

# More than two million migratory birds killed in Cyprus

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The survey by Birdlife Cyprus was carried out in the key season between

September and October and estimates the number of [birds](#) indiscriminately trapped in nets or with limesticks.

The group said its surveillance showed "a dramatic situation of this [illegal activity](#) sadly taking place," with the number of mist nets used almost doubling in 2014 from the year before.

It found some 16 kilometres (10 miles) of net supports active during [autumn](#) and more than 6,000 limesticks were reported from enforcement agencies and other non-governmental organisations.

Limesticks are twigs covered in a sticky substance that instantly trap birds that alight onto them, leaving them to dangle helplessly.

"With these trapping levels for autumn 2014, BirdLife Cyprus estimated that over two million birds could have been killed across the whole of Cyprus," said Birdlife, the most since it began monitoring the activity 13 years ago.

Such methods are used to catch blackcaps and song thrushes, much sought after delicacies that fetch up to 80 euros (\$86) for a dozen at Cypriot restaurants.

The Game and Fauna Service, in charge of the fight against poaching in Cyprus, says the [illegal trade](#) is worth about 15 million euros a year.



An estimated 60 species are listed as threatened or in need of protection are snared in illegal Cypriot traps

### **'Out of control'**

Birdlife said the figures showed illegal trappings were now "out of control" and that more needed to be done by the authorities in Cyprus, including the British military at bases on the island.

A clampdown on restaurants was needed to prevent Cyprus revisiting the 1990s when up to 10 million birds were estimated to have been killed.

Autumn is the peak season for bird trapping with an estimated 3,000-4,000 poachers involved. The numbers for spring are lower because the birds are less plump.

Birdlife Cyprus chief Claire Papazoglou said poaching was a "serious,

persistent and growing problem" in "what has been the worst year with the highest trapping levels since the start of the monitoring programme in 2002".

Tim Stowe of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds called for zero-tolerance by the British military.

"The report highlights the illegal trapping of songbirds on the British military base has escalated and we are urging the Ministry of Defence... to resolve it before this autumn's migration," said Stowe.

A huge crackdown on trappers and restaurants was enforced before Cyprus joined the European Union in 2004, but now conservationists say the government lacks the political will to eradicate the trade.

Birdlife has also called for tougher sentencing available to the courts to be enforced while pinpointing a need to change attitudes towards killing and eating [migratory birds](#).

The law provides for penalties of up to three years in jail and fines as high as 17,000 euros but these are rarely imposed.

During winter, millions of birds take refuge in Cyprus from colder northern climates.

An estimated 60 species are listed as threatened or in need of protection are snared in illegal Cypriot traps.

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