Figure 8: Average number of limesticks and nets used in trapping cases confirmed during CABS & SPA Autumn Bird Protection Camps 2014-2020**

The average number of limesticks used in the trapping cases confirmed during the camp was 33.2, a similar figure to the average number of limesticks used for trapping cases confirmed during the previous two autumn camps. The average number of nets found set per netting trapping case was 2.88, an increase for a second autumn in a row.

## 4 RESULTS OF ACTIONS TAKEN AGAINST THE TRAPPING CASES CONFIRMED DURING THE CAMP

### 4.1 OVERALL RESULTS

During the camp, 217 cases of trapping activity were confirmed across 117 individual trapping sites. Altogether, 1987 limesticks, 50 nets and 36 electronic callers were found and seized from the active trapping sites during the camp. For 26 trapping cases, reported by CABS & SPA activists, individuals involved in trapping were caught and they were issued fixed penalty notices by enforcement officers (table 13).

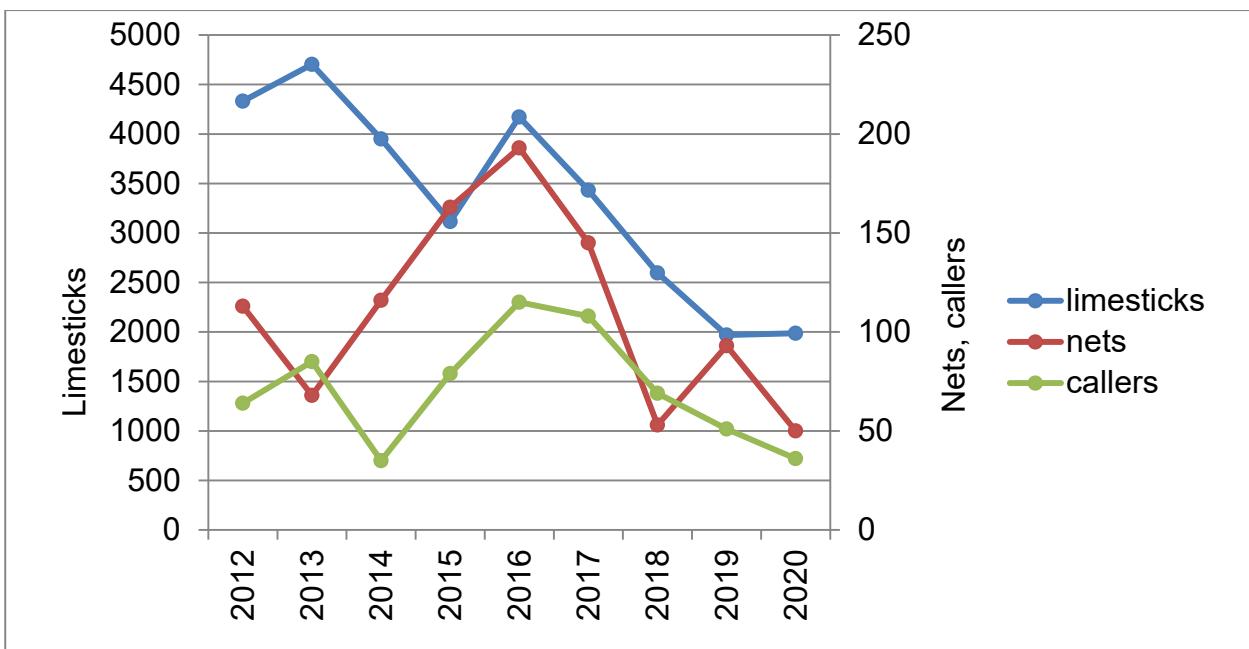
**Table 13: Overall results of actions taken against trapping cases confirmed during CABS & SPA Autumn 2020 Bird Protection Camp**

No. of confirmed trapping cases	217
No. of trapping cases with actions taken by the activists (cases reported to the enforcement officers and cases with actions directly taken by the activists)	151
Total no. of limesticks seized	1987
Total no. of nets seized	50
Total no. of electronic callers seized	36
No. of fixed penalty notices for trapping issued by enforcement officers	26

**Table 14: Comparison of the results of actions taken against the trapping cases confirmed during CABS & SPA Autumn Bird Protection Camps 2012-2020**

Autumn Bird Protection Camp	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
No. of trapping cases confirmed	145	211	157	225	450	327	233	191	217
No. of limesticks seized	4331	4703	3950	3115	4172	3432	2596	1969	1987
No. of nets seized	113	68	116	163	193	145	53	93	50
No. of electronic callers seized	64	85	35	79	115	108	69	51	36
No. of prosecutions made / fixed penalty notices issued*	13	1	27	37	26	19	14	24	26

\* since 2017, all poaching offences in Republic of Cyprus are punishable with fixed penalty notices issued by relevant enforcement officers



**Figure 9: Total numbers of limesticks, nets and electronic callers seized during the investigations of trapping cases confirmed at CABS & SPA Autumn Bird Protection Camps 2012-2020**

The total numbers of limesticks, nets and electronic callers seized during autumn bird protection camps are generally decreasing since autumn 2016.

This autumn, the total number of nets and electronic callers seized during the camp has decreased in comparison with previous autumn, while the number of seized limesticks remained at the same level as last year. As trapping activity in the monitored area, the south-eastern part of Cyprus was slightly higher this autumn than last year according to our findings, an increase in the number of seized traps and callers would be more expected result. The decrease in the number of seized traps can be accounted to the exclusion of the trapping investigations made in the Northern Cyprus, where large number of nets and electronic callers were seized last autumn (Debersek 2020) and to the smaller number of activists participating at the camp in the comparison with the same period last autumn.

