

# A best practice guide for monitoring illegal killing and taking of birds

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**nature** and **people**

## Executive Summary

Overexploitation is one of the main threats driving birds towards extinction globally, and much of this is illegal. Illegal activities are by definition hidden and difficult to track, and consequently most estimates of the numbers of birds illegally killed or taken are currently based on inference from fragmentary data, informed by expert knowledge. Monitoring of illegal killing and taking of birds using standardised, replicable methods is needed to generate robust quantitative data to help focus efforts, track trends and monitor the effectiveness of actions to address illegal killing.

Detailed guidance is widely available on methods for monitoring bird population abundance, but little information is available on methods to monitor illegal killing and taking of birds. Such monitoring requires use of appropriate sampling design and methodology, recruitment and maintenance of a network of individuals to collect the data, involvement of relevant stakeholders, appropriate consideration of security issues, appropriate data management, analysis, presentation and communication, and many other elements. The aim of this best practice guide is to provide BirdLife Partners and other stakeholders with guidance covering these different aspects. The principle elements of each aspect of a monitoring scheme are summarised in the main chapters, illustrated by a series of case studies describing different approaches applied in selected countries.

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Front cover picture: Illegal mist-netting of birds in Cyprus© BirdLife Cyprus

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Aim of the Best Practice Guide

A recent review by BirdLife Partners and other organisations within the Mediterranean Basin on monitoring of the illegal killing and taking of birds showed that many BirdLife Partners have a strong commitment to addressing this issue and are collecting relevant data, but there is at present little systematic, coordinated monitoring of the illegal killing of birds currently in place in the region. This Best Practice Guide has been prepared to address this gap. It builds on the experiences of Mediterranean BirdLife Partners, and was developed partly through a workshop “Monitoring the illegal killing and taking of birds in the Mediterranean” held in Spain in February 2015. The Guide aims to facilitate expansion of monitoring, increase the robustness of existing and new schemes, and support the development of a more coordinated approach across the region and beyond. It is aimed primarily at BirdLife Partners in the Mediterranean, but has considerable relevance to other stakeholders within the region, as well as to BirdLife Partners and other stakeholders elsewhere in the world. Specifically, the Guide:

1. Provides a **checklist of the minimum steps** that should be considered in monitoring the illegal killing and taking of birds.
2. Presents relevant **sampling design and survey method considerations**.
3. Presents **overarching considerations** related to monitoring of illegal killing and taking of birds.
4. Describes **recommended methods** and **detailed case studies** with **examples of protocols** currently implemented by BirdLife Partners.
5. Provides **information on how to train, enthuse and communicate with a network of surveyors**.
6. Highlights some of the opportunities and considerations for using the monitoring data for **advocacy and communication**.
7. Lists some of the **key references and relevant sources of additional information**.

The Guide is designed to promote consistent, replicable approaches for monitoring illegal killing of birds. However, it also recognises the need to retain the flexibility to adapt to country-specific conditions.

## 1.2. Defining illegal killing and taking of birds and the need for monitoring

Globally, overexploitation is one of the main threats driving birds towards extinction globally (BirdLife International 2013), and much of this is illegal. The illegal killing of birds is known to be a particular and growing issue of concern, especially across the Mediterranean. Previous studies on this topic have increased our understanding of the breadth of illegal killing activities taking place across the region

(e.g. Schneider-Jacoby & Spangenberg 2010; BirdLife Europe 2011; Emile *et al.* 2014). It is, however, still difficult to state in which countries the largest numbers of birds are killed, where the worst locations for illegal killing are, for which species illegal killing is having significant population-level impacts or what the trends over time in illegal killing activity are. While the patterns may be clear within some Mediterranean countries, we lack such information from others, and so the region-wide picture remains obscure. Implementing standard methods for monitoring the illegal killing of birds would allow robust analysis of trends and comparison of the scale and intensity of illegal killing of birds between geographic areas. The results of monitoring are useful for advancing advocacy and communication campaigns, providing data to influence legal frameworks, and targeting and determining the impact of conservation actions addressing the issue.

**The illegal killing and taking of birds is defined here as any form of deliberate action that results in the death or removal from the wild of an individual bird (regardless of whether it was the target of this action or not), that is prohibited under national or regional legislation.** The illegal killing and taking of birds occurs, for example, when game species are killed during the closed season, when methods are used that are prohibited, when protected species are killed, and/or when killing or taking of birds occurs in protected areas in which such activities are forbidden. Species can be killed or taken illegally for a variety reasons, such as for food, trade, sport or to be used as caged pets or decoys. Hereafter the term “illegal killing” refers to both illegal killing and taking, and covers all the types of illegal activity, such as illegal shooting, trapping, poisoning, egg collecting, etc. (see [Appendix 1](#) for further details).

### 1.3. Overarching considerations for schemes that monitor the illegal killing and taking of birds

In this section the minimum steps required to design and implement a monitoring scheme on the illegal killing of birds are outlined:

#### 1. Gather information on the context of this issue at the national level:

- Information on what is legal and illegal in the country, e.g. existing laws and regulations about hunting and taking of birds, derogations from EU Nature Directives, etc. If there are no hunting or taking laws in place, consider participating in the development of draft legislation and a law enforcement strategy.
- Information on the relevant authorities (e.g. who are they and what do they do? what are their legal duties and legal rights? what do they need to tackle the illegal killing of birds?), the law enforcement (e.g. information on court decisions), the correct procedure to report illegal activities to authorities.



- Information on the type of people carrying out illegal activities (e.g. local community, foreign visitors etc.), when the illegal activities are happening and the process from illegal activity to the end user, which species are targeted and worst locations for the illegal activities.

### **2. Identify all the stakeholders involved and any existing sources of data:**

- Monitoring/data collection by other stakeholders (e.g. NGOs, wildlife rescue centres, hunting federations, police records, authority reports), accessibility of such data (are stakeholders willing to share data?).
- Information on how ongoing data-collection efforts could contribute to an effective monitoring scheme on the illegal killing of birds.
- Assess which stakeholders could contribute what (manpower, funding, security, technology, etc.).

### **3. Involve relevant stakeholders in development of a monitoring scheme on illegal killing of birds:**

- Participation of all stakeholders in a meeting/workshop.
- Cooperation with all the stakeholders for data sharing and capacity building, sharing of financial and manpower resources (e.g. joint enforcement patrols).
- Agree the aim of the monitoring: survey of the scale of problem (numbers, trends, target species, locations of worst areas), motivations for poaching (socio-economic drivers), effectiveness of law enforcement, protected area management, etc.
- Assess how a monitoring scheme on the illegal killing of birds could interface with law enforcement.
- Strong cooperation between BirdLife Partners and authorities is therefore highly recommended

### **4. Based on available capacity and funding, design appropriate sampling regime and methodology (see [Chapter 2](#)):**

- Verify the robustness of the sampling design.
- Pilot at a few sampling units, refine if needed, and then implement more broadly.

### **5. Train, enthuse and communicate with participants of the monitoring scheme (see [Chapter 3](#)).**

### **6. Collect, manage and analyse data (see [Chapters 4 and 5](#)).**

### **7. Communicate results to tackle the issue (see [Chapter 6](#)):**

- Raising public awareness to put pressure on government.
- Using international policy mechanisms to apply pressure on government.
- Educating hunters, bee-keepers, fishermen, etc.
- Lobbying for changes in national legislation if needed
- Communicate regularly with collaborators/stakeholders in the monitoring scheme to ensure their continued support.

Illegal killing activities appear to be chiefly a male activity, although women and children may be involved in some activities in some countries. In some countries, hunting/trapping is considered as an old tradition that is dying out and the younger generation do not support it, whereas in others, many people practice it on a small scale throughout the country and so it has broad-based support. In some cases, a relatively small but powerful sector of society may be involved in some activities. All of these subtle differences will influence decision-making on the most effective way to tackle illegal killing.

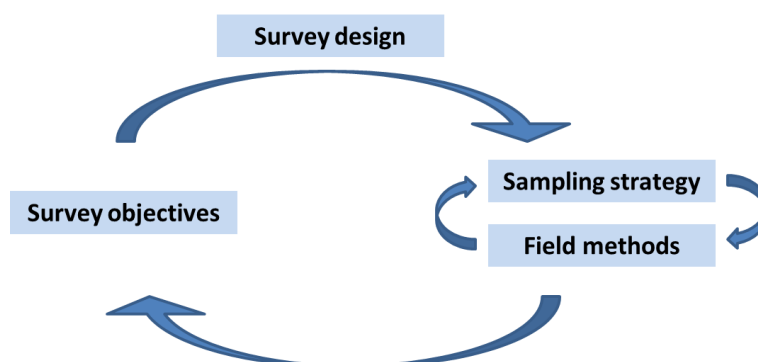
### Dos and don'ts

The top ten aspects to consider in implementing effective monitoring of illegal killing of birds and ten potential pitfalls to avoid are summarised in this box

- 'The 10 best suggestions'
  1. Define survey objectives at the outset and stick to them;
  2. Keep things simple – since complexity often adds only marginal benefits and has associated costs;
  3. Aim high and be ambitious, but not too high;
  4. Learn from others – there is a wealth of experience and knowledge out there;
  5. Follow the basic principles of good survey design – as set out in this guide and elsewhere;
  6. Talk and listen to stakeholders: the surveyors, expert ornithologists, technical experts, and the people who will be using the outputs;
  7. Incorporate a pilot phase of a monitoring scheme and use that experience to revise the methods and/or sampling strategy;
  8. Store data in a database and archive the information properly;
  9. Report the results on a regular basis to a range of audiences – newsletters to volunteers, leaflets for policy makers, and scientific publications;
  10. Design a survey that can be expanded in size or scope if more resources become available. Monitoring should be viewed as an adaptive and ongoing process.
- 'The 10 things to avoid'
  1. Repeating mistakes other people have already made;
  2. Being unrealistically ambitious and trying to do several things at once;
  3. Collecting information that is not compiled and never analysed;
  4. Forgetting to look after, nurture and train the skilled surveyors, on which much good monitoring is based;
  5. Forgetting to thank the surveyors and funding bodies on a regular basis;
  6. Believing that no birds/traps are missed when data are collected;
  7. Not knowing the statistical difference between accuracy and precision;
  8. Changing monitoring methods part way through a survey;
  9. Failing to analyse data and write up the results – failing to tell the world what you have found and why it is important;
  10. Failing to use the information to tackle the issue of illegal killing of birds.

