



**Committee Against  
Bird Slaughter - CABS**  
Komitee gegen den Vogelmord e.V.

**Stiftung Pro Artenvielfalt®**  
Foundation Pro Biodiversity

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**Field Report:**  
**Winter 2015/2016**  
**Bird Protection Camp,**  
**Republic of Cyprus,**  
**8 – 13 December 2015 & 22 January – 7 February 2016**



**Bonn / Bielefeld, Germany: February 2016**

**Authors:**

Andrea Rutigliano, Field Investigations Officer, CABS

Bostjan Debersek, Field Investigations Officer, CABS

**Contact Details:**



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**Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS)**

Komitee gegen den Vogelmord e.V.

An der Ziegelei 8

D-53127 Bonn

Germany

Telephone: +49 228 665521

Fax: +49 228 665280

Email: [info@komitee.de](mailto:info@komitee.de)

Website: [www.komitee.de/en/homepage](http://www.komitee.de/en/homepage)

**Foundation Pro Biodiversity (SPA)**

Stiftung Pro Artenvielfalt

Meisenstrasse 65

D-33607 Bielefeld

Germany

Telephone: +49 521 2997 888

Fax: +49 521 2997 889

Email: [team@stiftung-pro-artenvielfalt.org](mailto:team@stiftung-pro-artenvielfalt.org)

Website: [www.stiftung-pro-artenvielfalt.org](http://www.stiftung-pro-artenvielfalt.org)

## 1 SUMMARY

In the winter 2015/2016 *Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS)* and the *Foundation Pro Biodiversity (SPA – Stiftung Pro Artenvielfalt)* organised the winter *Bird Protection Camp (BPC)*. The Camp was split in two parts, the first one took place from 8<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> of the December 2015 and the second part from 22<sup>nd</sup> of January until 7<sup>th</sup> of February 2016.

**During the camp we observed large scale illegal bird trapping with 96 active trapping sites found in 22 days. Altogether, 222 mist nets, 451 limesticks and 60 electronic bird callers were found on them.**

Field work was conducted both independently and with the cooperation of the Cyprus Police Anti-Poaching Squad (APS) & the Anti-Poaching Unit (APU) of the British Eastern Sovereign Base Area (ESBA). **During 15 joint operational days with the police agencies 53 active trapping sites were investigated by the officers. 153 mist nets and 38 electronic bird callers have been seized and 5 persons have been prosecuted for illegal bird trapping.**

**Further 43 active trapping sites with 67 mist nets and 414 limesticks** were found during independent fieldwork. Due to the reduction of requested days of cooperation with the anti-poaching units, we did not manage to visit these trapping sites with the police and they were reported for investigations after the Camp.

We requested for 144 hours of joint field operations with the police agencies, but received only 63 hours. Received support was enough to investigate 53 trapping sites, but not enough to investigate further 43 trapping sites found active by our members.

We do not believe that the enforcement actions undertaken by the police units at the investigated trapping sites are strong enough to minimally deter trapping. Only at 5 out of 53 investigated trapping sites prosecutions for trapping were filed. At the remaining 48 trapping sites investigations resulted either in confiscations of trapping equipment or nothing was found.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

In 2016, the second Winter BPC was organised by CABS and SPA. Until 2015, CABS& SPA conducted BPCs in spring and autumn bird migration time to prevent mass scale of trapping and killing of migratory birds passing through Cyprus. Massive extent of bird trapping witnessed during our first winter BPC, organised in January 2015, proved the need for organising a BPCs every winter. In winter time, from November until March, the main targeted species for trapping is the Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*.