Field investigations in the Northern Cyprus were not possible this autumn as the border between Republic of Cyprus and Northern Cyprus was closed for non-residents of Cyprus as a result of the restrictions in place due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The regulations to curb the spread of the virus also made travel to Cyprus more difficult and consequently, fewer activist volunteers were able to travel and participate in the camp.



**Picture 1: Limesticks and electronic caller, seized by Game and Fauna Service officers from a trapping site reported during CABS & SPA Autumn 2020 Bird Protection Camp (Photo: CABS)**

#### 4.2 RESULTS OF ACTIONS TAKEN BY ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES FOR THE TRAPPING CASES REPORTED BY CABS & SPA ACTIVISTS

CABS & SPA teams reported cases of trapping activity confirmed during the camp to the relevant enforcement agencies, responsible with regulation and enforcement against illegal bird killing in Republic of Cyprus and in the British Eastern Sovereign Base Area. These agencies are the Game and Fauna Service and Cyprus Police in Republic of Cyprus and Sovereign Base Area (SBA) Police for the ESBA.

In total the activists reported 101 cases of trapping activity to the enforcement officers and 84 cases were investigated by them. Investigations for 26 reported cases resulted with fixed penalty notices being issued to the suspects caught by the enforcement officers for bird trapping offences (table 15).

**Table 15: Results of actions taken by enforcement agencies for the trapping cases reported by the activists during CABS & SPA Autumn 2020 Bird Protection Camp**

	Game and Fauna Service	Cyprus Police	SBA Police	All
No. of trapping cases reported by CABS & SPA activists	75	8	18	101
No. of reported trapping cases investigated by enforcement officers	63	7	14	84
No. of investigated cases resulting in fixed penalty notices being issued	24	1	1	26
No. of investigated cases resulting in confiscation of trapping paraphernalia	25	3	5	33
No. of investigated cases ending without enforcement actions (no trapping activity was recorded at the time of investigation)	4	3	7	14
No. of reported cases that were not investigated by enforcement officers	11	1	4	16



**Picture 2: SBA Police officer and CABS & SPA activist rescuing quail from a net found during CABS & SPA Autumn 2017 Bird Protection Camp (Photo: CABS)**

**Table 16: Comparison of the results of actions, taken by enforcement agencies for trapping cases reported by the activists during CABS & SPA Autumn Bird Protection Camps 2015-2020**

Autumn Bird Protection Camp	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
No. of trapping cases confirmed	225	450	327	240	196	217
No. of trapping cases reported to the enforcement agencies	142	111	188	140	99	100
<b>INVESTIGATIONS</b>						
No. of reported cases investigated by enforcement officers	110	65	157	102	84	84
Percentage of investigated sites (for all reported sites)	77.5	58.6	83.5	72.9	84.8	84.0
No. of cases investigated by Cyprus Police Anti-Poaching Squad (APS)	74	37	32	9	6	/*
No. of cases investigated by Cyprus Police officers	0	4	5	4	2	7
No. of cases investigated by Game and Fauna Service officers	0	3	17	62	47	63
No. of cases investigated by SBA Police officers	36	21	103	27	12	14
No. of cases investigated by Northern Cyprus Police/Army	0	0	0	0	17	0
<b>PROSECUTIONS / FIXED PENALTY NOTICES</b>						
No. of prosecutions made / fixed penalty notices issued at reported sites	38	27	19	14	24	26
Percentage of prosecutions / fixed penalty notices (for all reported sites)	26.8	24.3	10.1	10.0	24.2	26.0
No. of prosecutions made / fixed penalty notices issued by Cyprus Police APS officers	26	20	11	3	2	/*
No. of prosecutions made / fixed penalty notices issued by Cyprus Police officers	0	1	2	1	1	1
No. of prosecutions made / fixed penalty notices issued by Game and Fauna Service	0	1	4	6	16	24
No. of prosecutions made / fixed penalty notices issued by SBA Police	12	5	2	4	3	1
No. of prosecutions made by Northern Cyprus Police	0	0	0	0	2	0

\*APS unit was dismantled in November 2019

The results of cooperation with enforcement agencies this autumn are similar to the results from the previous autumn camp. As investigations in Northern Cyprus were not possible this autumn, the investigations and actions taken against trapping activity in Northern Cyprus were compensated with the increase in investigations conducted in the Republic of Cyprus and increase in the number of trapping cases reported to Game and Fauna Service officers.

The percentage of reported cases resulting in fixed penalty notices being issued for trapping this autumn is with 26% slightly higher than in autumn 2019 and the second highest value for CABS & SPA autumn bird protection camps. The high percentage of trapping cases ending with penalties is, among others, the result of persistence by CABS & SPA activists to conclude all trapping cases confirmed during the camp with the apprehension and prosecution of trappers. To achieve this objective, the activists made a more concerted effort than in previous years to carry out their investigations covertly and to gather intelligence about the trapping cases, they have confirmed. The intelligence gathered was forwarded to the enforcement officers while reporting confirmed trapping cases.

The high percentage of trapping cases resulting in fixed penalties being issued for trapping this autumn is also the result of good cooperation between the activists and enforcement officers, especially Game and Fauna Service officers, who have issued most of the fixed penalties for cases reported by the activists this autumn. In general, the response of GFS officers for the reported cases was good: officers attended quickly to the reported locations and took the appropriate actions required to apprehend the trappers.

#### 4.3 RESCUED BIRDS AND BIRDS FOUND DEAD IN TRAPS

In total, 324 protected wild birds, belonging to 27 different species were rescued from traps, found by CABS & SPA activists during the camp (table 17). Birds were rescued either directly by the activists or by the enforcement officers during the investigations of the trapping cases, reported by the activists. Rescued birds were released immediately or were released following a short rehabilitation period.