## 2. Survey design

Illegal activities are by their nature often hidden and difficult to track, and monitoring the illegal killing of birds therefore requires additional considerations to those for monitoring bird abundance or distribution (see [Chapter 4](#)). However, some of **key points and caveats to bear in mind in the design and establishment of protocols** are similar. This section outlines how to go about planning a survey, including considering the sampling strategy (choosing where to count) and field methods (choosing how to count), which both influence each other, and in turn may influence the survey objectives ([Figure 2.1](#)).



*Fig. 2.1 Feedback loops operating in survey design between the survey objectives, sampling strategy and field methods (from Gregory et al. 2004)*

All decisions made when designing monitoring programmes interact to affect the strength, efficiency, and reliability of information gained during implementation. The resulting programme will represent a balance between practical challenges associated with meeting monitoring goals and sampling efficiently, and logistical and financial constraints. In practice, **survey design often involves a compromise between the ‘ideal’ approach scientifically and the reality imposed by constraints, resources and practicalities** (Steidl 2001). However, whatever monitoring programme emerges from this compromise should use consistent methodologies that enable direct comparisons of data between years and between different geographic areas in order to allow calculation of trends over time.

Where financial and capacity constraints are severe, partnership with other organisations/authorities is even more important. Before deciding that constraints mean that starting to monitor illegal killing of birds is not possible, it is worth considering what regular activities are underway that monitoring of illegal killing could be added to in order to reduce costs and time and make efficient use of capacity (e.g. national park patrols by authorities, monitoring of Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs), wintering waterbird censuses, migration counts, etc.). Bear in mind that **some well-designed monitoring on a small scale is better than no monitoring**. Monitoring of the same small subset of sites in a consistent way will allow you to establish what the trend in illegal killing activity is at those sites over time, even if the broader picture for the country is incomplete.

## 2.1. Monitoring goal and objectives

The **goal of most monitoring efforts is to detect changes and quantify trends in characteristics of a parameter** (e.g. number of birds, trend in illegal activities). Changes can be defined as the difference in the value of this parameter between two time periods (e.g., a 3% change between years 1 and 5), and trends defined as continuing directional change in the value of this parameter (e.g., linear regression slope of -3.0 parameter units/year) (Steidl 2001).

Before designing and implementing a monitoring programme, it is **very important to define clearly the aims of the survey and review resources**. A common mistake is to be overambitious and try to collect much more information than is strictly required, to the point where this compromises quality. A useful technique is to list your goals, the data required to fulfil them, the time required to collect these data, and revisit and prioritize your aims (Gregory *et al.* 2004). Questions that should be asked before setting up a monitoring scheme include:

- **What questions is the monitoring intended to answer?** (E.g. how many individuals are illegally killed, which species are involved, which illegal methods are used, where are the worst locations, who is involved, how does intensity change throughout the year, how are the trends changing over time, how effective is law enforcement, how successful have conservation efforts been, what are the root causes?)
- **What data do you need in order to answer these questions?** (E.g. numbers of individuals of each species illegally killed/trapped, trends in illegal activities)
- **Who is involved in illegal killing of birds?** (E.g. local or foreigner poachers)
- **Who will be engaged in monitoring illegal killing of birds?** (E.g. volunteers, NGO members, national authorities staff (e.g./ National Park staff))
- **Who will use the results and how?** (E.g. conservation NGOs for communication, local authorities for law enforcement, international conventions for prioritising action)

## 2.2. Direct or indirect measures?

The **first key decision to take is to choose which measures(s) will be recorded**. Most measures can be divided into two groups: *direct (or absolute) measures*, where the target being monitored is itself measured (e.g. number of birds illegally killed), and *indirect (or relative) measures or indices*, where feature related to the target is measured (e.g. number of persons engaged in illegal killing, number of traps, numbers of shots heard, etc.). If an index is used, it must reflect short-term changes in the target and provide a direct relationship to the true status of the target (e.g. if fewer traps are counted, fewer birds are being trapped; Steidl 2001). Direct measures of illegal killing of birds are very valuable and allow more sophisticated analysis, but indices may be less time-consuming to measure (e.g. number

of shots heard in 30 min from a sample point = index for number of birds being killed). To be able to extrapolate absolute numbers from index, the relationship between the two have to be known. This is the *calibration of the index* and it is undertaken by simultaneously measuring both the index (e.g. number of shots fired, number of traps found) and the actual species and numbers of birds killed/trapped. Then, number of birds killed from other sample units in which only indices have been obtained can be estimated.

### 2.3. Survey boundaries

The next decision is about **where to undertake the survey**, which should guide the setting of *survey boundaries*. These boundaries are largely self-evident if you want to obtain an estimate of the number of birds killed in a discrete habitat area, such as a specific forest or wetland, or in a particular geopolitical (e.g. country) or geographical (e.g. island) area. Survey efficiency, however, can be greatly improved if you further refine the boundaries within the area of interest, as it is likely that the illegal activities will not be present everywhere. It would be inefficient to cover large areas of clearly unsuitable habitats, but conversely little confidence could be placed on a study that excluded suitable habitats. It is often necessary to collect data over a wider area than expected, although it is sensible to sample at a much lower intensity in peripheral areas. This is the basis of *stratification* (see [section 2.5.4](#)). Paradoxically, it can be also important to confirm that an illegal activity does not occur in an area (and record a nil count; Gregory *et al.* 2004).

### 2.4. Census or sample?

The next decision is **whether to undertake a *true census* by attempting to count all birds illegally killed within the survey boundary, or to count in only a *sample* of areas within the survey boundary**. While it might be tempting to census the whole area for the sake of completeness, it is often considerably more effective to census representative samples and to extrapolate the results to obtain a total figure with estimates of the likely error (Gregory *et al.* 2004).

### 2.5. Sampling strategy

If a sample survey is undertaken, the *sampling strategy* has to be very clear. **Areas counted have to be representative of the area within the survey boundaries**. If they are not, the final estimates or index may be biased in an unknown manner (Gregory *et al.* 2004). Strategies based on *random, random*

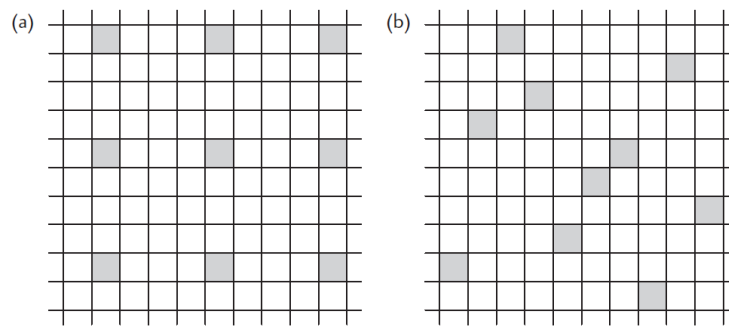
*stratified or regular sampling* (also known as *systematic sampling*) outlined below are likely to be more robust.

### 2.5.1. Sampling units

**Sampling strategy** defines the method by which sample locations are chosen and **sampling unit** defines the size, shape, number, and spatial arrangement of units at each sample location. The appropriate size for a *sampling unit* very much depends on the monitoring method selected. Line transects (e.g. detecting illegal traps) might be walked across a square of 1 km<sup>2</sup>, whereas surveillance from vantage points (e.g. counting gunshots) might cover several km<sup>2</sup>. It is essential that all the *sampling units* counted in a sample are comparable. The best way to do this is to base them upon regular units, such as grid squares, rather than irregularly shaped sites such as wetlands or particular areas of forest. The use of grid squares has many advantages, particularly in the planning and coordination of schemes, and in the analysis of data (Senyatso *et al.* 2008).

**The number of samples surveyed will, largely, depend on both availability of surveyors and/or equipment/logistics (i.e. binoculars, transport, etc.), and the method used.** As a general rule, it is desirable to have as many as samples as possible; many samples taken using a quick and easy method are preferable to only a few with more detailed and time consuming methods (Senyatso *et al.* 2008).

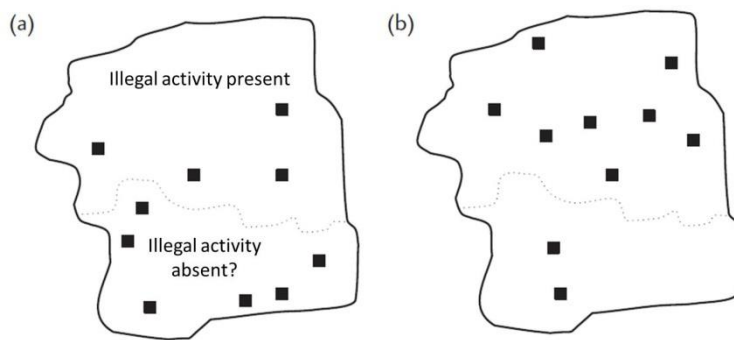
**Which sampling units to count is probably the most critical decision**, as failure to use an appropriate *sampling strategy* could invalidate the results. There is a tendency for surveyors to visit areas they expect to be good for their target species. *Free choice* of this kind can lead to a bias toward particular types of sites; whereas sample must be representative of the whole area of interest to extrapolate the results to areas that are not visited (Gregory *et al.* 2004). There are **number of approaches to ensure sampling is representative, with the two that produce the best results being based on either random sampling or regular sampling (Figure 2.2)**. Both require the study region (e.g. country or worst area for illegal killing of birds) to be divided into standard recording units, and then a number of units chosen for survey depending on surveyor capacity. The *random sampling* selects sites entirely at random from the entire sample, whereas the *regular sampling* selects survey sites based on a regular grid approach (every 10<sup>th</sup>, 100<sup>th</sup> square or other appropriate proportion; Senyatso *et al.* 2008). In the real world, it may be very difficult to sample totally at random, for example, because of the remoteness and land ownership of some areas. A more pragmatic approach is *semi-random sampling*, where sampling units are randomly selected within a predefined area. For example, each square of the survey area can be classified as either a 'possible bird trapping area' or 'unlikely bird trapping area', based solely on the presence or absence of suitable habitat. A certain number of squares are then randomly selected each year only among the 'possible bird trapping area' squares.



