



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

Stiftung Pro Artenvielfalt®
Foundation Pro Biodiversity®

Field Report:
CABS & SPA
WINTER 2016 – 2017
BIRD PROTECTION CAMP
CYPRUS

(15th – 18th December 2016 & 13th January – 13th February 2017)



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Authors:

Boštjan Deberšek, Field Investigations Officer, CABS
Andrea Rutigliano, Field Investigations Officer, CABS

Photo on the cover:

CABS & SPA activists with nets, seized in the Eastern Sovereign Base Area, January 2017 (Photo: CABS)

Contact Details:



**Committee Against
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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

Website: www.komitee.de/en/homepage


Stiftung Pro Artenvielfalt[®]
Foundation Pro Biodiversity[®]

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

Website: www.stiftung-pro-artenvielfalt.org

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SUMMARY

In December 2016, January 2017 and February 2017, the Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) and the Foundation Pro Biodiversity (SPA – Stiftung Pro Artenvielfalt) conducted their third Winter Bird Protection Camp in Cyprus. The Winter Camp ran from 15th December 2016 – 12th February 2017.

There were 27 activists from 8 different countries who participated in the Winter Camp and monitored bird trapping activity in the south-eastern part of the island. They investigated 223 known trapping sites and 186 of them were found to be active. The number of active trapping sites was the highest ever found at a Winter Camp and it shows that the level of winter trapping is massive and comparable with autumn trapping, which is the main bird trapping season.

In total, 523 mist nets and 901 limesticks were removed from active trapping sites. This number of seized nets is the highest out of all Bird Protection Camps ever conducted. Additionally, 651 birds were rescued from traps, mostly song thrushes.

During the Winter Camp we cooperated with police officers from the Republic of Cyprus Police Anti-Poaching Squad (APS), Sovereign Base Area (SBA) Police and with game wardens. Enforcement officers investigated 29 out of 30 trapping sites reported by our teams and caught trappers at 17 sites.

In the UK Eastern Sovereign Base Area (ESBA) 125 out of 186 trapping sites were found to be active. Similarly to last autumn, trapping activity was by far highest in this small area under British control: the density of active trapping sites was 0.95 sites per km², 16 times higher than in the Republic of Cyprus, where we found 0.06 trapping sites per km².

1 INTRODUCTION

Cyprus is one of the main hotspots of illegal bird killing in the Mediterranean. It is estimated that more than 2 million migrating birds get caught and killed in illegal traps every year in Cyprus (Brochet et al. 2016). Trapping has affected a total of 153 recorded wild bird species, of which 78 are threatened and listed on Annex 1 of the Birds Directive or listed in one of SPEC (Species of European Conservation Concern) categories (Birdlife Cyprus 2016).

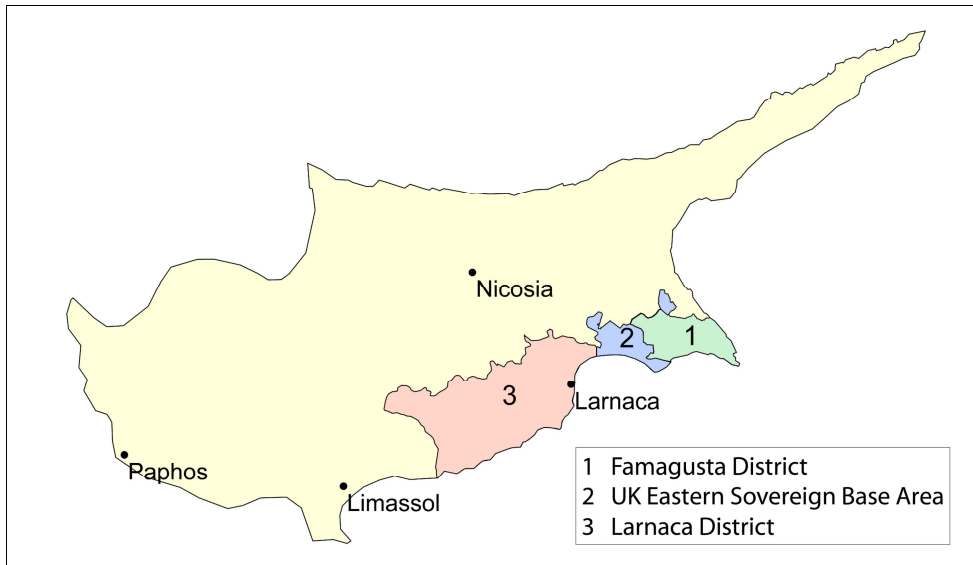
Cyprus lies on one of the key migratory routes that birds use during their journey between Europe and Africa, with around 100 million birds visiting the island every spring and autumn (Lederer 2016). Cyprus is also an important wintering place for birds which migrate to Cyprus to avoid harsh winter conditions in Europe.