Unfortunately, the activists and the enforcement officers were too late for 476 birds, which were found dead during the investigations of the trapping sites and investigations of home addresses of the suspects.



**Picture 3: Blackcap rescued from a net found during CABS & SPA Autumn 2020 Bird Protection Camp in Cyprus. In total 139 blackcaps were rescued during the camp (Photo: CABS)**

**Table 17: Rescued birds and birds found dead in traps or in the possession of trappers during CABS & SPA Autumn 2020 Bird Protection Camp**

		No. of birds rescued from traps	No. of dead trapped birds found
1	Blackcap ( <i>Sylvia atricapilla</i> )	139	78
2	Song thrush ( <i>Turdus philomelos</i> )	77	10
3	Chiffchaff ( <i>Phylloscopus collybita</i> )	19	2
4	Lesser whitethroat ( <i>Sylvia curruca</i> )	7	1
5	Willow warbler ( <i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i> )	7	0
6	Blackbird ( <i>Turdus merula</i> )	5	0
7	Black redstart ( <i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i> )	4	0
8	Red-backed shrike ( <i>Lanius collurio</i> )	3	0
9	Reed warbler ( <i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i> )	3	0
10	Common nightingale ( <i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i> )	2	1
11	Common redstart ( <i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i> )	2	0
12	European Bee-eater ( <i>Merops apiaster</i> )	2	0
13	Robin ( <i>Erithacus rubecula</i> )	2	0
14	Red-breasted flycatcher ( <i>Ficedula parva</i> )	1	0
15	Barn owl ( <i>Tyto alba</i> )	1	0
16	Long-eared owl ( <i>Asio otus</i> )	1	0
17	Wryneck ( <i>Jynx torquilla</i> )	1	0
18	Thrush nightingale ( <i>Luscinia luscinia</i> )	1	0
19	Laughing dove ( <i>Spilopelia senegalensis</i> )	1	0
20	Cettis warbler ( <i>Cettia cetti</i> )	1	0
21	Garden warbler ( <i>Sylvia borin</i> )	1	0
22	Eastern Bonelli's warbler ( <i>Phylloscopus orientalis</i> )	1	0
23	Sardinian warbler ( <i>Sylvia melanocephala</i> )	2	1
24	Great reed warbler ( <i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i> )	1	0
25	Great tit ( <i>Parus major</i> )	1	0
26	Greenfinch ( <i>Chloris chloris</i> )	1	0
27	House sparrow ( <i>Passer domesticus</i> )	1	0
28	Red-rumped swallow ( <i>Cecropis daurica</i> )	0	4
29	Common starling ( <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> )	0	2
30	Masked shrike ( <i>Lanius nubicus</i> )	0	1
31	Pied flycatcher ( <i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i> )	0	1
	Unidentified	37	375
	Total	324	476



**Picture 4: Red-breasted flycatcher, a rare migrant in Cyprus, rescued from limestick during CABS & SPA Autumn 2020 Bird Protection Camp (Photo: CABS)**



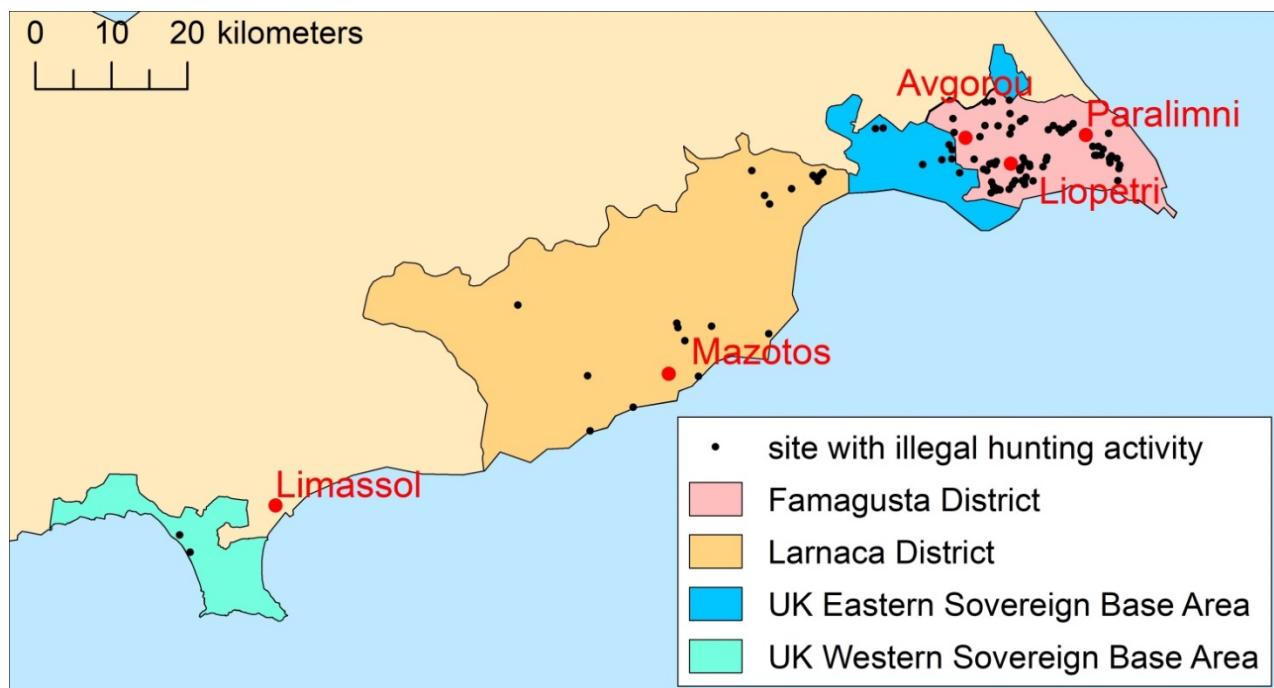
**Picture 5: Long-eared owl rescued from net during CABS & SPA Autumn 2020 Bird Protection Camp (Photo: CABS)**

## 5 RESULTS OF ILLEGAL BIRD HUNTING FIELD INVESTIGATIONS

CABS & SPA field investigations in autumn 2020 confirmed 166 cases of illegal hunting activity, recorded across 99 individual hunting sites in southern and south-eastern Cyprus (table 18, figure 10).