**Fig. 2.2** Example of (a) regular and (b) random sampling method, survey squares are shaded (from Gregory *et al.* 2004)

### 2.5.2. Using stratification

**Prior knowledge about an illegal activity or an area to be surveyed can often be used in order to sample more effectively.** An important refinement is *stratification*, where the area of interest is broken down into different sub-areas, known as *strata* (Gregory *et al.* 2004). For example, there is prior information that the illegal activity is largely absent, or at least very rare, in the southern part of a given region. Randomly sampling across the whole region might, quite by chance, result in selecting a high proportion of samples in the area where the illegal activity is largely absent. This would lead to an imprecise and inaccurate estimate and might lead to other problems, such as reluctance by surveyors to visit these areas because they expect to see so little. As an alternative, it can be predetermined that 80% of samples are drawn at random from the area where the illegal activity is largely present and only 20% of samples from that area where it is thought to be largely absent (**Figure 2.3**). As illegal activities may shift location over time, to maintain an overview there is value in monitoring even the places with currently low levels of illegal activity (albeit perhaps at lower intensity). Samples can be *stratified* by habitat, climate, altitude, land use, accessibility of survey sites, administrative or geopolitical boundaries, etc. *Stratification* is highly recommended because it can improve both precision and accuracy (see **section 2.7**) and it ensures proper habitat coverage.

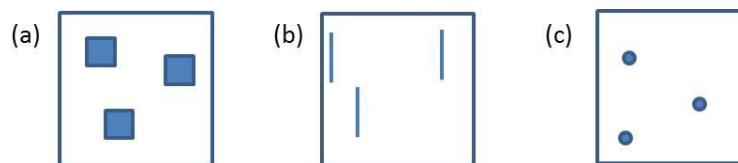


**Fig. 2.3** Imagine a survey of an illegal activity in an area divided into two distinct habitats. The filled squares represent survey plot. (a) A pure random sample of the whole area could, by chance, result in 60% of samples failing in the southern habitat – which may have very little, if any illegal activity. This would be wasteful of time and resources. (b) Far better would be to use prior knowledge to

stratify the sample: 80% of the random samples are taken from the habitat where the illegal activity is known to be present and 20% from the habitat where the illegal activity may be absent. Note that, although the sample is smaller in the southern area, it is still vital that it is surveyed (from Gregory et al. 2004)

## 2.6. Field methods

The next decision is about **which field methods to use to count birds/traps/etc.** within each *sample units*. The **choice of the field methods is as important as the choice of sampling strategy**. The three principal methods, *spot mapping*, *line transects* and *point counts* (Figure 2.4), are outlined in this section. Of course it may also be appropriate to use market surveys, questionnaires or other socioeconomic methods to better understand the drivers/ motivations for illegal killing.



**Fig. 2.4** Principal field methods for monitoring: (a) spot mapping, (b) line transects and (c) point counts

**Whatever the method chosen, it is important to standardize fieldwork as much as possible**, in order to ensure comparability between surveyors and comparability over space and time. Providing observers with a survey form with fields to capture all relevant information and providing detailed guidance on how to carry out the survey (to supplement any training) are both very important. Hereafter some general issues to consider in planning fieldwork:

- **Season of the year:** this will depend upon the aim of the survey and the level of existing knowledge. Where nothing is known about seasonality of illegal killing, sampling should initially be spread throughout the year. Where illegal killing is thought to be focused on a particular season sampling may be more intense during that period, but it is important to maintain an overview by sampling (even if at lower intensity) in other seasons of the year.



- **Time of day:** In some cases it will be appropriate to put most effort into surveying at a time of day that maximises the chance of detecting illegal activity. However where trapping/ killing devices or other evidence is left in situ in the absence of the owners and (i) the safety of observers is a concern or (ii) it is felt that detection of observers by protagonists may cause them to shift their activities elsewhere (thus biasing results), it may be more appropriate to survey outside of peak trapping times and gather indirect evidence by counting the traps themselves, net rides etc.
- **Size of survey plots:** if they are too small, they will yield only imprecise data, if they are too large, surveyors may be reluctant to undertake the work or may carry it out with insufficient care.
- **Number of visits** to be made to each sample plot or area and recommended search effort, for example, walking speed (for line transects) or count duration (for point counts), and general counting protocol for the surveyors.
- **Recording units** to be noted, e.g. number of traps, number of individual birds shot.

### 2.6.1. Spot mapping

This method consists of **searching all the evidence of the illegal activity in the selected sample units** (e.g. all the traps). An obvious advantage of the method is that it produces a detailed map of the distribution of the illegal activity, but it may require a high level of surveyor skill to detect evidence of the illegal activity (e.g. trap, mist-net ride, bird feather, and blood stains).

### 2.6.2. Line transects

This method involves **traveling a predetermined route and recording evidence of the illegal activity on either side of surveyors**. The distance an item of evidence is seen or heard from the transect line is normally recorded as an absolute measure, or in distance bands (distances should be estimated perpendicular to the transect line). The *sampling strategy* chosen for a particular survey determines the *sample unit* to be surveyed, but there is still choice of the *line transect routes* within this area. There are several options, and some flexibility is advisable. For example, a regular or systematic approach could be used with parallel transects orientated north to south, or a series of transects oriented along the long axis of the study area. A random approach, for example, with starting points and directions of transects selected randomly, could be used. In reality, topography, watercourses, roads, certain land uses, and access permissions, might all limit access, so that the actual routes counted will differ to some degree from the ideal routes – but such deviation cannot be avoided.

### 2.6.3. Point counts

*Point counts* differ from line transects in that surveyors stop at predefined spot and then record targeted unit for a predetermined period of time, e.g. the number of shots heard or the number of

birds recording being shot. There are again choices in deciding where to site point counts within the study plot. One could select individual points at random, or by a stratified random design, and access each of them individually. As with line transects, practical barriers might limit the degree to which the ideal point counts can be reached, but equivalent points can be substituted with little care.

### 2.7. Reliability: accuracy, precision and bias

The **reliability of a sample-based estimate of numbers (or change in numbers over time) is a matter of both accuracy and precision**. The terms *accuracy*, *precision* and *bias* have specific meaning when applied to scientific data. It is extremely important to understand these terms at the outset and to use them appropriately when survey results are reported. **Survey design essentially revolves around the twin aims of increasing accuracy and precision and reducing bias** (Gregory *et al.* 2004):

- **Accuracy is a measure of how close the estimate is to the true value.** Of course, the problem is that the actual value is usually not known and so it is extremely difficult to measure *accuracy*. The only practical way to measure *accuracy* would be to carry out very intensive work in small areas and to calibrate the findings with a wider survey – but such studies are very time-consuming
- **Precision is a measure of how close replicated estimates are from each other** (and so it is unrelated to the true value). This is the same as asking how much error is there around a mean estimate. Unlike *accuracy*, *precision* can be measured in statistical terms (e.g. as a range, variance, standard error, 95% confidence limits) by looking at the differences in counts between the sampling units. Multiple counts can be obtained by counting the same study site repeatedly in the same season, or by counting multiple sites once. The first option tells us about the temporal variation at sites within a season, the second about the spatial variation across sites – both may be important depending on the study aims.
- **Bias occurs when the estimates are either systematically larger or smaller than the true value.** A whole range of factors could lead to *bias*, for example the field method, effort and speed of surveying, the habitat, the time of the day, the season of the year, the observer's skills, etc. The challenge is to recognize all the potential sources of *bias* and to standardize survey methods to reduce it as much as possible.

### 2.8. Analysis

**Thought must be given to how a dataset will be analysed before a monitoring scheme is launched.** Data need to be entered into an appropriate database ([section 5.1](#)), and then analyses conducted. In

the first year of a scheme, these will be simple descriptive statistics (e.g. numbers of individual bird killed/trapped, number of traps located, etc.). After three or four years, it will be appropriate to calculate trends in illegal activities. The production of trends depends on looking at changes in a variable at each site between years, and can be done through a number of approaches ([section 5.2](#)).

### 3. Implementation on the ground

Once the survey design has been decided (see [Chapter 2](#)), **practical considerations have to be made for running the scheme**. As the employment of professional surveyors is rarely possible, such monitoring may rely, at least in part, on volunteers. Hence, it is vital that good management practices are employed to recruit and retain volunteers, by ensuring their involvement with the scheme is enjoyable and rewarding. In addition, it is important to ensure that there is sufficient support, guidance and training, so that data collected are robust and reliable.

There may be **considerable advantage to keeping the monitoring method simple** and it may be entirely **possible for non-specialist surveyors to be of considerable help**. With minimal training, non-specialist observers should be able to identify and count traps/shot, and, where identification of trapped/killed birds is required, surveyors could take pictures or video (easily possible now on most mobile phones) for a specialist to identify later. Even with larger trap types (like mist-nets), a non-specialist surveyor could simply photograph or video the contents of a net or pre-agreed area of net for later counting and identification of contents by a specialist.

#### 3.1. Recruiting surveyors and maintaining involvement

The issue of recruiting scheme coordinators and surveyors for monitoring illegal killing of birds is closely tied to that of recruiting support for many other conservation projects. Often, monitoring illegal killing of birds may compete with other projects for the time of potential participants (volunteers, tourists, protected area staff, rangers, etc.). **Surveyors need to be encouraged that the scheme they contribute to is important and valuable, and that their own individual contribution is valuable**. New monitoring schemes typically start by recruiting experienced observers known by the monitoring coordinators. The skills, time and effort of such observers are valuable, and taking time to explain the objectives and anticipated outputs of the scheme will help encourage their participation. It is worth highlighting the scheme's relationship with the other conservation programmes, including IBA monitoring, threatened species recovery work and membership activities. Additionally, the participation of skilled observers often provides the opportunity to gather valuable feedback on the practicality of the methods, which may be incorporated into the survey design. If necessary, in the early stages of the scheme (after the end of the first year for instance) this may lead to a revision of techniques to accommodate relevant feedback without compromising the robustness of the scheme.

**Monitoring illegal killing of birds can be undertaken by a range of different stakeholders**, including individuals from government agencies and authorities, national and international NGO volunteers, local people etc., but there are many potential benefits to multi-stakeholder collaboration. It is

therefore important to consider working with partners and building on/complementing any existing efforts/related work. It is also important, when possible, to involve the local community to increase buy-in and decrease antipathy to monitoring efforts. Incentives can encourage wider participation and commitment. However, this can pose problems for long-term sustainability though raising expectations. Analogies can be drawn with BirdLife's Local Conservation Groups, whose source of motivation will vary from site to site, though generally, they appear to be keen to engage in activities that provide benefits to themselves and the community, including activities that build their individual capacity, activities that earn the group local, national and international recognition and acclaim and/or opportunities to deploy traditional knowledge and skills possessed by the local community.

Although time-intensive, when it comes to maintaining the interest and involvement of volunteers, there is no substitute for regular personal contact. This is particularly true for small, new schemes where every surveyor is very valuable. When schemes grow and the numbers of surveyors increase, it is worth considering establishing a network of regional coordinators, each with the responsibility for maintaining contact with surveyors within their regions. Without frequent contact and regular reporting, volunteers may desert the schemes. Regular contacts allow informing surveyors about any training opportunities, ensuring that data are submitted to coordinator, giving a sense of collective endeavour (individual surveyor may carry out surveys alone, and it is only through good communication that they can really feel part of a team), feeding back results, and increasing understanding of how surveyor efforts are contributing to tackling of illegal killing.