**Picture 1: Song thrush caught in a mist trapping net (Photo: CABS)**



**Picture 2: Mist net placed on the edge of the orchard used for winter bird trapping (Photo: CABS)**

### **3 WINTER 2015/2016 BIRD PROTECTION CAMP METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 PARTICIPANTS**

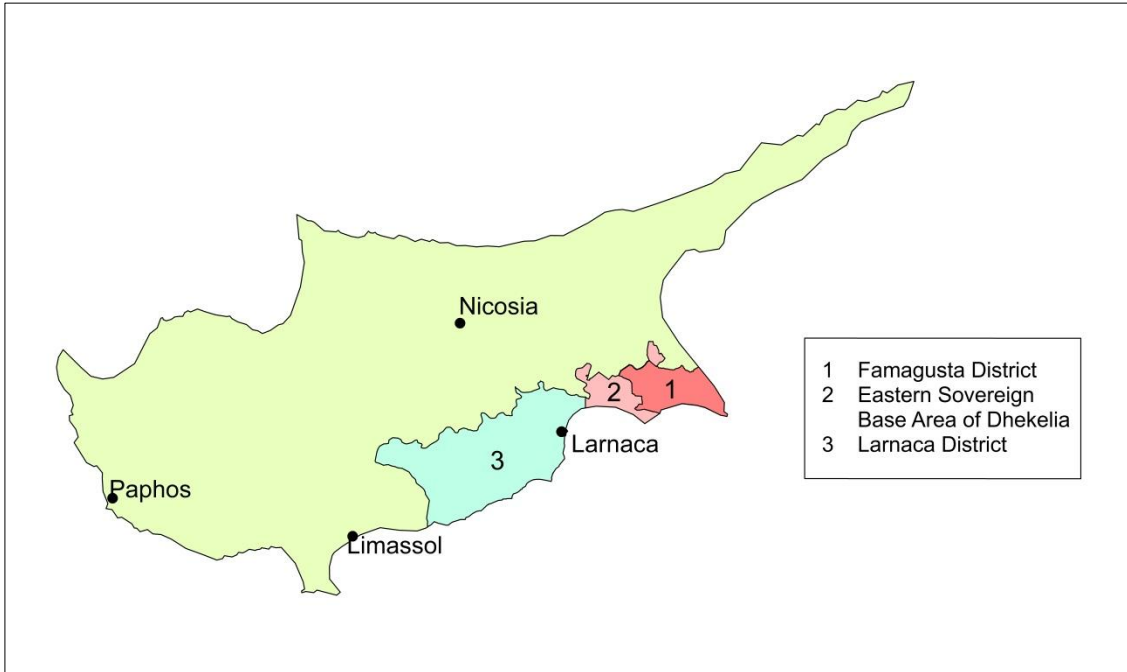
A total of 8 people from Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Great Britain and Slovenia participated in the camp.

#### **3.2 WORKING SCHEDULE AND AREAS**

In the first week of the BPC, from 7<sup>th</sup> until 14<sup>th</sup> of December 2015, we organised 4 joint field operations with Anti-poaching Unit (APU) from the Sovereign Base Areas (SBA) Police to investigate trapping in the Eastern Sovereign Base Area (ESBA).

In the second part of the Camp, from 23<sup>rd</sup> of January until 7<sup>th</sup> of February 2016, we worked both with Anti-poaching Squad (APS) from the Cyprus Police and with APU from SBA Police. With APS we organized 6 joint field operations and 5 with APU.

4 joint operations with APS were conducted in the Famagusta District, the main area for bird trapping in the Republic of Cyprus and 2 in the Larnaca District. All operations with APU were conducted in the ESBA, one of the two sovereign British territories on the island of Cyprus.



**Figure 1: Main areas for winter trapping in Cyprus**

## 4 RESULTS OF WINTER 2015/2016 BIRD PROTECTION CAMP

### 4.1 MONITORING OF THE TRAPPING ACTIVITY

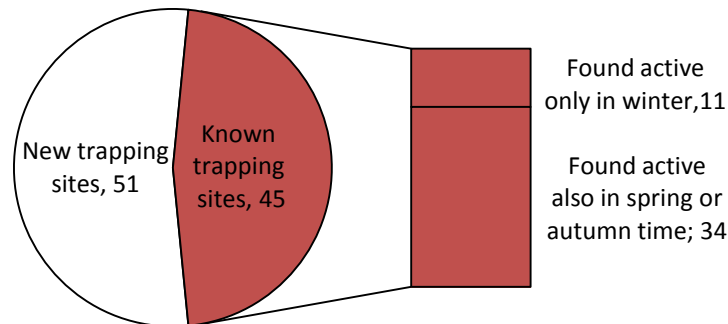
During the entire period of the winter camp, both with the independent investigation and the joint operations with APS and APU, CABS teams monitored 101 trapping sites. Of the 101 sites checked, 96 sites were found active i.e. with traps or with signs of recent trapping, such as feathers on the ground. Considering the camp duration of 22 days, we found on average 4.4 active trapping sites per day (Table 1).

