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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee
23rd meeting

Strasbourg, 1-4 December 2003

Specific File

**Illegal Killing and Trapping of Birds
in Cyprus**

**Report by the Governments
(Cyprus and United Kingdom)**

*Secretariat Memorandum
Prepared by
the Directorate of Culture and Natural and Cultural Heritage*

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REPUBLIC



OF CYPRUS

Update Report on Illegal killing and trading of birds in Cyprus.

13th November 2003,
Ministry of Interior, Republic of Cyprus

I. Introduction

This case refers to the effective enforcement of laws in Cyprus prohibiting the capture, taking and sale of small protected bird species. The enforcement refers both to the area controlled by the Republic of Cyprus as well as the area controlled by the British Sovereign Areas.

II. Historical background of the case

The Bern Convention Committee discussed the issue of illegal capturing and selling of birds back in 1986 and adopted Recommendation No. 5 which spoke for the prosecution of persons that are illegally capturing and selling protected species in all the Parties. In 2001 a number of NGOs claimed to the Committee that the capturing, killing and selling of protected species in restaurants was very widespread in Cyprus. The Secretariat brought the subject to the Committee two years ago for discussion.

In 2001 the Standing Committee for the Convention of European Wildlife and Natural Resources decided to adopt recommendation (No. 90) on the catching, killing and trading of protected birds in Cyprus and not to open a file in view of the measures to taken as assured by the representatives of the Republic of Cyprus. This Recommendation urged the representative of the Governments of Cyprus to take all necessary and administrative measures to eradicate this phenomenon. The Recommendation in particular spoke for:

- Increasing of wardening of areas,
- Frequent control of restaurants,
- Strict control of illegal capturing,
- Prosecution for these offenses, and
- Launching of a wide information campaign to the general public on the illegal capturing and trade of protected species and the need to emphasize their conservation.

In year 2002 the Republic of Cyprus has been very determined to put an end to these illegal activities. During the visit of the Head of the Natural Heritage and biological Diversity Division of the Council of Europe in Cyprus in 2002 the Minister of Interior reaffirmed the willingness and political will of the Government to fully enforce relevant legislation. During the migration period game wardens of the Game Fund Service conducted anti-poaching campaigns all over the island and especially at the areas where traditionally trapping was a common activity. This resulted in 130 cases involved with illegal trapping to be reported. There were also various inspections in restaurants and 25 cases have been reported. The Government of Cyprus also has been cooperating with the SBAs and working closely in joint patrols as well as with the Birdlife International representatives which visited Cyprus for two months in order to inspect enforcement of the legislation.

During the examination of the file in 2002 there was a general consensus that important steps have been taken to the right direction and most Delegates of the Bern Convention Committee were satisfied with the achieved progress, regarding this file, but they expressed the opinion that the

fighting of illegal activities should continue. The NGOs congratulated the government of Cyprus for the progress made, but noted that much more work needs to be done, especially in the sale of birds in restaurants. NGOs and the Standing Committee wished to keep the subject in the agenda for next year so that to follow developments until these practices are eradicated.

III. Progress developments during 2003:

During 2003 the following actions are reported:

- a) In June 2003 the Council of Ministers reaffirmed its determination and decided to fully implement all international obligations of the Republic as well as to continue the cooperation with the Birdlife International representatives for this matter.
- b) The new Minister of Interior made several public statements expressing the willingness and determination of the Government to enforce the legislation on the illegal trapping and sale of protected bird species.
- c) The Game Fund Service continued anti-poaching patrols in sensitive areas as well as restaurants. Until 2.11.2003 a total of 184 cases of poaching have been reported, out of which 73 involved illegal trapping, netting or use of radio devices. These reportings show a decrease compared to 2002 (130 involved trapping and netting).
- d) A number of campaigns have occurred by the Game Fund in cooperation with the Cyprus Police in restaurants where sale of protected bird species was common. Only in about 10 cases illegal sale of protected species was reported. During inspections in restaurants about 1.000 birds have been confiscated.
- e) The staff of the Game Fund Service have also been cooperating with the Birdlife International representatives who visited Cyprus for the second year in migration period in order to inspect the enforcement of relevant legislation. Cooperation was achieved on a daily basis and all assistance asked was provided.
- f) A number of lectures occurred by members of the Game Fund Service in sensitive areas so as to persuade people to fully stop this illegal activity. Also announcements on the radio and articles appeared in daily newspapers urged the need to fully comply with the existing legislation.
- g) In September 2003 the new legislation for the Protection and Management of Wild Birds and Game Species 152 (I)/ 2003 was passed by the Cyprus Parliament. This legislation introduces a number of new elements making prosecution easier. The legislation also allows for strict fines for offenders and automatic confiscation of all equipment used in poaching and illegal activities.

Overall, it can be stated that trapping and the illegal sale of protected species have been reduced even more this year, as a result of the continuous effort of the Government and all steps mentioned above. The reduction of trapping activities can also be reflected on the attached sheet with the reduced trapping activities reported as seen on the last three consecutive years.

