



## **Report of the Weekend Field Trip to Karpaz October 10th, 11th and 12th 2008 re Illegal Trapping.**

“Pulya” is a local delicacy and has been for at least 400 years in Cyprus. Plucked blackcaps and song thrushes are first blanched and then pickled, either for personal use or for sale. Bannerman and Bannerman (1958) note the sale of 1200 ‘jarres’ of ‘beccaficoes’ being sent to Venice in the year 1553.

However, currently, the trapping of birds using lime sticks or mist nets is illegal all over Cyprus.

On Friday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2008, a group of 16 individuals met at the Arch House in Dipkarpaz in preparation for a weekend of investigating the occurrence of illegal trapping of birds in the area. Nine students from METU NCC; Can Uygur, Ercan Karatay, Barış Erbil, Tolga Kırca, Erdi Somuncuoğlu, Ayten Kara, Doğuş Kozal, Yeşim Kardeş, Muhacir Özmen, members of NCC Conservation and Kuşkor, as well as representatives of NABU, Kuşkor, the European University of Lefke and BirdLife Cyprus were present. Before dinner a presentation on the illegal trapping of birds in the south was given by Martin Hellicar of BirdLife Cyprus, and given the size of the group it was decided to split into two and explore different parts of the Karpaz peninsula for signs of illegal trapping.

### **Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> October**

The group divided into two and one half went to the cell phone masts close to Apostolos Andreas, and this group split again into two, with each new group looking for lime sticks and nets in the brush.

The other half of the main group went to start its investigation in Buyukonuk, nearer to Bogaz and Iskele. One student, through injury, stayed in the village of Dipkarpaz itself to make his investigation.

The groups investigating near Apostolos Andreas proved unsuccessful in finding any evidence of illegal trapping.

The group that began in Buyukonuk found substantial evidence of illegal trapping activities in this village. Lime sticks were being produced and a villager had only recently been arrested, with his partner for illegally trapping birds with mist nets. This group then went on to Yedikonuk, where again the manufacture of lime sticks was in progress.

All groups met back in Dipkarpaz for breakfast and debriefing. The lime sticks, the fruit from which the glue is made and the information gleaned was discussed at length, until lunch, when various groups were again formed and dispatched into the countryside.

2,400 cranes were counted, over about an hour, coming over the coastline from the north and a number of villages nearer to Yeni Erenkoy were visited but no real evidence was found, but a strong ‘feeling’ that illegal activity was taking place was recorded.

Lime sticks in situ were found and the trapper was pleased to display his catch. A trapped bird was also photographed.

An erect mist net was located very close to Dipkarpaz village and its position was logged onto a GPS set.

By this time it was dark and the various groups met up again at Arch House, where we encountered two journalists who would be writing an article for a German walking magazine. Dinner. Bed.

### **Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> October**

A small group of early risers went off in search of the mist net and indeed found it. They became aware of two young boys on bicycles nearby and an individual on a moped. It seemed as if potential trappers were making their rounds checking their sticks for any prey. A little later these school boys were located and interviewed, showing us their catch for the morning. They declined to be photographed. From this interview it became clear that there is a trade of these birds and, certainly there are Greek Cypriot purchasers and local buyers, possibly acting as agents. Prices for Pulya (blackcaps) ranged from 2.5YTL for skinny items to 4 YTL for fatter morsels, and Cikla (song thrush) could fetch up to 6YTL each. ( €1 = ± 10% YTL 2 )

### **Conclusions / Findings**

- Illegal bird trapping is far more widespread than previously believed but is as yet not as commercialised as the activity in the South.
- There is active trading taking place North and South.
- Mist nets are smuggled into the North, together with shotgun cartridges, and these items are usually hidden under the back seats of cars.
- September is the Pulya (blackcap) season and November the Cikla (song thrush) season
- Although the arrested mist netter indicates that the authorities are prepared to take action, the net was reported to the police by tourists who found it while walking in the area and so the action appears to be reactive rather than proactive.
- Given the prices paid, the trade in these birds appears to be highly lucrative.
- All those interviewed knew the practise to be illegal but were quite prepared (not in Avtepe) to discuss it and show us lime sticks and mist a net.
- The village of Yeni Bogazici appears to be a Pulya haven and they have staged two Pulya festivals so far but it is not clear if they actually sell Pulya publicly.
- The full extent of illegal trapping in Northern Cyprus is unknown.

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**Martin Marancos, Kuşkor, January 2009**