**Table 1: Monitoring of trapping activity during the last four BPCs**

Bird Protection Camp (BPC)	Winter 2014/ 2015	Spring 2015	Autumn 2015	Winter 2015/ 2016
Duration of the BPC (days)	10	29	40	22
No. of all active trapping sites found	49	51	164	96
No. of trapping sites found per day	4.9	1.8	4.1	4.4

This slightly smaller number of trapping sites found per day as in previous winter does not mean a decreasing trend, since it is the sheer presence of volunteers reporting and dismantling with law enforcement agencies which makes the phenomenon decrease day after day: consequently, the longer the camp, the more difficult it turns to find active trapping sites in the final days. This is also a significant hint which shows the lack of enforcement before our camps: if authorities did their job on their own, it wouldn't be so easy to detect trapping sites in the first days of the camp, nor we would witness this fast decrease after the first raids. Table 1 also shows the high density of trapping in winter compared with spring and even with autumn. Even if we searched for active trapping sites with 1-2 teams this winter, we found more active sites per day as during autumn 2015, when 2-4 teams were searching for traps.

Out of 96 active trapping sites, 51 sites were new, with no records of trapping in the past, and 45 sites were known to us, as we already found traps or signs of trapping on them in previous seasons (Figure 2).



**Figure 2: Proportion between new and known trapping sites found active this winter**

High proportion of the new trapping sites can be explained with the fact, that this was only our second BPC organised in the winter and we don't have many records for the trapping sites used in winter time.

Winter trapping sites can be the same ones used for trapping in spring and autumn, but many of them are specific and used only in winter time to catch song thrushes. At these specific winter trapping sites, nets and bird callers are often placed on the edge of the vegetation patch (orchard, bushes, tree row...) and not inside the vegetation as it is common in autumn for catching blackcaps. This placement is aimed for catching song thrushes, which prefer less dense vegetation as blackcaps.

## 4.2 OVERALL RESULTS

During our joint field operations with the anti-poaching police units, 155 mist nets, 37 limesticks and 38 electronic bird callers were confiscated. Further 67 mist nets, 414 limesticks and 22 electronic bird callers were located by CABS members, but they were left behind, as there was not enough time to visit these trapping sites during the joint operations with law enforcement units.

**Altogether, 222 mist nets, 451 limesticks and 60 electronic bird callers were found this winter.** Following our findings, **5 prosecutions** for illegal bird trapping were made by the police agencies.

**Table 2: Overall results of the last four BPCs organised by CABS & SPA**

BPC	Winter 2014/2015	Spring 2015	Autumn 2015	Winter 2015/2016
Duration of Bird Protection Camp (days)	10	29	40	22
No. of mist nets	151	25	163	222
No. of limesticks	0	1470	3115	451
No. of electronic bird callers	20	10	79	60
No. of prosecutions	3	17	38	5

The number of mist nets found this winter shows how widespread and massive winter trapping is. In shorter periods and with less people we found more nets than last autumn. Intensity of winter trapping can be compared with the autumn trapping, the main season for bird trapping.

But the efforts of enforcement agencies to stop winter trapping are far behind from the efforts to stop autumn trapping. This can be clearly seen, when comparing number of prosecutions filed by police officers for trapping. During autumn 2015 BPC 38 persons were caught and prosecuted for trapping and this winter only 5.

The police justify their unwillingness to wait and catch offenders red-handed in winter, with the fact that trappers have different patterns during this season and can show up to collect birds both in the night, at dawn or later in the day. Therefore the waiting time of the police officers could be long at the trapping site and they prefer to employ the little time available searching and dismantling more installations. We believe that this justification shows the inadequate approach of law enforcement agencies, i.e. the low numbers of officers and hours employed to tackle bird trapping.

A serious approach requires that law enforcement agencies aim at prosecuting trappers and at being in numbers of patrols proportionate to the number of active trapping sites.