### 3.2. Training surveyors

**Good training is an essential component of successful monitoring schemes**, in order to build capacity for designing surveys, managing volunteer networks, analysing data, communicating results and using them for advocacy. This is likely to involve both face-to-face training (workshops, joint field session with experienced surveyors training new surveyors) and the dissemination of training materials. Training workshops should aim to:

- **Describe the situation in the country regarding the legislation** (what is legal and illegal about killing of birds), the mission of the monitoring coordinator.
- **Describe the rationale behind establishing a monitoring on illegal killing of birds** and its value for conservation.
- **Give a basic grounding in the survey design** being employed and methods.
- **Explain methods to be used in the scheme** (steering observers away from potential pitfalls). Note it is extremely important to give surveyors exact instructions as to how to conduct their surveys, but if instructions are too detailed, surveyors may not bother to read them properly.

- **Include sessions on filling in forms correctly and securities issues.**
- **Exchange experience and opinions.**

To cover all these aspects fully, a workshop is recommended as early as possible at the commencement or development of a scheme, involving monitoring coordinator staff, potential key surveyors, government counterparts and all the stakeholders who are or could be involved in tackling the illegal killing of birds in the country. Workshops should then be repeated when needed (typically once a year for annually repeated monitoring).

### 3.3. Security

Safety of surveyors is paramount and all surveyors should receive training/guidance on how to minimise risk and what to do in the event of an aggressive situation arising. According to the situation of the country, those carrying out illegal activities may or may not be aggressive towards surveyors. **Security issues should, however, always be considered, and surveyors should be well-briefed for their own safety.** The following security rules should be considered and adapted as appropriate:

- Where appropriate, **surveyors should be covered by insurance.**
- It is highly recommend that **monitoring in the field is performed by at least two individuals per location at any time**, and/or accompanied by police/security if appropriate. Where appropriate, mixed teams (male and female) are also recommended.
- **Surveyors, or at least one of a field team, should be knowledgeable regarding bird identification, familiar with local area, speaking the local language and procedures to deal with illegalities**, so as to ensure the relevant expertise is present. Strong cooperation between BirdLife Partners and local communities is also highly recommended, not only to make use of local knowledge, but also to encourage the local community take some ownership of the issue and reduce the sense that external entities are imposing unwanted views on the community.
- Surveyors need a **list of what they should and should not do when they encounter illegal activity**. Rules and procedures should be developed to advise on how to handle potential situations in which surveyors' property is damaged (e.g., car tyres and windows, cameras etc.) or in which surveyors are intimidated, provoked or attacked by those carrying out illegal activities.
- In case of *undercover* monitoring ([section 4.2](#)), surveyors need **to avoid detection if possible in order to minimise confrontation** and in order to be able to complete the survey (binoculars can be used to scan areas before approaching). Surveyors need also to have a cover story in case people ask what they are doing in the area.

- If confrontation with those carrying out illegal activities is risky, **consider avoiding monitoring activities at the peak of the illegal activity**, and adjusting the survey design and analysis to take account of the bias this will introduce.
- **All illegal activity should be reported to the authorities following correct procedures** (e.g. providing photographic and video evidence that can be used as evidence if the case is brought to court) regardless of the outcomes, and all surveyors should receive training and information on this. Any vandalism etc. directed at surveyors and their equipment should also be reported to the authorities with appropriate evidence.

#### 3.4. Supporting materials

In order to recruit enough surveyors, monitoring coordinators may consider targeting those members of the public who might be keen to help, but who have limited surveying experience, or even relatively limited birdwatching experience. The survey design needs to be appropriate to the capabilities of the surveyors. For example, some observers may not be confident/competent in identifying birds captured in a mist-net, but they could instead photograph them for a more experienced observer to assist with identification later. Materials can be produced to facilitate the active participation of less experienced people, reducing errors (e.g. bird misidentification) and bias (e.g. facilitating the participation of more people enables more area to be covered during surveys, increasing accuracy in the results obtained). Some of the materials that could help with this include:

- **Data capture forms** – which should be easy to read and allow for all the required data to be recorded on them easily in the field. Include: surveyor's details (name, address, etc.), date, time and duration of visit, location of visit, weather, areas covered, surveyor's comments and observations.
- **Equipment** – such as telescopes, cameras, video cameras, binoculars and/or sound recording device.
- **Survey protocols** – which would describe the full detail of the methods to be used so that everyone understands what is to be done, and data collection is consistent.
- **Guidelines** to carry in the field – covering in bullet point form what to do and what not to do when illegal activity is encountered.
- **Field guides** – if these are too expensive, modified identification kits illustrating only the species most likely to be encountered can be considered. If appropriate, local and vernacular names can be included to facilitate greater use of resources.
- **Additional information** (in electronic or hard copy format) – such as reports, scientific articles, case studies, so that those who need additional information on monitoring illegal killing of birds

can easily access it. Country-specific materials can be also added, such as district maps, road networks, etc.

#### Case study: Briefing volunteers at the beginning of a camp in Malta

*Nick Piludu (BirdLife Malta)*

BirdLife Malta (BLM) has been organising monitoring camps in spring (Spring Watch) and autumn (Raptor Camp) since 2007. Every season new participants join the camps in addition to a group of returning camp veterans, and briefing them is a key component of fieldwork. Depending on camp structure, volunteers are briefed in a group or during a one-to-one meeting with the Camp Coordinator.

The briefing consists of the following sections:

- The current situation – the derogations that allow hunting and trapping in Malta, the political climate, and updates on BLM's work on this front.
- The season-specific hunting and trapping regulations – dates for the hunting seasons, hunting hours, permitted species, and restrictions. This is discussed in detail to make sure new volunteers are able to identify illegal behaviour on the field.
- The camp objectives – over the years camp objective included recording wildlife crime, monitoring the migration, hunting effort and enforcement, engaging the public and so on; volunteers are briefed on what is priority and what should not be given particular importance.
- The daily schedule
- The field methods – volunteers are assigned a role (e.g. driver, cameraman, phone user, data collector) during each shift and are briefed on what responsibilities they will have (e.g. the driver is supposed to know how to reach their destination). Volunteers are instructed to make sure phones and cameras are easily reachable in case they are needed (to call the police or record illegalities), and to park the car with the front facing the road in order to be able to leave the area quickly if needed. Volunteers are instructed to check the ground for nails, pieces of glass etc. Volunteers are instructed never to trespass into private property – if they suspect or are told (even if they are clearly been lied to) land is private property, they should not enter. Provocation and confrontation with hunters is absolutely forbidden and volunteers are instructed to leave the area in case of tension. Conversely, interaction with the public is strongly encouraged, and volunteers are instructed on what to say when engaging with them.
- The equipment – volunteers are briefed on using datasheets, important phone numbers, how to use cameras, scopes etc.
- How to react to wildlife crime – volunteers are instructed to record everything with a camera as soon as they witness crime, paying attention to swearing and inappropriate comments that might end up on video. Volunteers are also briefed on when to call the police and when not to, depending on the likelihood of the police being able to intervene. Volunteers are also instructed to contact the Camp Coordinator before contacting the police.
- Finishing the shift – volunteers are instructed to check with the Camp Coordinator before leaving an area, refuel the car on the way back if needed, and to pass on all data and footage to the Camp Assistants. If sufficient footage of crime was recorded, volunteers are instructed to prepare an investigation report that contains information for the police, which will be attached to any footage of illegal behaviour.



Case study: How volunteers are mobilized to support monitoring of the illegal killing of birds in Lebanon

*Ghassan Ramadan Jaradi (SPNL/BirdLife Lebanon)*

Volunteers of SPNL are selected among young people that have sufficient energy to cover study areas within a short time and with motivation. Students are also another type of volunteers. Some students will work for SPNL to add the experience to their resume when they graduate. Other students get college credit. Since mobilization and motivation are an inside job, SPNL have stimulated these inner mobilization and motivation in young people to collect the necessary data from the field on the illegally killed birds using the following stimulators: feedback, recognition, conferences-seminars-workshops, free food and fun.

Each volunteer has been requested to collect data on regular bases from its village and the immediate surrounding areas. This request is based on their love to birds, their access to the local hunting groups, including their parents and their community knowledge, and their desire to feedback to SPNL and compete with other volunteers from other villages. In return, SPNL provides those who are feeding back with certificates of recognition as an incentive to maintain their motivation at a high level and to mobilize them to perform short and mid-term monitoring of IKB. It is worth mentioning that the collection of information on illegally killed birds within the village is safer for the volunteer, especially for girls, because the risk of getting harmed is higher outside the village for the volunteer due to the possibility of meeting unstable and hostile shooters. However, this doesn't mean that some volunteers are limited in their work to their villages.

In most cases, the volunteers have been asked for information on illegally killed bird species from the shooters themselves. Some others may obtain a permission from the shooters to photograph their shot birds that are hanged on the strings, and sending those photos to the experts at SPNL for identification purposes. This procedure of feeding back and re-feedback constituted an excellent stimulation of the inner mobilization and motivation of volunteers.

In order to maintain volunteer's high motivation level, SPNL organizes conferences, seminars and workshops where staff meets with the volunteers to discuss positive and negative matters, focusing on the importance of volunteers' findings; to eat together as this will go a long way in motivating and encouraging volunteers and to have fun together. The latter is crucial since fun is considered as stress buster, breaking ice between paid staff and volunteers and finally a source of mobilization and motivation.

In addition to the above, SPNL collects data through its local conservation groups established at its IBAs/KBAs/Himas spread in different Lebanese districts. Further, Birdtalk Lebanon which is an email group for birdwatchers is another source of information.

Finally, SPNL partnership with Sayd Magazine which addresses hunters in Lebanon is another resource for information directly from hunters.

All these resources collectively help in providing an overview of the situation of the illegal killing of birds in Lebanon.

## 4. Collecting data on illegal killing and taking of birds

In general, there is **no single approach or method for monitoring illegal killing that can be applied in all countries**. Each country is a unique and specific case and should adapt as appropriate the methods and approaches described below. However, consistency over time and between areas within a single scheme is essential. It is the role of scheme coordinators to pick the methods that best fit their circumstances, conditions and needs. A common and very sensible approach is to build on established methods because their strengths and weakness are well known (Voříšek *et al.* 2008).