CABS and SPA organise Bird Protection Camps in Cyprus three times per year; in spring, autumn and winter seasons, to prevent illegal, non-selective and large-scale trapping, killing and trade of migratory birds passing through Cyprus. During the Camps our volunteers monitor bird trapping activity in the field and report active trapping sites to the competent authorities for immediate intervention.

This winter, the third successive Winter Camp was organised by CABS and SPA in Cyprus. It was done in two parts: the first part ran between 15th – 18th December 2016 and the main part ran between 12th January – 12th February 2017.

2 WORKING METHODS

A total of 27 people from Cyprus, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Great Britain, Hungary, Slovenia and Austria participated in the Camp. Participants monitored known trapping areas within Famagusta District, Larnaca District and the UK ESBA (Picture 1).



Picture 1: Areas monitored during Winter 2016 – 2017 Bird Protection Camp.

They searched for active trapping sites and reported them to enforcement agencies for immediate action against trapping. Trapping sites considered to be active were those with set traps (either limesticks or mist nets). Also trapping sites with no traps but with signs of recent trapping activity were counted as active. Feathers on the ground at trapping locations or pieces of glue on branches indicate that a location was recently active.

3 RESULTS OF THE BIRD PROTECTION CAMP

3.1 TRAPPING ACTIVITY

This winter we organised the longest ever Winter Camp, lasting for 35 days in total and with the highest number of participants, which was 27 in total. The long duration of the Camp allowed us to cover a long period of the winter trapping season and with the high number of participants we could conduct extensive field investigations of the monitored areas.

