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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE  
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**- METHODOLOGY DOCUMENT TO IDENTIFY  
BLACK-SPOTS OF ILLEGAL KILLING OF BIRDS –**

**- Final -**

*Document prepared by  
BirdLife International on behalf of the Bern Convention*

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>Methodology document to identify black-spots of illegal killing, trapping and trade of wild birds .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Appendix I - Report on different illegal activities and methods .....</b>	<b>5</b>

## **METHODOLOGY DOCUMENT TO IDENTIFY BLACK-SPOTS OF ILLEGAL KILLING, TRAPPING AND TRADE OF WILD BIRDS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

At the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Bern Convention's Group of Experts on the conservation of wild birds (30 June 2013, Tunis, Tunisia), Contracting Parties to the Convention agreed on the need to work towards the identification of black-spots of illegal killing, trapping, and trade of wild birds

This has been further highlighted in the Tunis Action Plan 2013-2020 for the eradication of illegal killing, trapping and trade of wild birds, adopted by the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention through [Recommendation No. 164 \(2013\)](#).

Tackling wild-bird crime is a long-term process and involves many stakeholders which have to be identified in the preparation phase of national action plans. Structures have to be in place to exchange information and allow specific actions to improve the situation at identified black-spots. The identification of black-spots will also facilitate the process towards the setting-up of national priorities to tackle wild-bird crime.

Appendix I to this document contains a report on different illegal activities and methods.

### **ELEMENTS TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT FOR THE PREPARATION OF ACTION PLANS ON BLACK-SPOTS**

The identification of black-spots of wild-bird crimes has proved to be extremely useful for efficiently tackling the most severe cases of wildlife crime and to make sure that the surveillance and enforcement chain are based on cost-effective interventions.

An action plan on black spots should include the following steps:

- Identification/location of the black-spots at local (internally to the country), national and, if possible, regional levels.
- Carrying out of a diagnosis, i.e. the process of studying what the problems are, the contributing factors and the deficiencies for each of the identified black-spots.
- Designing suitable countermeasures: carrying out a methodical analysis to design suitable countermeasures for each black-spot, based on actual problems and deficiencies.
- Monitoring the effects of the countermeasures, including the effects of law enforcement (and, if necessary, others such as the effects of communication and awareness initiatives) and costs of implementation of adequate countermeasures.
- Setting priorities for countermeasures: prioritising implies finding the best action plan (or investment program), according to some defined criteria, and based on estimated effects and costs as well as budget restrictions.
- Implementation: this is the actual realisation of the prioritised measures included in the action plan.
- Follow up and assessment of the results with particular attention to cost-effectiveness (i.e. comparing effects and costs).
- Preparing a "black-spot manual" which includes all these steps.

There are a number of elements that determine if an area is a black-spot of wild-bird crime on national and international levels. Because wild-bird crime is illegal, it is not straight forward to collect correct information on the exact size, severity and location of the issue.

#### Proposed actions:

- Collate all available information on wild-bird crime from all relevant reports in order to identify black-spots. This involves creating a national database or using existing international databases and producing hazard maps.

- By superimposing flyway data and information on illegal activity, the level of impact of wild-bird crime on particular species can be described.
- Compare the number of individuals of different species with national and regional population estimates for the species.
- Identify which specific cultural activities, and other drivers and/or organised crime are responsible for wild-bird crime black-spots in the country or region.
- Compare data on the number of incidents of wild-bird crime and species involved with other regions and countries.

## Appendix I

### REPORT ON DIFFERENT ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES AND METHODS

The list of known activities and methods of illegal killing, trapping and trade of birds is derived from national and international reports of enforcement authorities and NGOs. This list can serve as the basis of a database for use by enforcement authorities to exchange best practices to tackle activities and report on the different types.

#### 1. NEST COLLECTION OF EGGS OR YOUNG

- *Egg taking for collection*: collectors build large collections of clutches of different species and trade with one another. Eggs of rare birds as well as those of common birds are collected.  
*Detection*: collectors will exchange information with other collectors.
- *Egg or young collection for breeding*: collectors take eggs from nests or take young out of the nest before fledging. Many species are difficult to breed in captivity and taking eggs or young from nests in the wild overcome this problem. These young can be fitted with closed foot rings.  
*Detection*: the absence of breeding parent birds is a potential indication of a wild-bird crime.

#### 2. KILLING

- *Illegal use of firearms*: protected species are killed for predator control, food and/or taxidermy collections.  
*Detection*: dead birds of prey should be checked for shooting as standard procedure.
- *Lime-sticks*: Lime-sticks are twigs about 50-70cm long that are streaked with a sticky type of glue. In Cyprus, it is made by boiling up the fruit of the Syrian plum-tree. These sticks are placed in open areas or gardens in bushes, or sometimes inserted into the ends of bamboo poles, to provide perches for birds. Any bird landing on a lime-stick gets stuck.  
*Detection*: lime-sticks are often used in open areas near bushes and are visible to a trained eye.
- *Poisoned baits*: a poisoned bait may take the form of a bird or animal carcass or piece of meat which has been sprinkled or injected with poison. Sometimes eggs are injected with poison, often discolouring the contents of the egg.  
*Detection*: many poisons are fast acting so the victims are often found close to the baits. Dogs can be trained to find poisoned baits. Dead birds of prey should be checked for poisoning as standard procedure.
- *Snares*: Snares are anchored cables, wire nooses or made from horse hair set to catch wild birds. Snares are one of the simplest traps and most often used to kill the bird.  
*Detection*: the snares are often placed along a track used by the perpetrators.
- *Deadfall (stone) trap*: A deadfall is a heavy rock or wooden log that is tilted on an angle and held up with sections sticks. One of the sticks serves as a trigger.  
*Detection*: the deadfalls are often placed along a track used by the perpetrators

#### 3. TRADE & TRANSPORT

- *Birds of prey and waterbirds*: birds of prey and waterbirds are of particular interest to some bird keepers. Since they are in general difficult to breed in captivity there is a significant illegal trade of these species.  
*Detection*: illegal traders will try to cheat with closed foot rings or falsified documents.
- *Cagebirds*: popular cagebirds like finches are relatively easy to catch and are kept in captivity in large numbers.  
*Detection*: illegal traders will try to cheat with closed foot rings.
- *Collections (trophy)*: taxidermy collectors will try to obtain birds from as many species as possible, preferably collected by themselves. To obtain certain species they might visit other countries.  
*Detection*: skins or stuffed birds are often shipped separate from the perpetrator. Scanning of legal hunting trophies and statues of birds can reveal smuggling of protected species.

- *Dead birds for food:* protected species are traded to countries like Italy where there is a high demand for wild birds as food.  
*Detection:* shipments of shot or trapped birds are often big and occur mainly during the autumn migration season.

#### 4. TRAPPING

- *Bal-chatri traps:* these are traps designed to catch birds of prey or shrikes. The cage is constructed using mesh wire with nylon nooses on top. Inside the cage, a visible live rodent, small bird or pigeon is placed as bait. The bird of prey that attacks the bait will be snared by its legs.  
*Drivers:* the bird of prey is captured alive by using the Bal-chatri trap and is a popular method for trapping birds of prey in especially open areas, where the bait is easily visible.  
*Detection:* can be thrown out of a car when a bird of prey is spotted.
- *Cages:* There is a large number of cage types being used. Several of these cages are used with a decoy bird to attract individuals of the same species; a compartment next to the decoy is used to trap the birds. The size of the traps can vary from 30 cm to 2-3 meter. Larsen traps are one of the popular types of cages.  
*Detection:* the decoy bird is often easily visible; cages are often used at the same location which means tracks can be seen.
- *Mist net:* mist nets are typically made of nylon mesh suspended between two poles. The grid size of the mesh netting varies according to the size of the species targeted for capture. Net dimensions are approximately 1–4 m high by 6–15 m long.  
*Drivers:* mist nets allow the bird to be captured alive to be kept in captivity, if it is the intention to keep the bird alive the trapper controls the nets often (at least every hour). If birds are trapped for consumption they might be left in the nets to die and are controlled maybe once a day.  
*Detection:* the poles of mist nets are often visible, the trapper needs to clear the vegetation for at least 1-1.5 m where the net is placed, this opening in the vegetation is often visible, foot paths to the nets are frequently used.
- *Tape-luring:* With a type of recorder/ipod the song of a species or a mixture of several species is played in a continuous loop. Tape-luring is often used in studies of bird migration, and the technique can strongly augment the total number of birds captured. Tape-luring can increase the capture probability of birds already at site and attracting birds that normally would have overflowed the site. Not all species react in autumn on tape-luring, but especially Blackcaps (*Sylvia atricapilla*) are known to be strongly attracted by the played song.  
*Detection:* the monotonous continuous loop of songs can be picked up during control rounds. Larger recorders need battery power or electricity so might be better visible.