Below we describe **methods to monitor the main types of illegal activities, which can be adapted to address other types of illegal activities as appropriate**. As far as possible, monitoring of illegal killing should generate species by species data, or at least ancillary data that be used to produce these. The same protocol should be adopted by all observers.

Note that, although it may seem paradoxical, **enforcement activities (such as alerting authorities, filming illegal activity, removing birds from nets, closing down nets etc.) should preferably not take place in monitoring squares** because 1) this will take up time that observers should be spending monitoring illegal activities and 2) enforcement activity may affect the likelihood of detecting future illegal activity in that location (which could lead to recording a declining trend in illegal activity when in fact the individuals killing birds illegally have just moved location). It is important to brief surveyors on what they should and should not do if they find live birds in traps. Many surveyors will feel a strong desire to release such birds or destroy/disable traps. Whether this is advisable or not will depend upon the approach of the organisation, but as noted above there are good reasons why combining monitoring and enforcement may not be advisable.

Note also an important difference between monitoring illegal activities and monitoring bird population abundance is that the **individuals carrying out illegal activities are often keen not to be detected, identified or recognised, and may be antagonistic or aggressive to surveyors**. Hence monitoring of illegal killing needs to be tailored in accordance to the local situation.

### 4.1. Direct or indirect measures?

**A crucial question that should be answered prior to setting up monitoring of illegal killing of birds is what type of evidence (data) on illegal activity are to be collected** (see [Chapter 2](#)): *direct evidence* (e.g. numbers/species of birds illegally killed, poisoned or trapped; identification of poachers), or *indirect evidence* (e.g. signs of illegal activity such as shots, cartridges, traps, etc.). Collecting *direct evidence* of illegal activities implies that monitoring should be carried out at the same time as illegal activity is occurring (or at least close enough to be able to collect data with sufficient quality), which in turns increases the chance for direct encounters with poachers and raises safety issues. Collecting

*indirect evidence* does not require synchronisation of monitoring with illegal activities, and thus encounters with poachers are less likely.

### 4.2. 'Visible' or 'undercover' monitoring

In practice, depending on whether *direct* or *indirect evidence* on illegal killing activities are collected, it is necessary to decide between the *visible* or *undercover implementation of monitoring*.

**Visible monitoring** means that the monitoring scheme, place and date of its implementation on the ground are publicly and widely announced. Monitoring primarily takes place during the day and the persons involved are visible to others (including local people and poachers). The advantage of this approach is that surveyors' presence in the field can be used for raising awareness and it can discourage illegal activities during monitoring. A disadvantage is that poachers, informed by surveyors' arrival, can hide evidence of crimes, and thus monitoring could under-estimate the frequency of illegal activities. *Visible monitoring* is more applicable for the collection of *indirect evidence* of illegal activities (e.g. shots heard, etc.). It is advisable that this type of monitoring is carried out together with interested stakeholders (game wardens, protected area park rangers, hunting associations etc.) for educational purposes.

**Undercover monitoring** should generally be applied when *direct evidence* of illegal killing is collected, either to prove the crime, identify poachers or to calibrate the data collected indirectly (e.g. how many shots on average lead to a bird being killed). By definition, *undercover* means collecting information in secret that could eventually lead to the prosecution and conviction of those engaged in illegal activities. The advantage of this type of monitoring is that it can lead to better quality evidence on illegal killing of birds, including identification of bird criminals. The disadvantage is that it may be more risky from the safety point of view. Thus, this type of monitoring should be carried out only by trained individuals.

In the worst areas for illegal killing, it would be **advisable to use both monitoring approaches, often by different monitoring teams.**

### 4.3. Monitoring illegal shooting of birds

#### 4.3.1. Overarching considerations

**Several traits inherent to illegal shooting make this activity very hard to assess and monitor.** The shooting generally happens in a small time window as it is strongly linked to the peak migration phenology of the target species, and this varies between years mainly due to prevailing weather conditions. It may be highly localised and occur only when the conditions are right and the opportunity arises. Therefore discovering active poachers may be a matter of chance. Absence of this practice on

the other hand is almost impossible to verify. Since it is illegal, no ‘bag records’ are kept by governmental or hunting organizations and in most cases the offenders are not helpful in providing data either.

**Illegal shooting may occur in two different contexts: occurring in a country either where hunting is legal, or banned.** This impacts how illegal shooting can be monitored, because indirect data collection (particularly counting shots) is more challenging if it is difficult or not possible to discriminate between legally or illegally fired shots. Illegal shooting occurs if the targeted species is protected, or illegally shot during the closed hunting season, or hunted with illegal weapons or using illegal methods (e.g. lures, decoys), or hunted inside protected areas (i.e. locations where such activities are forbidden), or outside the authorised periods (e.g. during the night), or when bag limits are exceeded, or when it is done by unauthorised persons (without an official licence or permit). Often several of these forms of illegal shooting occur simultaneously.

Illegal shooting may often increase during legal hunting periods, especially if there is a perception of weak law enforcement (e.g. bag limits may be exceeded, or protected species killed alongside huntable species). Illegal shooting may also concentrate in certain areas, where the geography and topography (e.g. large water bodies, high mountains) create a so called “migration bottleneck”, where migrants concentrate through a narrow corridor to avoid crossing these barriers. For example, migratory soaring birds are particularly vulnerable on migration to illegal shooting because they are large and relatively slow flying, and therefore obvious and easy targets. The daily passage of thousands of birds at single sites at predictable times provides poachers with an abundant and seemingly endless source of targets. Poachers targeting such species are likely to concentrate in these areas.

#### *4.3.2. Recommended methods*

Monitoring using line transects (along the dikes or roads) may be the most appropriate method to monitor illegal shooting. On the mountainous or hilly areas, illegal shooting monitoring could also be done from vantage points, using a point count method, covering a circle which may be up to several kilometres wide (recommend for migration bottleneck).

Once the sampling design has been determined (see [Chapter 2](#)), the number of sampling units covered and the frequency of visits are decided according to the period of presence of targeted species and organiser capacity, e.g. daily over a short period (3-4 weeks) for migrating birds, weekly over a long period (3-4 months) for wintering birds. **Recording indirect evidence, such as the number of poachers seen, shots heard, cartridges/decoys/carcasses found, may be easier than recording direct evidence.** These parameters can be used to measure the trend in illegal shooting activity over time. It is however necessary to determine which are the best proxies for actual number of birds killed, as different proxies may show different trends. To estimate the number of individuals illegally shot and the species involved, proxies need to be calibrated and the calibration checked regularly. For example, the number

of shots heard can be calibrated to estimate the number of individuals illegally shot using the shooting success of poachers. Point counts can be used to record by eye the number of birds shot and falling out of the sky (this requires highly-qualified surveyors with good identification skills) to measure the shooting success.

**In a country where hunting is banned, customs authorities may be able to provide the total number of cartridges imported in the country.** By knowing the shooting success, the number of birds shot can be estimated. For example in Lebanon, 40 million cartridges are imported each year and 7 million are estimated to be locally made, 18 million of these are re-exported to neighbouring countries, and 19.5 million are estimated to be used for hunting (with the remainder used for target practice). The shooting success is estimated to one per 7 cartridges (per SPNL/BirdLife Lebanon), so it is estimated that 2.79 million birds are shot per year.

**In cooperation with hunter associations and/or authorities, it is possible that reliable data on the illegal shooting of protected/non-hunable species may be obtained from monitoring hunting bags.** This may be most effective when groups hunt together and bring their catch at the end of the hunting session to a place where independent checks can be carried out (e.g. hunting lodges). All species killed and their numbers should be recorded, as well as number of hunters engaged (from which hunting pressure or effectiveness can be calculated), number of dogs used (higher number of dogs increases the likelihood of finding the shot bird in the field), etc. If there is a likelihood that hunters would discard illegally shot birds, further field searches could be carried out immediately after the hunting takes place.



*Shooting hides in Ulcinj salinas (protected area where hunting is banned), Montenegro © CZIP*

Case study: Monitoring illegal take in hunting bags in Croatia

*Tibor Miskuska (Croatian Society for Bird and Nature protection)*

Bird hunting is a quite common activity in Croatia. Mikuska *et al.* (2014) have been inspected hunting bags during five hunting seasons on two fishponds in the Pannonian Croatia. Waterfowl hunting was taking place from September until January during both two weekend mornings, with more time spent hunting during the Saturday than the Sunday. Hunting took place from sunrise until mid-day, when hunters returned to their lodges. Shot birds were collected by the employees of the hunting grounds and brought to the place where the examination of shot birds was undertaken. Numbers by species and sex were recorded. During the five hunting seasons, 5,879 individuals of 23 bird species have been examined, of which 14 are strictly protected according to the Nature Protection Act (Table 4.1).

**Table 4.1** Species present in hunting bags during five hunting seasons, 2008-2012.

Species	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total	Protection status in Croatia	Croatian Hunting Law
Common Teal	210	817	800	590	340	2,757	Protected	Game
Mallard	160	564	273	441	228	1,666	Protected	Game
Eurasian Wigeon	25	104	134	94	20	377	Strictly protected	
Ferruginous Duck	3	150	76	32	1	262	Strictly protected	
Common coot	16	25	148	29	6	224	Protected	Game
Common Pochard	15	61	56	22	16	170	Protected	Game
Gadwall	41	33	46	20	7	147	Strictly protected	
Nothern Shoveler	5	29	31	18	10	93	Strictly protected	
Garganay	4	18	19	20	17	78	Protected	Game
Nothern Pintail	5	18	6	17	2	48	Strictly protected	
Tufted Duck	5	7	9	1	1	23	Protected	Game
Greylag goose		10	4			14	Strictly protected	
Northern Lapwing		3				3	Strictly protected	
Greater White-fronted Goose		2				2	Protected	Game
Common Goldeneye			2			2	Strictly protected	
Common Snipe	1			1		2	Protected	Game
Ruff	2					2	Strictly protected	
Great Cormorant	1					1	Not protected	
Red-crested Pochard		1				1	Strictly protected	
Smew		1				1	Strictly protected	
Dunlin		1				1	Strictly protected	
Common Woodpigeon				1		1	Protected	Game
Spotted Redshank					1	1	Strictly protected	
Hybrids		3				3		
<b>Total</b>	<b>493</b>	<b>1,847</b>	<b>1,604</b>	<b>1,287</b>	<b>649</b>	<b>5,879</b>		

Case study: Monitoring illegal shooting during migration count in France

*G. Quaintenne (LPO/BirdLife France)*

Spring migration of birds is monitored at the Escrinet pass (Ardèches) from mid-February to mid-April since 1984, with interruption during 9 years (1991 and from 1994 to 2001) because of threat pronounced by poachers (illegal shooting activities at this location was very common during this period).