**Table 18: Results of illegal bird hunting field investigations made during CABS & SPA Autumn 2020 Bird Protection Camp**

No. of hunting sites with illegal hunting activity confirmed	99
No. of all illegal hunting cases confirmed on investigated hunting sites	166
No. of confirmed cases of hunting with electronic caller emitting recorded quail calls	74
No. of confirmed cases of hunting with electronic caller emitting recorded blackcap calls	30
No. of confirmed cases of hunting with electronic caller emitting recorded skylark calls	24
No. of confirmed cases of hunting with electronic caller emitting recorded song thrush calls	3
No. of confirmed cases of shooting of protected bird species	34



**Figure 10: Distribution of the hunting sites with illegal hunting activity confirmed during CABS & SPA Autumn 2020 Bird Protection Camp**

Field investigations of illegal hunting activity revealed similar widespread use of electronic callers for hunting as documented in previous years. The use of electronic callers, emitting recorded quail calls at nights was the most common illegal hunting activity detected during the camp. These callers are used to attract migrating quails to land in the fields at night in order to be easily shot in close proximity during the morning.

In total, CABS & SPA activists investigated 74 cases of hunting with use of callers emitting recorded quail calls this autumn, but these cases do not include all the callers heard during the night patrols. As the main task of the activists during night patrols was to monitor and locate electronic callers used for trapping, they only had time to precisely locate and take action against a small percentage of all callers emitting recorded quail calls heard in the nights. We estimate that beside the located and investigated callers, several hundred more callers, used to attract quails were in use this autumn in south-eastern Cyprus.



**Picture 6: Electronic caller, emitting recorded quail calls, found during CABS & SPA Autumn 2020 Bird Protection Camp (Photo: CABS)**

**Table 19: Results of illegal bird hunting field investigations during CABS & SPA Autumn 2020 Bird Protection Camp per investigated regions**

	Famagusta District	Larnaca District	ESBA	WSBA
No. of all confirmed cases of illegal hunting	92	44	17	13
No. of confirmed cases of hunting with electronic caller emitting recorded quail calls	54	3	17	0
No. of confirmed cases of hunting with electronic caller emitting recorded blackcap calls	17	13	0	0
No. of confirmed cases of hunting with electronic caller emitting recorded skylark calls	18	4	0	2
No. of confirmed cases of hunting with electronic caller emitting recorded song thrush calls	2	1	0	0
No. of confirmed cases of shooting of protected species	0	23	0	12

Most of the illegal hunting cases confirmed during the camp, were located in Famagusta District. The use of electronic callers to attract specific bird species (quails, blackcaps, skylarks and song thrushes) was prominently confined to this district.

Hunting of protected, non-huntable bird species without the caller was most commonly observed in Larnaca District and in the British Western Sovereign Base. During the camp, two major hotspots of shooting at protected bird species were discovered by the activists. One was the designated hunting site near Lake Soros, Larnaca District, where field investigations confirmed 9 cases of shooting of European bee-eaters, while the other hotspot, revealed during the camp, was the designated hunting site near Episkopi, WSBA, where 11 cases of shooting of protected birds, mainly White wagtails, were confirmed during the camp.