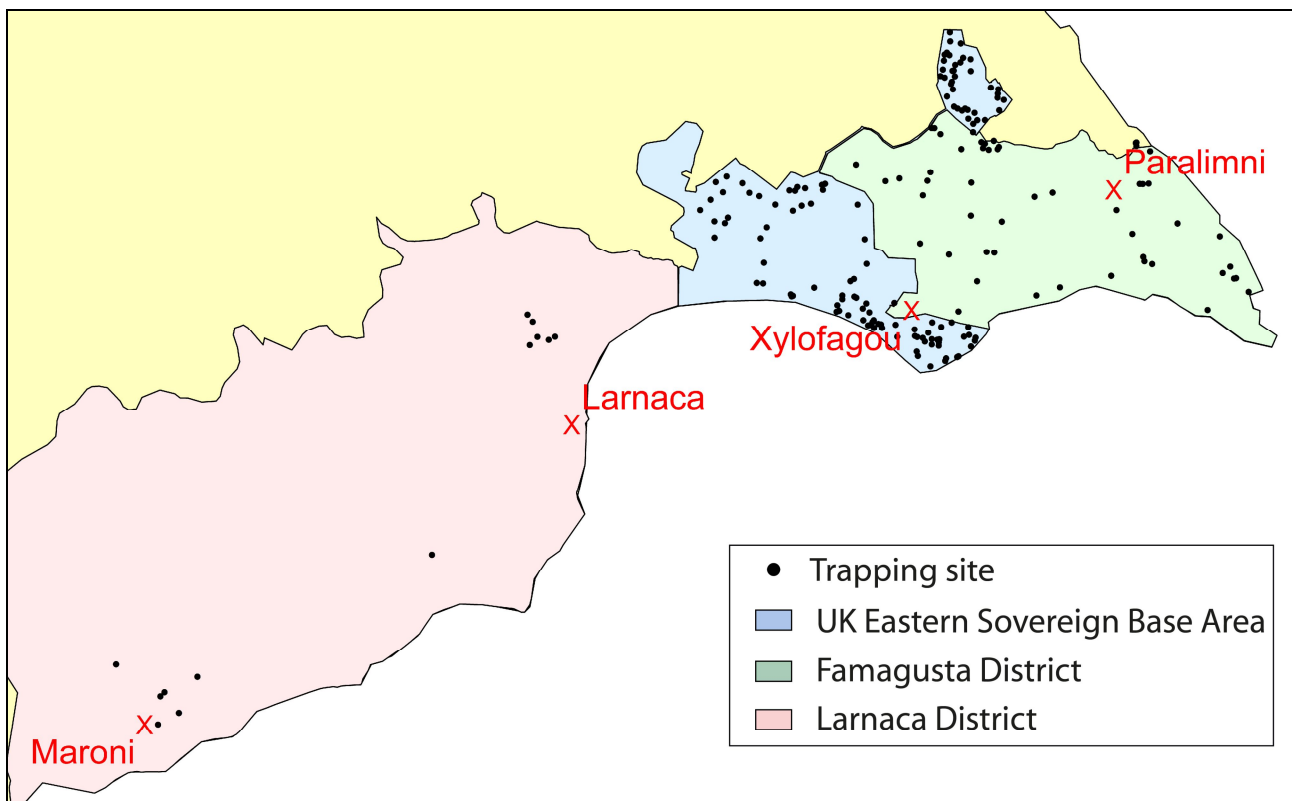
Our teams checked 223 trapping sites during the Winter Camp. Of the 223 sites checked, 186 sites were found active, either with set traps or with signs of recent trapping, such as feathers on the ground (Table 1). Significantly, the density of active trapping sites found in the ESBA (0.96 active sites/km²) was 16 times higher than in the Republic of Cyprus (0.06 active sites/km²) (Table 2).

Table 1: Results of monitoring trapping activity during Winter 2016 – 2017 Bird Protection Camp. ROC = Republic of Cyprus; ESBA = Eastern Sovereign Base Area.

	ROC	ESBA	All
No. of sites checked	95	133	223
No. of active trapping sites found	61	125	186

Table 2: Density of active trapping sites found this autumn per jurisdiction. ROC = Republic of Cyprus; ESBA = Eastern Sovereign Base Area.

	ROC	ESBA
No. of active trapping sites found	61	125
Size of the area (km ²)	1044.2	131.0
Density of active trapping sites (sites per km ²)	0.06	0.95



Picture 2: Distribution of active trapping sites found during Winter 2016 – 2017 Bird Protection Camp.

Table 3: Trapping activity over the duration of the Winter Bird Protection Camp.

	15 th – 18 th December	13 th – 15 th January ¹	16 th – 22 th January	23 th – 29 th January	30 th – 5 th February	6 th – 12 th February
No. of active sites found	12	115	41	19	31	28
No. of teams	1	8	2	2	2	2
No. of trapping sites of found per team per day	3	4.8	3	1.4	2.2	1.8

¹From 13th – 15th January we organised a special operation called the Long Night Raid with large number of volunteers. The aim was to investigate trapping activity in the Eastern Sovereign Base Area and to dismantle traps from active sites.

Table 4: Comparison of trapping activity of Committee Against Bird Slaughter and Foundation Pro Biodiversity Winter Bird Protection Camps.

Winter Bird Protection Camp	2014 – 2015	2015 – 2016	2016 – 2017
Duration of Bird Protection Camp (days)	10	22	35
No. of active trapping sites found	44	92	186
No. of active sites found per day of the Camp	4.4	4.2	5.3

3.2 TRAPPING PARAPHERNALIA

During the Winter Camp CABS and SPA members investigated 167 of 186 known active trapping sites. Altogether, 550 nets and 901 limesticks were observed in them. CABS and SPA members and enforcement officers removed 523 nets and 901 limesticks. Sound lures were used to attract birds at 143 investigated sites (Table 5).

The number of seized nets was the highest out of all CABS and SPA Bird Protection Camps. The previous highest number was 222 mist nets, seized during the Winter 2015 – 2016 Bird Protection Camp.