Since 2002, alongside the migration monitoring protocol, acts of poaching has been recorded: number of shots heard, targeted species, number of birds killed or wounded. Common Woodpigeon was the most targeted species by poachers (Table 4.2). This species is legally huntable in France from September to February (dates varying every year and according regions) but was illegally shot at the Escrinet pass after the legal hunting season in February and March. Since 2009 illegal shooting has stopped at this site.

**Table 4.2** *Synthesis of illegal shooting of Common Woodpigeon recorded in March 2003 at Escrinet pass (from Curial et al. 2003)*

Date	Number of shots heard	Number of birds killed
3 March	281	9
4 March	283	0
5 March	128	0
6 March	21	1
7 March	590	44
8 March	346	34
9 March	580	37
10 March	245	19
11 March	10	0
12 March	49	5
13 March	567	38
14 March	456	30
15 March	154	4
16 March	58	5
17 March	92	15
18 March	651	32
19 March	126	5
20 March	-	-
21 March	-	-
22 March	103	-
23 March	5	-
24 March	-	-
25 March	-	-
26 March	-	-
29 March	-	-
30 March	-	-
31 March	54	2

Using these data from monitoring, it is possible to calculate the % of birds harvested to the total number migrating

$$\text{Harvest} = (\text{no. birds killed} + \text{no. birds wounded}) / \text{no. birds migrating}$$

In March 2003, the mean harvest % was 7.0% at the Escrinet pass, ranging from 0% to 40.5% according to weather conditions (wind speed and direction influencing harvest %).

All the reports of migration counts at the Escrinet are available at: [http://www.migration.net/index.php?m\\_id=1522&frmSite=31&mp\\_item\\_per\\_page=10&mp\\_current\\_page=1](http://www.migration.net/index.php?m_id=1522&frmSite=31&mp_item_per_page=10&mp_current_page=1)



## 4.4. Monitoring illegal trapping of birds

### 4.4.1. Overarching considerations

**Illegal trapping covers a wide variety of activities** (see [Appendix 1](#)), **and a similarly broad range of motivations drives the activities**. Some trapping methods catch individual birds and the traps then need to be re-set, while others can catch many hundreds of birds simultaneously. Some methods are intended to catch specific species, while others are indiscriminate. Some trapping methods relies for its success in setting the traps in the right habitat at the right time to coincide with the target species, while others increase the capture rate by modifying the surrounding habitat (e.g. irrigating vegetation to create lush habitat to draw in birds to be trapped) or using taped calls or other lures. Some trapping capitalises on the geographical route and physiological state of migrating birds by, for example, focusing trapping on geographical areas where the birds concentrate in numbers, or capitalising on their exhausted state after making a long sea crossing.

**The impact of illegal trapping may be chiefly on the target species, on many species if the method is indiscriminate, or on ancillary species if they are used as lures, for feeding to individual raptors used as lures or for feeding trapped raptors post-capture.** Trapping may not have the same impact across a species population, as younger, less experienced birds may be more likely to be trapped and there may be differences in response to playback or lures by males and females. In some forms of trapping the target is killed during trapping, whereas in others the target is kept alive (e.g. for falconry, food markets or for the cagebird trade). In many kinds of trapping the target is injured, and then dies in the trap or is killed by the trapper on collection.

**Trapping of various kinds has a long tradition in many countries and trappers may associate it with their cultural identity.** In some countries, the legality of trapping, its scale, the methods employed, the groups of people involved or the motivations for trapping have changed considerably over time. In some countries, what was originally a means of subsistence and an important source of protein for local people with few alternatives has become a highly lucrative commercial enterprise with a relatively small number of wealthy beneficiaries who may have considerable political influence and power over, or alliances, with local law enforcers.

### 4.4.2. Recommended methods

A variety of methods may be required to monitor the wide variety of trap types in use (see [Appendix 1](#)), but **trap types can be split into those for which *visible evidence remains in place even when trapping is inactive* (e.g. mist-net rides, permanent pole bases for nets) and those that leave *no visible evidence when they are not in use***. For example, individuals (often children) trapping birds at oases in Tunisia may leave no trace of the trapping when they are not present, however they are generally happy to talk about their activities, so interviewing may be a suitable method for monitoring this activity ([section 4.7](#)). When lime-sticks are used, there is little proxy evidence of this trapping



activity taking place unless the limesticks are detected *in situ*, apart from detecting evidence of trees pruned to maximise the deployment of lime-sticks.

*Mist-netting* – a suitable proxy for the number of birds trapped might include length of net (or area, if net height varies) per grid square (searched by a standardised number of people for a set length of time). Another alternative for monitoring mist-netting is to use line transects or strip transects of set length from randomly selected starting points. Suitable proxies could be derived from counting the number of times a transect line intersects a mist-net, or measuring the area of mist-net falling within a strip transect by searching a fixed distance (e.g. 20 m) either side of a transect line. These kinds of data can be calibrated to estimate the number of birds captured by measuring the total area of every  $n^{\text{th}}$  mist-net intersected, and recording data on species composition of catch, and average capture success per unit area of net/unit of time. The latter can be obtained periodically through the season either by directly accompanying trappers if they are cooperative or by setting test nets if not. In calibrating the proxies, the length of trapping season needs to be estimated, as well as the mean number of hours per week that nets are set, and the seasonal changes in size and composition of the catch.

*Trap types where evidence remains* – suitable proxies would be the number of traps (or trappers) within a randomly selected grid square or intersected by a transect of set length or within a strip transect of  $n$  metres either side of the transect line. To calibrate, the average success rate per trap per unit time and average species composition of the catch at different points in the season would need to be known, as well as length of trapping season, the mean number of hours traps are set for and how often they are emptied and re-set.

*Trap types where evidence does not remain* – one could either base proxies on active traps encountered as above and/or use interview/questionnaire techniques to try to ascertain the average number of trappers operating within the area and average capture success/species composition ([section 4.7](#)). Knowledge of the spatial extent of the main trapping areas would also be important.



*Illegal use of Stone crush trap in Dalmatia, Croatia*  
© BIOM



*Illegal use of Trammel nets in Egypt* © NCE

Case study: Monitoring illegal mist-nets in Cyprus*Tassos Shialis (BirdLife Cyprus)*

## Survey area and sampling strategy

Trapping surveillance occurs in two areas identified as the worst for illegal trapping in Cyprus; Famagusta/Eastern Larnaca and Ayios Theodoros-Maroni area. The total survey area is 406 km<sup>2</sup> and each grid square is classified as either a 'possible bird trapping area' or 'unlikely bird trapping area', based solely on the presence or absence of vegetation suitable for setting lime-sticks or mist-nets. Monitoring is undertaken in the 'possible' squares only (301 squares). Each autumn (since 2002) and spring (since 2004), a sample of squares are surveyed. The random sample is stratified to ensure representative coverage of areas under the jurisdiction of the Republic of Cyprus and British Sovereign Base Area, as well as "joint" squares where the two jurisdictions meet.

Monitoring is undertaken by a two-man team that systematically searches for evidence of illegal trapping activity in the survey squares. The time taken to survey each square is recorded, as are weather patterns.

For safety reasons, the surveyors do not go out in the field at dawn, which is the main period of trapping activity, but carry out surveys between 09:00 and 17:00. Each sample square is surveyed only once each season.

## Mist-netting activity monitoring

The survey team carries out a thorough search of all habitat patches that are suitable for the setting of mist-nets (i.e. all areas with bushes and/or trees) within each survey square. The surveyors record all direct and indirect evidence of mist-net and tape-lure use and of net-ride preparation and use (e.g. cleared corridors within vegetation for putting up nets, presence of pole bases) and calculate the total length of active net rides recorded within the survey area. The codes used for the various categories of mist-netting activity and tape-lure use are given in Table 4.2, as are the codes used for recording the type of habitat where trapping activity is detected. Net rides can be missed when set within fenced compounds to which surveyor access is not possible, however trapping activity can still be monitored in these compounds. The survey team make every effort to check for trapping activity within enclosed (fenced-off) areas, even though they never enter such areas. The surveyors note cases where they come across enclosed (fenced) areas that they cannot see into at all, or cannot see into well enough to survey fully. All the active trapping sites are reported to the competent authorities with GPS locations to take further action.

*Table 4.2 Survey codes used for the field*

Net code	Habitat code	Tape-lure code
O – old ride	A – acacia	P – tape-lure present,
P – ride recently prepared <sup>1</sup>	C – citrus	playing
ANN – active no nets present <sup>2</sup>	E – eucalyptus	L – loudspeakers present
AUN – active unset net present <sup>3</sup>	F – fig	Y – tape-lure present, not playing
ASN – active set net present <sup>4</sup>	J – mulberry	U – unknown
IUN – inactive unset net present	O – olive	W – electrical wires associated with tape-lures
	M – maquis	B – car battery present
	P – pomegranate	
	K – carob	
	Cy – cypress	
	L – lentisk	
	S – syrian plum	

<sup>1</sup> A net ride that is recently prepared and ready to be used (including vegetation clearing from ground, trimming of vegetation along net ride, laying of carpets).

<sup>2</sup> A net ride that from the evidence found e.g. bird feathers, blood stains, thrown pebbles, indicates that illegal activity was taking place the previous night / morning but no net **is present**. When recording a ride as 'active no nets' (ANN) instead of a 'prepared' (P) one, the survey team makes a note explaining their reasoning for doing so, in particular by cataloguing the evidence found that led them to make this classification.

<sup>3</sup> A net ride where the trapper has left the mist-net on the poles but it is furled i.e. the mist-net is not stretched up for catching birds but lowered down (or the net is placed e.g. under a tree).

<sup>4</sup> A net ride where the trapper has left the mist-net set on the poles and it is ready for catching birds.

## 4.5. Monitoring illegal poisoning of birds

### 4.5.1. Overarching considerations

Several aspects of illegal killing of birds by poisoning make it hard to assess trends and to determine the people responsible, in particular because it is extremely difficult to record the act of a person putting out poison. Several drivers for the use of poisoned baits have been identified. Birds may be targeted if they are seen as predators by racing-pigeon enthusiasts, game-keepers, livestock farmers, poultry farmers and fishermen. Birds are often victims of poisoning targeted at mammal predators by farmers to protect livestock, hunters to protect game, and for pest control. Poison is often used to control rodents and other pests to protect crops, including orchards and vineyards (where even drinking water is poisoned). Feral dogs and cats are targeted with poisoned bait and birds can also be a victim of this. Conflicts between hunters (and between them and shepherds and other farmers) may also drive poisoning incidents.