The Government of Cyprus follows Recommendation No. 90 (2001) on the catching, killing or trading of protected birds in Cyprus and takes an active step on all recommendations of the Standing Committee. The Government is determined to continue its efforts til these activities stop fully.

**Poaching and illegal trapping cases reported by the Game Fund Service (Ministry of Interior)
in Cyprus for the years 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003**

A/A	Year	District	Total poaching cases	Cases involved with illegal trapping, netting, liming or use of radio devices
1	2000	Nicosia	52	16
2		Lemessos	50	7
3		Larnaca	62	25
4		Ammochostos	18	15
5		Paphos	59	13
		TOTAL	241	76
1	2001	Nicosia	52	9
2		Lemessos	57	10
3		Larnaca	97	53
4		Ammochostos	50	46
5		Paphos	70	14
		TOTAL	326	132
1	2002	Nicosia	79	36
2		Lemessos	67	10
3		Larnaca	93	50
4		Ammochostos	33	24
5		Paphos	77	10
		TOTAL	349	130
1	2003 until 2/11/2003	Nicosia	27	6
2		Lemessos	18	4
3		Larnaca	64	34
4		Ammochostos	40	28
5		Paphos	35	1
		TOTAL	184	73

BERN CONVENTION – ILLEGAL KILLING AND TRADING OF BIRDS
IN CYPRUS

Report by the UK Government

1. Further to the report put to the Bern Convention Standing Committee last year, the Sovereign Base Areas Administration (SBAA) continues to take vigorous measures against the illegal mist-netting and lime-sticking of birds – with considerable success. Although we accept the assertion by BirdLife International that such activity continues to take place in Cyprus, we would argue that, as a result of the efforts of both the SBAA and the Republic of Cyprus, this is on a vastly reduced scale than 2-3 years ago.
2. The focus of the SBAA effort continues to be against mist-netters in the Eastern Sovereign Base Area (ESBA). Since the last meeting in December 2002, the SBA Police have seized over 180 mist-nets, 362 limesticks and 3,680 metres of wires and cables in the ESBA (significantly, none of the limesticks were of the ‘high-tech’ variety). The peak month for activity was October when 76 nets and 143 limesticks were taken by police carrying out their daily patrols. The SBA Police have also arrested 25 trappers and confiscated 7 shotguns during the same period. These figures show a significant increase over the figures reported last year against all these criteria. It should also be noted that a further 2 limesticks were seized and 4 arrests made in the Western Sovereign Base Area (WSBA) which would appear indicate a high degree of compliance with the law in that area.
3. All the measures to counter mist-netting reported last year continue to be pursued. This year’s autumn/winter anti-netting campaign was mounted once again in co-operation with the RoC authorities, particularly the Game Warden Service of the Republic of Cyprus and the Cyprus Police. The policy framework for our activity continues to be one of seeking to reduce demand by informing, educating and influencing the public with respect to this matter. A key element of this public awareness campaign has been the continued distribution throughout the ESBA of posters and leaflets signalling the SBAA's intention robustly to enforce its anti-poaching policy. The matter has also been raised in public meetings and in our regular discussions with the local authorities. In addition, the SBA Police and Game Warden Service recently held a joint press conference as another means of getting across these key messages. This received wide media coverage throughout Cyprus. The sale of birds in restaurants has never been a major problem in the ESBA given the relatively small number of restaurants located there. Despite this, we continue to carry-out regular checks to ensure that such activity is not taking place.
4. We have co-operated fully with BirdLife International over the past year, both practically and by providing detailed statistics. The two resident field inspectors have indicated that they are happy with the measures the SBAA are taking to combat this problem. More recently, we hosted a visit from Mr Richard Brunstrom, the Chief Constable of North Wales Constabulary and Co-Chair of the UK Partnership Against Wildlife Crime who was highly complimentary of our efforts in this and other areas. As a further indication of the seriousness with which we are treating this issue and wildlife matters more generally, the SBA Police’s two Wildlife Officers (one from each Division) attended the UK Police Wildlife Liaison Officers' Conference in October this year. They will now attend on an annual basis. The Divisional Police Commander for the ESBA will make a keynote speech at the Conference next year.
5. We firmly believe that the message is getting through to both the poachers and to the general public that the illegal trapping of birds in the SBAs will not be tolerated and that the law will be enforced robustly by the SBA Police. However, although the statistics would appear to indicate that this policy is having significant deterrent effect, we assess that the customs and practices are so deeply entrenched in Cyprus that it could be many years before they are eradicated entirely. Despite this, the SBAA will continue to work closely with the RoC authorities to ensure this activity is further reduced, and ultimately stopped altogether. There are already regular co-ordination meetings between key

stakeholders on both sides, but we would be happy to work with the RoC in developing a long-term action plan. In the meantime, as a further measure of deterrence, we also plan to introduce new legislation within the next year which will mirror the RoC's Game and Wildfowl Management and Protection Act. This will allow the SBAA authorities to impose even harsher sentences on those involved in the illegal killing and trading of birds – although it should be noted that the SBA Courts are already imposing harsher fines than 2-3 years ago.