## 5.1 LARGE-SCALE SHOOTING OF EUROPEAN BEE-EATERS AT THE DESIGNATED HUNTING SITE NEAR LAKE SOROS

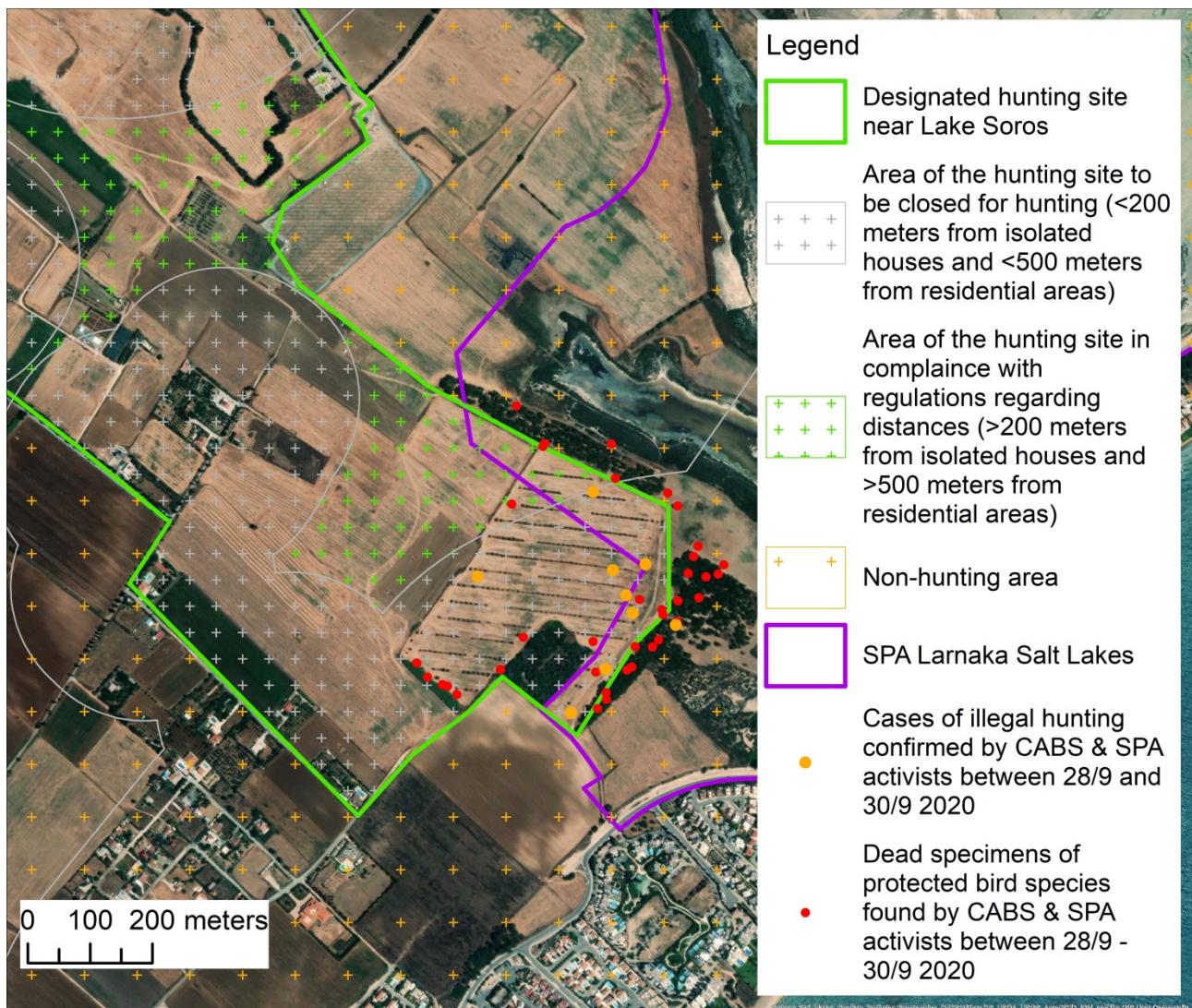
Between 28<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020, CABS & SPA activists witnessed large-scale shooting and killing of protected birds, in particular of European bee-eaters (*Merops apiaster*) at the designated hunting site near Lake Soros in Larnaca District.

In just 3 days of field investigations, the activists together with BirdLife Cyprus members confirmed 10 cases of shooting at the protected bird species at the site and found bodies or the remains of 237 shot bee-eaters and 11 other protected birds, including European roller, Common Kestrel and Night heron.



**Picture 6: Shot protected birds found at the hunting site near Lake Soros during CABS & SPA Autumn 2020 Bird Protection Camp. In total, the remains of 248 protected birds were found during the inspection of the hunting site in late September (Photo: CABS)**

All illegal hunting cases, confirmed by CABS & SPA teams, occurred in the part of the designated hunting site where hunting is prohibited due to the proximity of residential areas and individual houses (figure 11). According to the Protection and Management of Wild Birds and Game Species Law (2003), hunting is prohibited within 500 metres from the outskirts of residential areas or within 200 metres from individual houses. The majority of dead protected birds were found in the Special Protection Area (SPA) Larnaca Salt Lakes (code CY6000002, European Environment Agency 2019), one of the most important areas for wild birds in Cyprus (Hellicar et al. 2014).



**Figure 11: Locations of the illegal hunting cases and the dead birds, found by CABS & SPA activists between 28<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020 at the designated hunting site near Lake Soros.**

**Table 20: Comparison of the results of illegal bird hunting field investigations carried out during CABS & SPA Autumn Bird Protection Camps 2017-2020**

Autumn Bird Protection Camp	2017	2018	2019	2020
No. of hunting sites with illegal hunting activity confirmed	45	46	115	99
No. of all illegal hunting cases confirmed on the investigated hunting sites	55	50	186	166
No. of confirmed cases of hunting with electronic caller emitting recorded quail calls	50	43	107	74
No. of confirmed cases of hunting with electronic caller emitting recorded blackcap calls	2	2	12	31
No. of confirmed cases of hunting with electronic caller emitting recorded skylark or song thrush calls	1	4	23	26
No. of confirmed cases of shooting of protected bird species	2	1	35	34
No. of confirmed cases of other illegal hunting activity	0	0	9	1

CABS & SPA activists carried out extensive field investigations of illegal hunting activity in Cyprus for second autumn in a row. Results of the investigations, like the previous autumn, revealed very high illegal hunting activity in southern and south-eastern Cyprus.

The most common methods of illegal hunting, confirmed during the camp were hunting of quails and blackcaps with use of electronic caller and shooting of protected bird species. In comparison with autumn 2019, CABS & SPA teams investigated fewer cases of hunting quails with use of electronic caller, mainly because there were fewer activists present this autumn. The investigations of illegal hunting also revealed a sharp rise in the number of cases of hunting blackcaps with use of caller, while for the other methods of illegal hunting similar numbers of cases were confirmed in comparison with autumn 2019.

As the investigations of illegal hunting activity during the camp were limited with the small number of activists conducting illegal hunting investigations and as activists were occupied also with the investigating trapping activity, only a small percentage of all illegal hunting cases taking place in the monitored areas could be investigated during the camp. We estimate that the number of cases, investigated during the camp was less than 1 % of all illegal hunting cases taking place this autumn in southern and south-eastern Cyprus.

## 6 RESULTS OF ACTIONS TAKEN AGAINST THE CASES OF ILLEGAL HUNTING ACTIVITY CONFIRMED DURING THE CAMP

### 6.1 OVERALL RESULTS

CABS & SPA activists took immediate actions to prevent the on-going illegal hunting activity in 153 out of 166 confirmed illegal hunting cases. Altogether, 85 electronic callers were seized from illegal hunting sites confirmed during the camp. In 17 cases of illegal hunting activity, reported by the activists, hunters were caught and issued fixed penalty notices for illegal hunting by enforcement officers (table 21).

