Title

A BirdLife Malta fieldworker was physically attacked and injured by an individual illegally trapping waders adjacent to the Salina Bird Sanctuary.

The fieldworker was punched in the face and suffered a broken tooth and a swelling below the eye during the assault, which took place in front of a Police Sergeant and three officers.

The trapper was one of the individuals who were targeting protected species as well as trapping during the closed season. A BirdLife team that witnessed the activity placed a call to the ALE at 8.30 a.m., and waited for the officers on a side road at Kennedy Grove.

The ALE was unable to handle the report, and police officers from the Qawra police station arrived at the scene at 12.20 p.m.

As the BirdLife Malta team provided details to the police and pointed towards the area where the trappers stood, they came towards the BirdLife team and began hurling verbal abuse at them. The police had to restrain two of the aggressors, but the third then attacked the BirdLife volunteer. He was taken to a policlinic for medical examination.

The site, located adjacent to the Salina Bird Sanctuary, is a known hotbed of illegal hunting and trapping activity. One of the trappers on site today was already filmed by BirdLife fieldworkers last Friday, when he was trapping illegally and was also filmed carrying a shotgun.

The team went to the site today to continue monitoring the individuals who have a track record of reports of illegal activity.

Last April, one of the trappers was arrested by the police after he was filmed by BirdLife volunteers at the Spring Watch Camp illegally trapping waders at the same site. On that occasion, the trapper was caught on video screaming ?I will kill you? at the volunteers, in the presence of police officers.

In 2009, footage of the same trappers was also passed on to the ALE after they were seen trapping waders illegally. At the time, BirdLife Malta was informed by the Inspector of the ALE that he would be charged.

The reports of illegal wader trapping continue to increase as wader migration peaks over Malta this month. Active trapping sites in Delimara were also filmed by BirdLife Malta last weekend, although the police could not take action at the time due to a lack of resources.