#### 4.3 COOPERATION WITH THE ANTI-POACHING SQUAD (APS) FROM THE CYPRUS POLICE

This winter we worked for 6 days together with the APS from Cyprus Police. The results of cooperation are presented in Table 2.

**Table 3: Detailed results of the joint APS/CABS operations**

<b>Monitoring of trapping sites</b>	
Number of days working together with APS	6
No. of all active trapping sites found by CABS/SPA members and police officers in the Republic of Cyprus	56
No. of active trapping sites visited by APS	18
Sites with prosecution of trappers	2
Sites with confiscation of trapping paraphernalia only	16
Sites where nothing was found by APS	/
Sites that were left behind	49
<b>Seized trapping paraphernalia</b>	
Limesticks	0
Mist nets	67
Sound lures	18

As Table 3 shows, police officers investigated only 18 out of 56 active trapping sites found during the Camp. 38 trapping sites or 68 % of all trapping sites were not investigated. The reason was the lack of time. This winter we received only 18 working hours of the police support for joint field operations, even if we requested for 60 hours (Table 4).

**Table 4: Comparison between requested and received support of the APS during the winter camp**

	24/1	25/1	26/1	27/1	28/1	29/1	30/1	31/1	2/ 2	4/2	Total (hours)
Requested police support (hours)	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	60
Received police support (hours)		3		3		3		3	3	3	18

Beside the reduction of time intended for joint field operations, we are unsatisfied with the poor efforts of the APS officers to catch and prosecute trappers. Most investigations of active trapping sites ended with the confiscation of trapping paraphernalia. At only 2 out of 18 investigated trapping cases, complaints were filed against trapping. In both cases, complaints were filed for trapping inside fenced properties. At other investigated cases, police officers were satisfied with confiscation of the trapping equipment and they didn't made ambushes to catch trappers.

#### 4.4 COOPERATION WITH THE ANTI-POACHING UNIT (APU) FROM THE EASTERN SOVEREIGN BASE AREA (ESBA)

**Table 5: Detailed results of the joint APU / CABS operations**

<b>Monitoring of trapping sites</b>	
Number of days working together with the APU	9
No. of all active trapping sites found by CABS/SPA members and police officers in the ESBA	40
No. of active trapping sites visited by APU	24
Sites with prosecution of trappers	3
Sites with confiscation of trapping paraphernalia only	20
Sites where nothing was found by the APU	1
Sites that were left behind	19
<b>Seized trapping paraphernalia</b>	
Limesticks	37
Mist nets	88
Sound lures	20

Both concerns we emphasised in the evaluation of work with the APS are the same for work with the APU. We requested for 84 hours of police support, but received only 45 hours for joint field operations (Table 6). Received hours were not enough to investigate all active trapping sites found



by us. Only 24 out of 40 sites were investigated. Percentage of investigated sites is higher as with APS, but still far from desired 100 %.

**Table 6: Comparison between requested and received support of the APU during the winter camp**

Period	8/12/2015- 12/12/2015	30/1/2016 - 7/2/2016	Total (hours)
Requested police support (hours)	30	54	84
Received police support (hours)	20	25	45

Only 3 out of 24 cases resulted with the prosecution of trappers. More efforts should be put in catching and prosecuting trappers as the prosecutions are only significant deterrent of trapping activity. If only trapping paraphernalia is seized from a trapping site, it is just the matter of time, when the site will be reactivated for trapping. Sometimes trappers need just few days to set new traps.