Table 5: Trapping paraphernalia found during Winter 2016 – 2017 Bird Protection Camp.

No. of active sites found	186
No. of investigated active sites	167
No. of sites with set limesticks	14
No. of sites with set nets	148
No. of sites with both limesticks and nets	4
No. of sites with decoys	143
No. of found limesticks	901
No. of seized limesticks	901
Average number of limesticks used per site	50.1
No. of found nets	550
No. of seized nets	523
Average number of nets used per site	3.6

Table 6: Seized nets during Bird Protection Camps in 2015 and 2016.

Bird Protection Camp	Spring 2015	Autumn 2015	Winter 2015 – 2016	Spring 2016	Autumn 2016	Winter 2016 – 2017
Seized nets	25	163	222	50	180	523

Table 7: Comparison of the results of Committee Against Bird Slaughter and Foundation Pro Biodiversity Winter Bird Protection Camps.

Winter Bird Protection Camp	2014 – 2015	2015 – 2016	2016 – 2017
Duration of Camp	10	22	35
No. of limesticks found	0	451	901
No. of mist nets found	151	222	550

3.3 BIRDS FOUND IN TRAPS AND IN THE POSSESSION OF TRAPPERS

In total, 651 birds belonging to 10 different species were rescued from traps this winter. A further 94 birds were found dead in traps and 145 killed birds were found during police investigations (Table 8).

Table 8: Bird species found during Winter 2016 – 2017 Bird Protection Camp.

	No. of rescued birds	No. of dead birds found in traps	No. of dead birds found in possession of trappers
Song thrush (<i>Turdus philomelos</i>)	570	17	
Blackcap (<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>)	23	5	
Blackbird (<i>Turdus merula</i>)	6	1	
Robin (<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>)	5	9	
Chaffinch (<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>)	2	3	
Redwing (<i>Turdus iliacus</i>)	2	0	
Long-Eared Owl (<i>Asio otus</i>)	2	0	
House sparrow (<i>Passer domesticus</i>)	1	6	
Scops Owl (<i>Otus scops</i>)	1	0	
Stunne curlew (<i>Burhinus oedicephalus</i>)	1	0	
Others	0	15	
Unidentified	38	38	145
Total	651	94	145

4 RESULTS OF COOPERATION WITH ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

We cooperated with the Anti-Poaching Squad (APS) from the Republic of Cyprus Police; Anti-Poaching Unit (APU) and on-duty police units from Sovereign Base Areas (SBA) Police; and with game wardens from the Game and Fauna Service. Altogether we reported 30 active trapping sites to them. Most of them were investigated within a few hours after being reported by our teams and altogether 17 prosecutions were made (Table 9).

Table 9: Overall results of cooperation with enforcement agencies during Winter 2016 – 2017 Bird Protection Camp. APS = Anti-Poaching Squad; APU = Anti-Poaching Unit; SBA = Sovereign Base Areas.

	APS	APU & SBA Police	Game and Fauna Service	Total
No. of cases reported by our teams	12	15	3	30
No. of investigated cases	11	15	3	29
No. of seized mist nets	39	68	7	114
No. of seized limesticks	253	41	0	294
No. of prosecutions	9	5	3	17

Table 10: Comparison of enforcement results of all Committee Against Bird Slaughter and Foundation Pro Biodiversity Winter Bird Protection Camps.

Bird Protection Camp	2014 – 2015	2015 – 2016	2016 – 2017
Duration of Camp	10	22	35
No. of reported cases	24	60	30
No. of investigated cases	16	46	29
No. of prosecutions	3	5	17

Table 11: Detailed results of the joint Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS), Foundation Pro Biodiversity (SPA) and Anti-Poaching Squad (APS) police operations during Winter 2016 – 2017 Bird Protection Camp.