**Table 21: Overall results of actions taken at the hunting sites with illegal hunting activity confirmed during CABS & SPA Autumn 2020 Bird Protection Camp**

No. of all confirmed cases of illegal hunting	166
No. of confirmed illegal hunting cases with actions taken by the activists (cases reported to the enforcement officers and cases with actions directly taken by the activists)	153
No. of electronic callers emitting recorded quail calls, seized	73
No. of electronic callers emitting recorded blackcap, song thrush or skylark calls, seized	12
No. of illegally shot dead birds found on the ground or in the possession of hunters	271
No. of fixed penalty notices issued for illegal hunting	17

**Table 22: Comparison of the results of actions, taken against illegal hunting activity confirmed during CABS & SPA Autumn Bird Protection Camps 2017-2020**

Autumn Bird Protection Camp	2017	2018	2019	2020
No. of all illegal hunting cases confirmed	55	50	186	167
No. of electronic callers emitting quail calls, seized	49	44	114	73
No. of electronic callers emitting blackcap, song thrush or skylark calls, seized	0	3	5	12
No. of fixed penalty notices issued for illegal hunting	1	1	3	17

## 6.2 RESULTS OF ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES FOR ILLEGAL HUNTING CASES REPORTED BY CABS & SPA ACTIVISTS

Illegal hunting cases confirmed during the camp were reported to the enforcement agencies, responsible with regulation and enforcement against illegal bird killing in Republic of Cyprus and in the British Sovereign Base Areas on Cyprus.

Out of 166 cases confirmed during the camp, the activists reported 84 cases of illegal hunting activity to the enforcement officers and 57 incidents were subsequently investigated. Investigations of 17 reported cases resulted in fixed penalty notices being issued to individuals involved in illegal hunting (table 23).

**Table 23: Results of actions taken by enforcement agencies for the illegal hunting cases reported by the activists during CABS & SPA Autumn 2020 Bird Protection Camp**

	Game and Fauna Service	SBA Police	Cyprus Police	All
No. of illegal hunting cases reported by the activists	69	10	5	84
No. of illegal hunting cases investigated by enforcement officers	43	10	4	57
Percentage of reported cases being investigated	62.3	100.0	80.0	67.9
No. of reported cases ending with fixed penalty notices being issued for illegal hunting	14	3	0	17
No. of reported cases resulting in confiscation of electronic callers	3	7	2	12
No. of reported cases resulting in no evidence of illegal hunting found	27	0	1	28
Seized electronic callers for hunting	9	8	3	20

Only 84 out of 167 cases of illegal hunting, confirmed during the camp were reported to the enforcement agencies. Most of the unreported cases were cases of hunting with use of electronic callers, emitting recorded quail calls during the night within Famagusta District. Between 2:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m., when the activists located the majority of these callers,

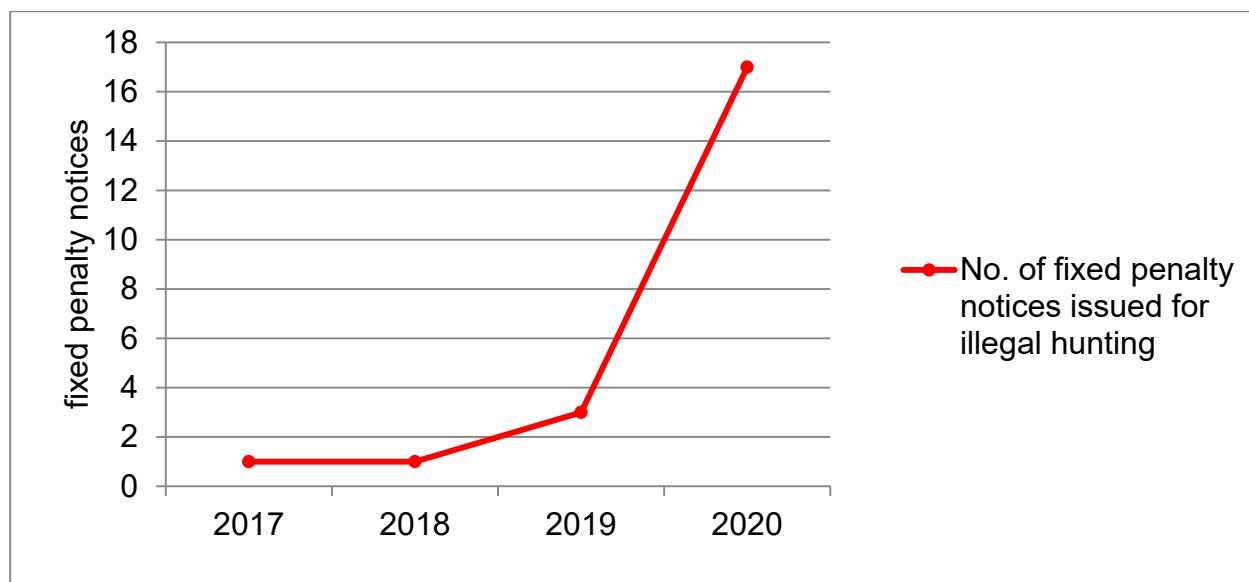
Game and Fauna Service officers were usually not working or they were not available to make the investigations. After 6:00 a.m., when it was easier to get the support of the officers, the callers were already switched off, making it practically impossible to convict the hunters shooting at the quails, attracted with callers.