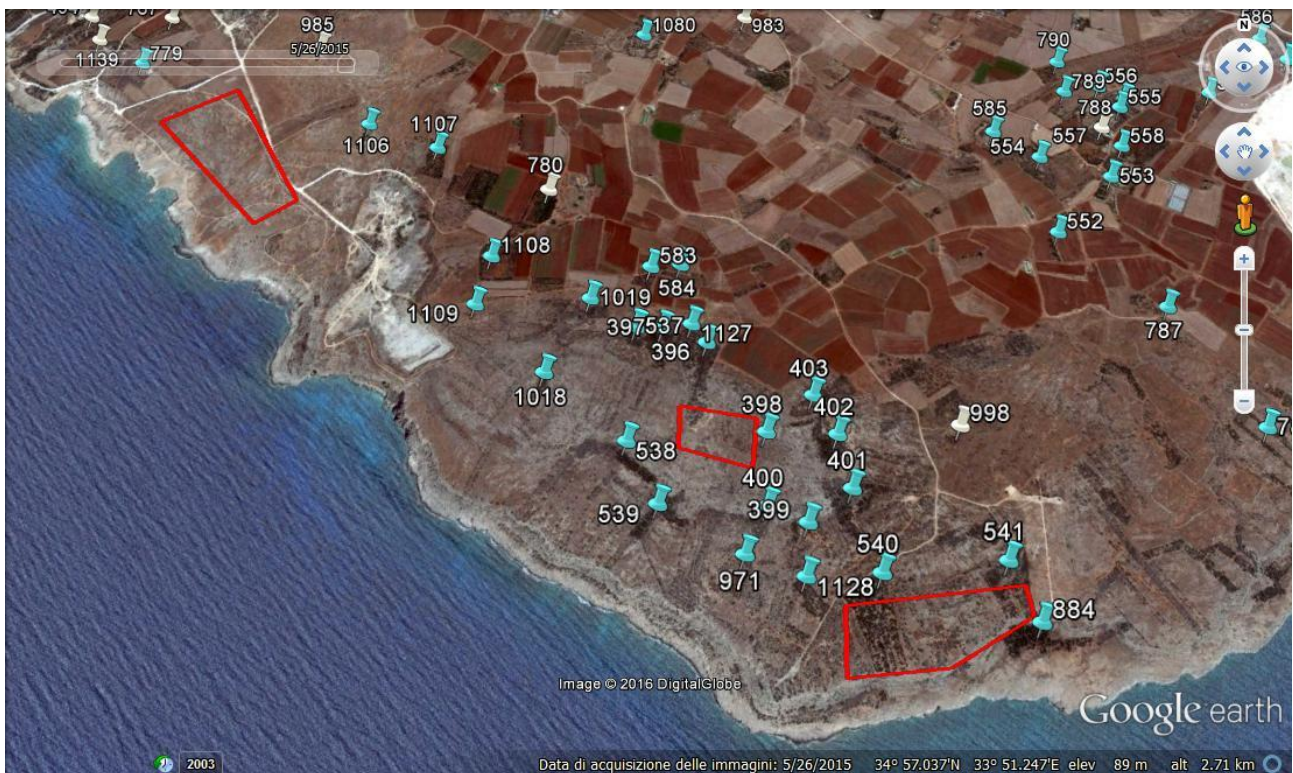
**Picture 3: Removal of the mist net found during joint operation with APU (Photo: CABS)**

#### 4.5 THE "FRAUD" OF ACACIA REMOVAL IN CAPE PYLA

For some years now the ESBA Administration has been criticised for his soft approach to the problem of bird trapping. In fact, despite the high number of paraphernalia confiscated every year, the number of prosecutions has been comparatively low in the ESBA and with a decreasing trend, whereas trapping density has remained stable and at the highest levels in the last decade.

In order to decrease the trapping intensity, NGOs have repeatedly demanded in the last three years the eradication of the acacias planted by trappers in Cape Pyla, the major bird trapping hotspot. The acacias make lush artificial green areas where birds are lured in the night, to be trapped in the morning: being the species invasive and alien, their removal is not only welcomed for saving birds, but also to restore the pristine environment of the Cape.