Whenever cases of poisoning occur, a search should be made of the following sources of information to find out the context:

- **Government sources:** information on autopsies of wild animals where poisoning was indicated as the cause of death; information on the customs of poison use in certain areas; review of reports of alleged offences and poaching reports. Detection of traps, snares, and protected species (like raptors with gunshot wounds) might all be clues to the possible use of poison in the area.
- **Veterinarians:** veterinary clinics may have knowledge of the illegal use of poison and also of the pathology that might indicate the ingestion of poison in domestic animals. They will typically be aware of the importance of communicating to the authorities any case of the use of poison is suspected.
- **Animal owners:** e.g. if pet animals have been poisoned.
- **Local residents:** particularly those living near to hunting grounds, woodland and scrubland, etc.
- **NGOs and other organisations working to protect the environment,** especially mammals and birds. This includes hunting and farming organisations.
- **Internet:** specialist websites and forums.

### 4.5.2. Recommended methods

Surveying this activity is possible using surveillance patrolling in the worst areas, especially in known poisoning hotspots, during the period of targeted bird presence. Once the sampling design is decided ([section 2.5](#)), the number of sampling units to be covered and the frequency of patrols are decided according to the period of presence of the targeted bird species and organiser capacity, e.g. coverage of each sampling unit surveyed once per year. In a standard day, surveyors are present in one sampling

unit and record all the direct and indirect evidence of illegal poisoning activity, such as the number of poison baits, number of carcasses or remains found, identity of the species targeted etc.

Owing to the difficulty of finding poisoned birds/bait in the field, using trained dogs may be effective (e.g. to look for more baits when a case is detected). For example in one location in Hungary during a monitoring protocol (4 hours), a ranger found five poisoned Western Marsh-harrier and three poisoned eggs after the report of a local farmer. In the consecutive days the trained dog-unit (one dog and one ranger) surveyed the same area two times and it found a further 13 poisoned Western Marsh-harrier, one Eurasian Buzzard, two Saker Falcons (the latter buried underground!) and 13 poisoned eggs, which remained unnoticed by the traditional human survey.

**Indirect information may also be very useful for monitoring illegal poisoning.** A number of sources can be used (see [section 4.7](#) and [4.8](#)) including:

- **Leaflets to highlight the issue in known poisoning hotspots** and promote reporting e.g. via a hotline number, website, officials
- **Intelligence of well informed people** living in a community linked to drivers of poisoning
- **Rehabilitation centres** who may have knowledge on fatal dose levels for different poisons.
- **Satellite tracking** of birds of prey
- **Censuses of target species** to detect hotspots. For instance, in some countries, Common Buzzards are a common target for poisoning .Information on the age-structure of the population, and genetic monitoring may help in monitoring survival.
- **Customs and enforcement authorities** who control the import, export and possession of poisons like carbofuran.



*Poisoned Spanish Imperial Eagle © SEO*



##### Case study: Surveilling the illegal use of poison in the countryside in Spain

*David de la Bodega (SEO/BirdLife Spain)*

Illegal poisoning is undoubtedly one of the main threats to biodiversity in Spain. From 2005 to 2010, 4,395 specimens of various species killed by poisoned-bait were collected and analysed. Bearing in mind that only 7% to 10% of poisoned animals are everfound (WWF/Adena 2008), this means we could talk about 45,000 animals killed by poison in a period of only five years. This staggering figure, plus the fact that many of the species involved are highly threatened (297 Red Kites, 133 Cinereous Vultures, 30 Spanish Imperial Eagles or 13 Bearded Vultures were found poisoned between 2005-2010), shows the size of the threat posed by this activity to the Spanish biodiversity.

With the aim to tackle this situation, a national strategy against illegal use of poison baits in environment in Spain was approved in 2004. It has an ambitious objective: to halt illegal poisoning by means of three targets: increasing the knowledge and information on this problem, developing prevention and dissuasion techniques, and increasing efforts to prosecute crimes. The action plan has been developed and four procedural protocols and measures have been drawn up, dealing with surveillance and control, the collection of samples involving the presumed use of poison, toxicological analysis of these samples and the legal action to be taken in each case to boost efficiency in the fight against poison ([http://www.venenono.org/?page\\_id=289](http://www.venenono.org/?page_id=289)):

Procedural protocol for law enforcement officials in charge of surveillance and preventive action against use of poison (Annex I of the action plan) recommend surveillance (inspection visit) of any property with a previous record of poisoning. This procedural protocol also recommend to collect all fauna carcasses or their remains found in the countryside and to take them to the wildlife rescue centre, government office or assigned laboratory, where the necropsy will be carried out to find out the actual cause of death and report same.

For cases with clear evidence of poison use, the following actions are recommended to be carried:

- Presence will be stepped up in the area concerned, with collection of vestiges and information outside the normal working hours of the law enforcement officials and preferably without uniform to avoid alerting the poisoner.
- Monitoring of "canary-in-the-mine" species like dogs and cats, scavenging birds, foxes, crows, etc, will be stepped up to detect any decreases in their numbers.
- A closer check will be kept of applications for restocking with hunting species, monitoring same.
- Suspect persons (managers, wardens, etc.), will also be under surveillance and followed.
- If any poisoned carcass/bait has come to light, attempts will then be made to work out the poisoner's modus operandi since they tend to repeat the same behaviour pattern and method year after year.
- Bait will be looked for in areas frequented by animals, zones close to water, fauna passageways, warrens, etc.
- A search will be made for any landmarks set up by the poisoner to find the bait and check whether it has been predated. These usually take the form of cairns, dry branches, thread or string tied to nearby branches or any other sign betraying the spot. Evidence about the person who placed the poison will also be sought, such as footprints, tyre marks, cigarette butts, etc.

Related with the mentioned protocol, police action proved to be highly effective and strongly recommended. For instance in Andalusia, before the Regional Action Plan against poisoning was implemented, investigators managed to solve cases only when the offender was busted in fraganti. Conversely today, 82% of all convictions were obtained by means of forensic and crime scene investigation methods some of them even solved and closed several years after the incident took place in the field. The use of modern techniques like fingerprints, ADN and other tools from police investigation procedures were applied to this particular field of wildlife crime and forensics. Motivation is relevant and essential to encourage the agents involved in the investigation and prosecution of poison and must be addressed correspondingly by specialized trainers. Other procedural protocols are also available in the action plan: law enforcement for officials in charge of collecting presumably poisoned fauna or bait and the preliminary investigation (Annex II), general legal protocol for administrative action (Annex III) and dealing with cases of poisoning in wildlife rescue centres and toxicology laboratories (Annex IV).

##### Case study: Employing a trained dog for gathering data on illegal poisoning in Hungary

*Márton Horváth (MME/BirdLife Hungary)*

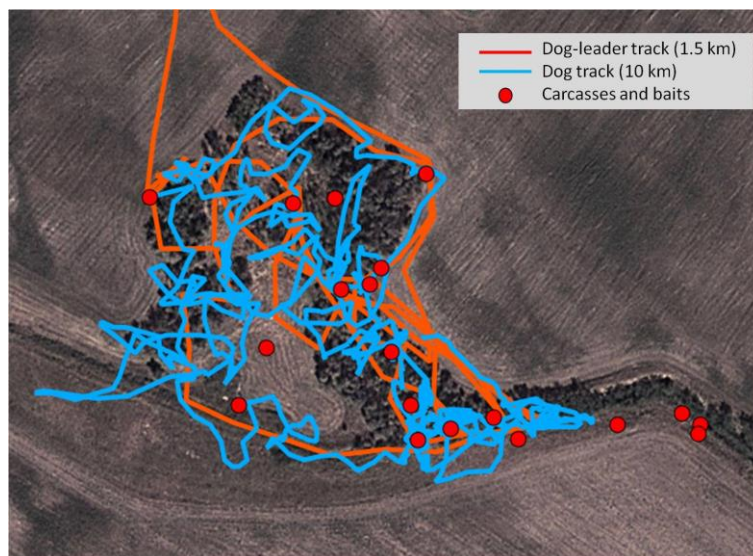
In the framework of a LIFE+ project for conserving Eastern Imperial Eagle (<http://imperialeagle.hu/>), an anti-poisoning dog unit was formed in 2013 in Hungary, as this approach has already proven its efficiency in Spain and Italy. The dog was trained during a 4-month training to check for carcasses and chemicals that are most frequently used to prepare poisoned baits the most frequently used (costs in Hungary for a pre-trained German shepherd dog was about 1,200 euros and for the training was around 4,000 euros).

The unit is now used for regular monitoring of 20 Special Protected Areas (SPAs, 3 days a week), but also as a quick reaction unit in case of poisoning cases reported by the members of the National Anti-poisoning Working Group, other stakeholders (hunters, farmers) or the general public. The dog finds buried carcasses and roams over longer distances than human surveyors, as shown in Figure 4.1.

The dog unit executed 265 field surveys in Hungarian SPAs and poisoning scenes in two years, meanwhile the leader walked more than 1000 km and the dog several times more. All together 1,500 carcasses and poisoned baits were found during the surveys, of which 103 were proved to be linked with bird crime cases and it was suspected for further 34 findings.

The dog can also be used for other monitoring purposes (remains under electric powerlines or windfarms, finding feathers for genetic monitoring, etc.) and also to help the investigation of other types of wildlife crime cases (i.e. finding the shooting location of an elsewhere found dead wolf).

Besides the clear technical efficiency of the dog unit, a working dog can be trained such way that it could remain friendly with people as well (like "Falco" dog of MME), and in this case such dogs can be the "ambassadors" of bird conservations, because dogs are very popular and can be used effectively to increase public awareness in the frame of open events (e.g. bird festivals) or through the media.



**Figure 4.1** Examples of monitoring tracklog and location of carcasses and baits found

## 4.6. Monitoring the illegal bird market trade

### 4.6.1. Overarching considerations

**It may sometimes be easier to monitor end users rather than individuals taking birds in the field, and it is worth considering where in the supply chain it is most efficient and effective to concentrate effort.** For example, in monitoring illegal trapping for the cage bird trade, one could focus effort on monitoring trapping in the field, but monitoring the internet for people keeping, breeding, buying and selling illegal species as cage birds could also be informative, as could surveys of bird markets.

**Wildlife trade is any sale or exchange of wild animal or plant resources by people.** This can involve live animals or a diverse range of products used by people – including skins, medicinal ingredients and food products. Most wildlife trade probably takes place within national borders, but there is a large volume of trade in wildlife internationally. In some Mediterranean countries, mainly in North Africa and Middle East, virtually all towns and cities have bird markets. Most of the bird species in these markets are traded as pets, while a few species are traded for food, and to a far lesser extent, for medicinal and folk magic purposes. The scale of the trade can also be huge, e.g. in South-East and Central Europe, it is estimated that hundreds of thousands of birds are illegally shot and exported every year and seized birds are estimated to be worth EUR 2-3 million per year (TRAFFIC 2008); the industry as a whole was estimated to be worth around EUR 10 million per year in 2008 (TRAFFIC 2008).