**Table 24: Comparison of actions taken by enforcement agencies for illegal hunting cases, reported by the activists during CABS & SPA Autumn Bird Protection Camps 2017-2020**

Autumn Bird Protection Camp	2017	2018	2019	2020
No. of illegal hunting cases reported by the activists	6	5	79	85
No. of illegal hunting cases investigated by enforcement officers	5	4	63	57
Percentage of reported sites being investigated	83.3	80.0	79.7	67.1
No. of reported cases resulting in fixed penalty notices issued for illegal hunting	1	1	3	17
No. of electronic callers used for hunting, seized	2	3	19	20

This autumn, CABS & SPA activists continued with regular, day-to-day cooperation with the enforcement agencies to prevent illegal hunting activity. The number of cases reported to the enforcement officers has increased in comparison with the previous autumn despite the smaller number of activists participating at the camp this autumn.

The percentage of reported hunting cases that were subsequently investigated by enforcement officers was with 67.1 % lower than recorded in previous years. The lowest percentage of reported cases was investigated in the Republic of Cyprus. As only 1 enforcement patrol in Famagusta District and 1-2 patrols in Larnaca District were on-duty in the mornings this autumn, the officers had limited capacity for the investigation and enforcement against the reported illegal hunting cases. Many reported cases were not investigated because Game and Fauna Service officers were busy with other cases or they were too far away from the locations, reported by the activists.



**Figure 12: Number of reported cases resulting in fixed penalty notices being issued to hunters for illegal hunting during CABS & SPA Autumn Bird Protection Camps 2017-2020**

The number of reported cases that have ended with penalties issued to hunters for illegal hunting was significantly higher this autumn than in previous years (figure 12). The increase can be attributed to several factors. The activists started with the extensive investigations of illegal hunting in Cyprus only one year ago and are still learning about illegal hunting activity and effective methods to prevent it. This autumn, the activists carried out field investigations of illegal hunting more covertly than in previous years in order to not jeopardise enforcement operations taken subsequently at the reported locations. More time was also allocated for gathering intelligence on illegal hunting activity.

Furthermore, the cooperation between CABS & SPA activists and the enforcement officers improved in comparison with previous years. As activists started to regularly report illegal hunting activity only recently, both sides are still learning on how to cooperate effectively. This autumn progress was made with enforcement officers acknowledging the intelligence regarding the on-going illegal hunting activity, gathered by the activists by using it during the investigations of the reported cases. Often the intelligence gathered by the activists lead to apprehension of hunters for illegal hunting.

## 6.3 SHOT PROTECTED BIRDS FOUND DURING THE CAMP

In total, 273 birds, belonging to 12 protected bird species, which are not allowed to be hunted in European Union, were found dead or injured at the hunting sites with illegal hunting activity confirmed during the camp (table 25).

Birds were found either directly by CABS & SPA activists or by the enforcement officers during the investigations of the hunting sites, reported by the activists. Injured birds were taken to the wildlife rehabilitation centre for recovery.

**Table 25: Protected birds found on the ground or in the possession of hunters at the hunting sites with illegal hunting activity confirmed during CABS & SPA Autumn 2020 Bird Protection Camp**

		No. of dead birds found at the investigated hunting sites	No. of dead birds found in the possession of hunters	No. of injured birds found
1	European Bee-eater ( <i>Merops apiaster</i> )	165	2	1
2	Blackcap ( <i>Sylvia atricapilla</i> )	11	21	
3	White wagtail ( <i>Motacilla alba</i> )	6	15	1
4	Willow warbler ( <i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i> )		7	
5	Barn swallow ( <i>Hirundo rustica</i> )	2		
6	Spanish sparrow ( <i>Passer hispaniolensis</i> )	2		
7	Common kestrel ( <i>Falco tinnunculus</i> )	1		
8	Night heron ( <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i> )	1		
9	European roller ( <i>Coracias garrulus</i> )	1		
10	House martin ( <i>Delichon urbicum</i> )	1		
11	Great tit ( <i>Parus major</i> )	1		
12	Pied flycatcher ( <i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i> )	1		
	Unknown		34	
	Total	192	79	2

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

### 7.1 BIRD TRAPPING

While bird trapping activity in the British Eastern Sovereign Base Area remains low with 15 active trapping sites found during the camp, bird trapping is on the rise in Famagusta and Larnaca Districts of Republic of Cyprus. Both, number of active trapping sites and number of trapping cases, confirmed on active trapping sites are higher than last autumn, despite the lower number of activists participating in the camp this autumn.

The rise of trapping activity in the Republic of Cyprus is apparent when comparing the percentages of sites checked during previous autumn camps. This autumn, the percentage of checked trapping sites found to be active was over 8 % higher than in autumn 2019. The increasing trend of trapping activity in Famagusta and Larnaca Districts of Republic of Cyprus in the last year is worrying, especially as our findings had shown that trapping activity in this region was slowly decreasing until 2019.

As trapping activity is increasing in Republic of Cyprus, while it remains low in the ESBA, it is important to find the reasons for this negative trend. CABS & SPA believe there are two main reasons for the increased trapping trend in the Republic of Cyprus:

- 1) decriminalization of bird trapping with limesticks in 2017 after the introduction of new, on-the-spot fines for poaching offences in Republic of Cyprus.
- 2) the dissolution of Cyprus Police Anti-Poaching Squad (APS) in November 2019. APS was a specialised police unit, dedicated to fight against poaching in Republic of Cyprus. It was especially effective in combating organised, professional trappers.

As presented in the report, percentage of active trapping sites with limesticks in use has increased since 2018. This is a surprising trend as trapping with limesticks is a traditional method of trapping, mostly used by older generations and was steadily declining since 2012 in south-eastern Cyprus, according to the results of CABS & SPA bird protection camps.

The choice of using limesticks for trapping was made easy for trappers after the controversial amendment to the 'Protection and Management of wild birds and game species Law' introduced regulation of all bird trapping and illegal hunting offences with fixed, on-the-spot fines in July 2017. The amendment among others introduced different

fines for the same offence, bird trapping, with the size of the fine being dependant on the method of trapping used.