Monitoring of trapping sites	
No. of days working together with APS	8
No. of active trapping sites reported by CABS & SPA members	12
No. of active trapping sites visited by APS	11
No. of sites with prosecution of trappers	9
No. of sites with confiscation of trapping paraphernalia only	2
No. of sites where nothing was found by APS	0
No. of sites without investigation	1

No. of cases with investigation inside reported houses	4
Seized trapping paraphernalia	
Limesticks	253
Mist nets	39
Electronic bird callers	14

Table 12: Detailed results of the joint Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS), Foundation Pro Biodiversity (SPA) and Sovereign Base Areas (SBA) police operations during Winter 2016 – 2017 Bird Protection Camps.

Monitoring of trapping sites	
No. of days working together with the APU & SBA Police	13
No. of active trapping sites reported by CABS/SPA teams	15
No. of active trapping sites visited by APU	15
No. of sites with prosecution of trappers	5
No. of sites with confiscation of trapping paraphernalia only	10
No. of sites where nothing was found by the APU	0
No. of sites without investigation	0
No. of cases with investigation inside reported houses	2
Seized trapping paraphernalia	
Limesticks	41
Mist nets	68
Electronic bird callers	15

Table 13: Detailed results of Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS), Foundation Pro Biodiversity (SPA) and game wardens investigations during Winter 2016 Bird Protection Camp.

Monitoring of trapping sites	
No. of active trapping sites reported by CABS/SPA teams	3
No. of trapping sites visited by game wardens	3
No. of sites with prosecution of trappers	3
No. of sites with confiscation of trapping paraphernalia only	0
No. of sites where no action was taken	0
No. of cases with investigation inside reported houses	0
Seized trapping paraphernalia	
Limesticks	0
Mist nets	7
Electronic bird callers	0

5 DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 REACTIVATION OF TRAPPING SITES WITH PREVIOUS PROSECUTIONS

During field investigations we regularly found trapping activity at sites where trappers were caught and prosecuted in the past. This winter we visited 35 trapping sites with previous prosecutions and 29 of them were active again. Reactivation rates were higher in the ESBA, where all checked sites with previous prosecutions were found active (Table 14).

Table 14: Activity of the trapping sites with previous prosecutions checked during Winter 2016 – 2017 Bird Protection Camp. ROC = Republic of Cyprus; ESBA = Eastern Sovereign Base Area.

	ESBA	ROC	All
No. of sites with previous prosecutions checked	9	26	35
No. of reactivated prosecuted sites	9	20	29
Percentage of reactivated prosecuted sites	100.0	76.9	82.9

Table 15: Comparison of reactivation of previously prosecuted sites at Winter Bird Protection Camps.

Winter Bird Protection Camp	2014 – 2015	2015 – 2016	2016 – 2017
No. of sites with previous prosecutions checked	20	20	35
No. of reactivated prosecuted sites	14	15	29
Percentage of reactivated prosecuted sites	70.0	75.0	82.9

6 CONCLUSIONS

The levels of illegal bird trapping during winter 2016 – 2017 in Cyprus were massive, much like in autumn 2016. Field investigations revealed 186 trapping sites with 550 set nets. Constraints on time and the limited number of volunteers restricted investigations to a relatively small area. Therefore we can reason that there were, in fact, thousands of nets illegally catching song thrushes and other birds across the whole of Cyprus this winter. Trapping remains out of control and the massive slaughter of protected wild birds in Cyprus continues. The authorities of the Republic of Cyprus and UK SBAs once again proved their inability to stop it and to implement the EU Birds Directive.

This was particularly obvious in the ESBA, where we discovered a 16 times higher density of active trapping sites compared with the Republic of Cyprus. Although the SBA administration emphasises that the countering of bird trapping is their priority, the situation we observed in the field was to the contrary. In the beginning of the Camp, when we prepared a big operation against illegal bird trapping, we found and removed 274 nets from the ESBA in just two nights.

The scale and the audacity of trapping in the ESBA were overwhelming: the use of loud sound callers and huge sized set nets in the ESBA is ubiquitous. This result comes as no surprise since once again law enforcement was extremely lacking in the ESBA during the winter trapping season. According to official statistics, only 3 people were arrested in November 2016 for mistnetting (plus one reported), whereas in December 2016 and January 2017 only one offender was arrested in each month (plus 2 reported in January). In February 2017, 5 people were arrested, although this was only following CABS reports, showing that no proactive law enforcement action was taken by the police using their own initiative.

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