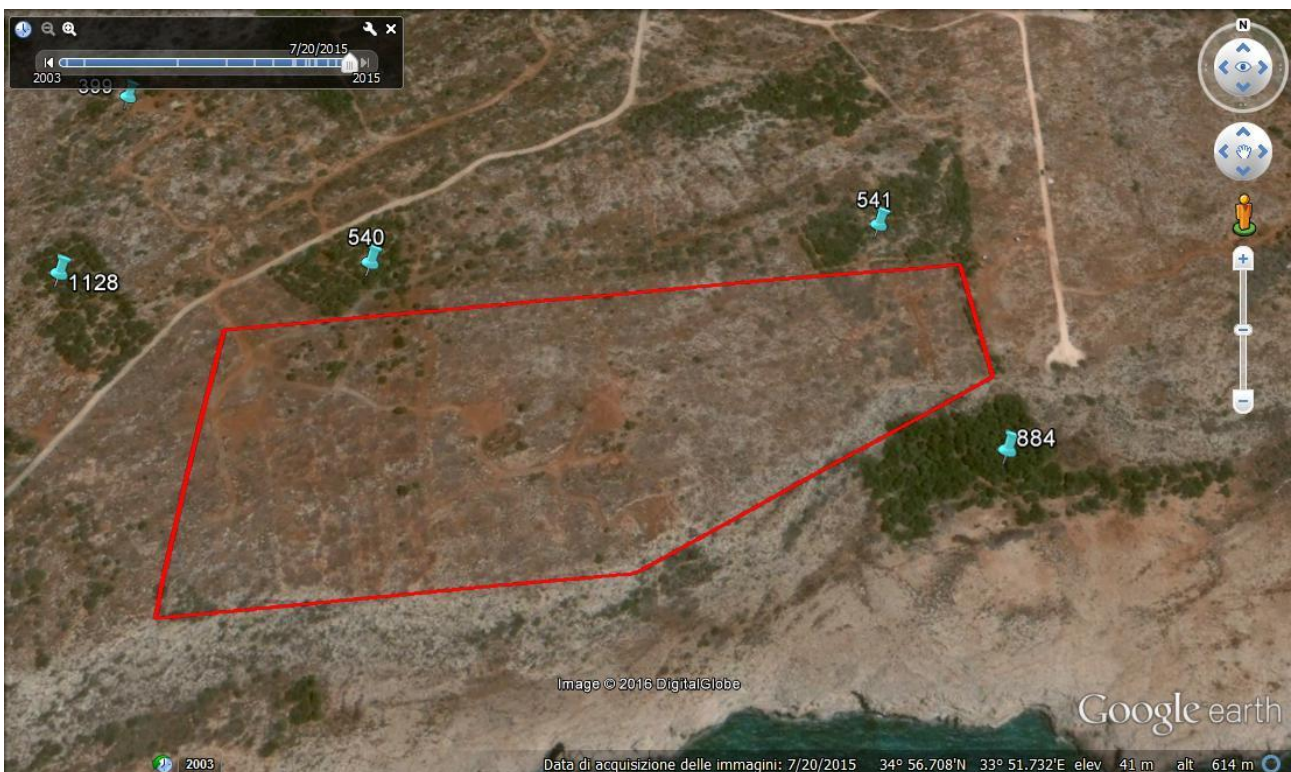
In December 2014 the British Administration has finally started a program of eradication of the acacias, and so far three areas have been selected and cleared of the plants (Picture 4).



**Picture 4: Cape Pyla with marked trapping sites and the areas selected for the acacia removal**

To our great disappointment, the ESBA selected a first area to the west, where no trapping sites were present at all. A second area (in the east) had three active trapping sites, but they were not destroyed by the Administration, but only reduced in size, leaving the corridors for nets untouched (see picture 5 and 6). The third area (in the middle) was once again away from the trapping sites and none was dismantled.

Definitely the British ESBA are doing their best to avoid any serious disturbance to trappers. Their lack of seriousness in tackling bird trapping is once again so clear to become slowly ridiculous.



**Picture 5 and 6: acacia eradication on Summer 2015. The core of the known trapping sites is left untouched by the ESBA**

In addition the clearance of acacias around trapping sites makes them even more effective and dangerous for birds. Migrants lured in the night by the tape lures will have no other choice than to come down and perch only in the smaller area where nets are going to be set at dawn, being therefore concentrated in this oasis and more easily trapped. Once again the "tolerant" approach of the ESBA will cause a bigger harm to our bird life.

Therefore we call upon the British ESBA to clear all acacias from inside the trapping sites and not only around them before the main season in Autumn starts. Environmental NGOs will be glad to assist providing maps and coordinates to avoid any mistake. If this will not be done, the British ESBA will be responsible for a even bigger massacre than usual in their area.