Trappers caught with up to 72 limesticks will receive on-the-spot fine of 200 € and additionally 200 € for up to 50 caught birds. That is very little if we consider that trapper can sell 50 caught blackcaps for around 150-200 € on the black market. The fine is only twice the profit from catching 50 birds with limesticks and clearly not deterrent enough. On the other hand, fines for trapping with nets are considerably higher and have a stronger deterrent effect. Trapper caught with 1 net will receive on-the-spot fine of 2000 € and additionally 1000 € for up to 50 caught birds.

CABS & SPA urge the authorities to change the controversial amendment and introduce equal fines for all methods of bird trapping with size of a fine being high enough to have a deterrent effect. An example to follow is the law regulating fines for poaching in the British Sovereign Base Areas, which introduced equal fines for trapping regardless of the method used. The fines start at 2000 € and are high enough to deter trapping as it is evident from the low trapping activity recorded this autumn in the ESBA.

Dissolution of APS in November 2019 is another step backwards in the fight against poaching in Cyprus. CABS & SPA teams cooperated closely with the APS during every CABS & SPA Bird Protection Camp since 2011 and their joint field operations resulted in over 150 prosecutions made for bird trapping in the south-eastern Cyprus until 2017. These results were not accepted well by the trappers and in autumn 2017 they prepared a large protest with several thousand people protesting against the enforcement actions of the APS. The government reacted in favour of protesting trappers and hunters by reducing APS unit in size from 7 officers to 4, making the reduction right after the protest in the middle of the autumn trapping season. Since then, the unit has generally remained undermanned with around four officers working for the unit. In practice, this made it nearly impossible for the unit to have an effective presence on the ground, hence the relatively poor results in the last few years. In November 2019, the unit was completely dismantled.

The lack of APS in the field was very noticeable this autumn. Some of the biggest and most organised trappers in Cyprus increased their trapping activity in comparison with previous years. These trappers are considered to be dangerous and are difficult to apprehend. As it was primarily the duty of APS officers to deal with these trappers, their absence is reflected in the rise of professional trapping with nets, observed by the activists this autumn.

One of the largest and most notorious trappers in Cyprus, who was caught and prosecuted regularly in the past years by APS officers, was left to trap undisturbed in the hills above Maroni for the whole autumn despite dozens of calls made and many reports about his activity sent by CABS & SPA and BirdLife Cyprus to the Game And Fauna Service and Cyprus Police. The only operation against the trapping activity of this notorious trapper took place in November 2020 when season for catching migrating blackcaps was already finished. Cyprus Police searched the premises of the trapper and his accomplices, resulting in the seizure of 6 mist nets, several electronic callers and 366 frozen birds.

## 7.2 ILLEGAL BIRD HUNTING

As CABS & SPA activists started with the extensive investigations of illegal bird hunting activity only a year ago, during the camp in autumn 2019, there remains a lot to be learnt regarding the true extent and impact of illegal hunting in Cyprus on bird populations. The investigations carried out this autumn confirmed that illegal bird hunting in southern and eastern Cyprus was as massive and out of control as documented in previous years. Beside illegal hunting methods known from previous camps, the investigations also revealed large-scale illegal shooting of several protected bird species, which was previously unknown to the activists.

The most shocking new discovery was the rampant shooting of European bee-eaters at the hunting site near Meneou in Larnaca District. Hunters took advantage of the strong migration of bee-eaters over the hunting site and the lack of enforcement, by continuously killing bee-eaters throughout the whole of September. Another hotspot of illegal bird hunting, previously unknown to CABS & SPA teams, was discovered in the Western Sovereign Base Area on Cyprus. Every visit to the area, designated for hunting within the WSBA, revealed shooting of protected bird species, especially of White wagtails as well as the widespread use of electronic callers for hunting.

The other methods of illegal hunting, known from previous autumns, were common and widespread also this autumn. Hundreds of electronic callers, emitting recorded quail calls were heard during the nights by the activists, resulting in yet another illegal slaughter of quails, attracted by these callers in the mornings.

The use of callers to attract blackcaps, skylarks and song thrushes also remains commonplace. A recent study in Cyprus revealed that the electronic callers, placed beside mist-nets increased the number of individuals of target bird species captured by 6 to 8 times (Sebastianelli et al. 2020). As callers are very efficient in attracting targeted birds

and as it is difficult to catch hunters with an active caller, hunters use the callers commonly. This autumn the activists could hear callers from almost every hunting site they investigated in the mornings.

The massive extent of illegal hunting makes it even a bigger threat for birds than bird trapping in south-eastern Cyprus. CABS & SPA activists estimate that 166 cases of illegal hunting, confirmed during the camp present less than 1 % of all illegal hunting incidents taking place this autumn in south-eastern and southern Cyprus. The situation is most worrying in the Famagusta District of Republic of Cyprus, where hundreds of hunting sites are open for daily hunting during the autumn hunting season. This autumn, on average only 1 patrol with GFS officers was monitoring illegal hunting in Famagusta District in the mornings. One patrol is capable to effectively monitor illegal hunting activity at a small number of hunting sites, open for hunting simultaneously and certainly not if the number of those sites is several hundred as it is the case in Famagusta District.

We are calling on Game and Fauna Service, responsible for regulation of hunting in Republic of Cyprus to significantly reduce number of hunting sites, open for daily hunting in Famagusta and Larnaca District during the hunting season 2021/2022 and we are also requesting for closure of several hunting sites with very high illegal hunting activity confirmed by the activists during this hunting season. As Game and Fauna Service has limited manpower for monitoring and regulation of illegal hunting activity, the reduction in the number of designated sites, open for hunting during the next season is the most effective measure to fight against massive levels of illegal hunting in Republic of Cyprus.

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