Precise data on the wildlife trade, e.g. the number of individuals and species involved, and the drivers behind such activity can be collected from bird market surveys. The number of individuals counted is typically a low proportion of the total numbers taken from the wild, owing to mortality rates in the supply chain. One preliminary estimate is that for each wild animal traded alive, three to ten others may have died (Regueira & Bernard 2012).



*Illegal trade of birds in the street in Morocco © GREPOM*

### 4.6.2. Recommended methods

As for other types of monitoring illegal activities, the choice of sites to monitor should be based on previous studies and stakeholder information. Once sites (e.g. markets) have been chosen, numbers of visits and intervals between them should be decided, as well as whether to focus on the people who bring the animals to sell to the traders in the market, the traders themselves or the customers. Note that in some markets, there are middlemen who buy animals to sell them later at higher prices in other cities.

To collect data, two different strategies are possible: **1) surveyors act as potential buyers, without arousing any suspicion from sellers, or 2) surveyors are open about their role, and are known in the**

**bird market** (this can be the only way to gain access to the more clandestine trade and receive accurate data from the market even when not present in person). In both cases, surveyors should be people known and trusted by monitoring coordinators. No wildlife should be bought so as not to fuel the trade, and only the first offered prices should be recorded to avoid showing too much interest.

In each market, surveyors should observe whether there is direct or disguised display of wild birds for trade. In each visit, time of arrival and departure, bird species and number displayed, their sex, age and physical condition, origin, destination, price, and the number and location of traders should be recorded. Pictures or movies with hidden devices should be also recorded if possible, as images can be later analysed for checking the accuracy of counting and bird identification. This kind of monitoring should aim at identifying the number of individuals and identify of species in trade at each market.

If traders feel free to discuss their trade, extra information from vendors and customers can be also gathered through informal interviews about the processes of the trade (see [section 4.7](#)). Building a relationship with traders in the bird markets could be a key element of the survey's success. Dealers could offer valuable information through informal interviews and conversations during repeated visits.

#### Case study: Monitoring a bird market in Jordan

*Ehab Eid (RSCN/BirdLife Jordan & Royal Marine Conservation Society of Jordan)*

Jordan is considered a passage for smuggling of animals to countries in the Arabian Peninsula and elsewhere in the Middle East. Trade is practiced through licensed animal pet shops and in streets, especially on Fridays, where vendors, hobbyists and hunters sell their animals in cages. The Eid *et al.* (2011) study was the first of its kind from Jordan and aimed at identifying the magnitude of the illegal animal trade at the Local Market in Amman, Jordan, in terms of species that are traded (including those listed on CITES Appendices) and the numbers of individuals.

A total of 10 visits to 'Local Market' were carried out between July and November 2009. These visits were conducted by a group of 3-4 researchers from the RSCN and BirdLife International. Visits involved an early inspection of the market, in order to identify all species present, the number of individuals of each species, and their prices. The origins of these animals were obtained when applicable.

Birds constituted the majority of animals in trade, involving 16,942 specimens of 54 species from 19 families. Prices ranged from as low as US\$1.50 for Common Hoopoe and White-eared Bulbul to US\$450 for Alexandrine Parakeet and US\$525 for Solomons Corella. Local and cage-bred birds were the most common species traded (97% of specimens). Local birds were either captured from Jordan or Syria, and included Common Kestrel, Long-legged Buzzard and Temminck's Lark. Common Pheasant, Chukar and Ring Dove were bred in captivity for trading. Budgerigar, European Goldfinch, Island Canary and Zebra Finch were the commonest species encountered, accounting for 82% of individuals. These birds are imported legally from various countries and some are locally cage-bred. Other local birds and some of the migrant bird species traded were taken directly from the wild, either trapped from the mountains of north Jordan or in the Jordan Valley as free-flying adults or taken as nestlings.



## 4.7. Monitoring illegal activities through socioeconomic study

### 4.7.1. Principles of socioeconomic study

**Socioeconomics is the social science that studies how economic activities affect, and are shaped by social processes.** It also analyses how communities and/or societies act according to their economic priorities. Socioeconomic studies involve attitudes and social interactions of individuals and groups within the same community.

A socioeconomic assessment of illegal killing of birds is a process of evaluating the social, cultural and economic circumstances of individuals and groups that are directly and indirectly associated with proposed conservation strategies, as it can help us understand the relationships between birds as a 'natural resource' and the users, through gaining knowledge of different issues to give an integrated picture of what happens on the ground. Thus, conservationists, decision makers and communities can identify the potential impacts of conservation policies and reveal the dynamics and patterns of bird poaching by local people. This helps planners and decision makers to develop objectives and conservation policies that balance conservation goals and the local communities' economy.

Assessment of socioeconomics of illegal killing of birds should:

1. Evaluate illegal killing of birds dependency and social resilience,
2. Identify the spatial patterns and techniques of illegal killing,
3. Assess the communities' local knowledge and experience of birds,
4. Evaluate the communities' understanding of bird conservation policies,
5. Determine if the communities would consider further bird conservation strategies in the area.

### 4.7.2. Overarching considerations

**If poachers are approachable and open to talking about their practices, interviews with them can be carried out to collect reliable information on the species involved and numbers shot or trapped using a *direct questioning technique*.** Direct questioning is generally considered a cost-effective method to assess the harvesting of natural resources. However, interviewees may not be willing to discuss participation in illegal activities and may refuse to answer survey questions (St. John *et al.* 2010).

**If poachers are not so easily approachable, a good method could be to interview a random selection of members of the local community with an *indirect questioning technique*.** This gives a good estimate of the proportion of the population engaging in illegal activities, and trends over time. *Indirect questioning techniques* have been developed that minimize these sources of error in surveys. These techniques aim to increase the respondent willingness to answer and reduce bias by making it impossible to directly link incriminating data to an individual (Nuno *et al.* 2013).

**As with other monitoring approaches, questionnaire and interview methods have to be well designed to ensure that they deliver robust information that can be analysed.** Other disciplines (such

as psychology, criminology and health care) have developed methods for answering sensitive questions but so far these have not been widely applied in conservation and natural resource management.

### *4.7.3. Recommended methods*

#### General methodology

To collect relevant and reliable information, it is recommended to conduct surveys within communities in the region. The survey should include:

1. A desk review of the relevant documents on the nature, economic and social situation of the target population within the region, for the purpose of the survey instruments design. Also, a literature review on indicators of resource dependency and resilience of other resource-dependent communities.
2. Conducting interviews with individuals associated with bird hunting activities, using a set of clear and understandable questions that are relevant to the survey objectives. The questionnaire should be divided into sections, each of which entails questions that cover one of the survey objectives. The questionnaires should entail:
  - a. Socioeconomic aspects of the community members involved in bird hunting activities (e.g. age, having a family, main occupation, area of living/village...etc);
  - b. Poachers' attitudes toward birds as a 'natural resource' (e.g. their poaching circumstances, what, how, where and when they hunt), materials used for poaching, their experience and previous incidents associated with poaching, etc.).
  - c. Personal perspectives of poachers on conservation and bird protection (e.g. their opinion about conservation of birds, considering other conservation arrangements such as no take zones establishment, forming new laws by the government, different equipment or hunting techniques, etc.)
3. Holding group meetings with local people involved in poaching activities. These kinds of meetings give a clear image of their understanding of conservation issues and their way of thinking of sustainability. They also encourage brainstorming for ideas that can be taken into consideration while forming new bird hunting regulations/laws in the future. During those meeting the surveyors should focus on and promote bird conservation efforts by raising awareness of many relevant conservation issues.
4. Observation during the hunting season, which is the most effective way of collecting data, particularly on poaching techniques and types of birds that are most likely sought. It also gives a clear image on what happens on the ground, including observation of poaching techniques and attitude. Observation usually validates other techniques used in the same survey.

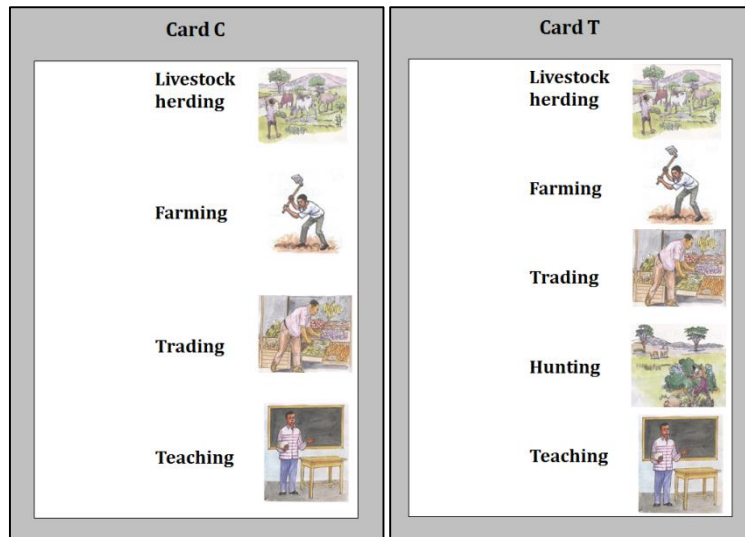
##### Direct questioning technique

There are different ways to ask direct questions, including through face-to-face interviews, phone-based interviews, and self-administered questionnaires. *Direct questioning* can provide information on the numbers of people violating regulations, the socio-demographic profile of potential violators, the incentives to violate, locations of illegal activities, the amount of birds taken illegally and short- and long-term trends in illegal activities (Gavin *et al.* 2010). However, it suffers from several sources of bias. Unless informants trust the interviewer, significant incentives exist to provide false or misleading answers. Respondents may fear retribution, including sanctions or public scrutiny. Careful choice of interviewers (i.e., with no link to regulating agencies) and survey design (e.g., sensitive questions at the end of questionnaires) can increase the reliability of responses to sensitive questions to a certain degree. Because questionnaire design and administration (i.e., consistent interview techniques) can greatly influence results, *direct questioning* requires focused training.

##### Indirect questioning technique

The *Randomised Response Technique* (RRT) is a survey method especially developed to improve the accuracy of answers to sensitive questions. There are a number of RRT designs described in the literature, 'Forced response' RRT is one of the most statistically efficient RRT designs. