



Massacres of Bee-eaters on Cyprus 2017

*25 years of protecting migratory birds
on Cyprus*

Hunting of Bee-eaters on Cyprus

In September of 2017, the shooting of hundreds of migrating Bee-eaters was observed from the east to west of the island – from Paralimni to Paphos. In addition to the use of electronic decoys to lure Common Quail, their use to lure Bee-eaters has now also become a matter of course. These birds are nowadays also taken for food as, when they are plucked and head and tail removed, they can scarcely be told apart from a thrush. The greatest problem is that this protected bird species is not trapped on limesticks or in nets, but shot. Following an unsuccessful application by the government of the Republic of Cyprus for a derogation to shoot Blackcaps, in September of this year the increase in the use of electronic decoys for the species is audibly manifest.

We appeal to those responsible in the EU and the Bern Convention to give their immediate attention to this development, as the mass shooting of Bee-eaters in September has been taking place for years. At a single hunting site we found 2,000 empty shotgun cartridges. The hunters have clearly become attracted to this illegal activity since 2013. The shooting of Blackcaps is a new phenomenon, marking a trend away from illegal trapping with limesticks and nets to illegal shooting. This development is very dangerous, as it indicates an attempt is being made to substitute the sharp decline in illegal trapping on the south-east coast of the island with illegal shooting.

One example of the mass shooting of Bee-eaters is the hunting area close to the Panagia church in Protaras - Paralimni. Local residents have protested strongly against this.

The shooting near the Panagia church of Protaras is very disturbing for residents. Shotgun pellets rain down in their gardens and the residents suffer night and day from the loud noise of the illegal decoys, which transmit at high volume. Shooting begins at dawn, or even earlier, depriving local residents of their sleep.

In 2013, bee-hives were positioned at the Panagia hunting site to attract the protected Bee-eaters and vast numbers of them were subsequently shot.

The route from Panagia church up to Agioi Ioannis and Agia Saranta Tourists is part of the E4 Cyprus footpath network (No. 9), used frequently by tourists and pilgrims. The hunters in the Panagia hunting area however, block the footpath with their activities. They shoot across it, and lie in ambush all around the footpath to shoot the birds from hides. Masses of Bee-eaters were killed in this area in September of this year.

The hunters consider themselves to be the masters of the area, and do not permit observation of their illegal activities. They have reacted with violence against people entering the area (police case pending).

The Panagia hunting area lies on the important international migration flyway from Europe to Africa (over Cape Greco). Hundreds of migratory birds can therefore be observed roosting at night in bushes, or on passage through the area. In September 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017, enormous numbers of Bee-eaters on passage were shot and killed by hunters in the Panagia area.

The EU Birds Directive protects migratory birds in areas such as the Panagia buffer zone area, close to the Cape Greco Natura 2000 SPA. Cape Greco is considered to be a migration bottleneck, an area of great importance for migratory birds.

“ The EU Birds Directive includes under its Article 4 for the protection of species habitats and for the avoidance of disturbance of all birds, which apply also outside SPAs (Cape Greco). Those provisions should therefore enable adequate protection of important bird populations, especially migratory, in the broader area, as part of its overall management.” This is also Cyprus law.

The following maps of the document 1-9 show the Panagia area and the Bee-eater shooting activities of the hunters.

The responsible European authorities must intervene and prevent the killing of wild birds throughout the Republic of Cyprus.





















People have forgotten how to deal with sentient living things, with the vast society of living beings in and from which we are living.

Konrad Lorenz , Modern behavioural ethologist and Nobel Price winner 1973



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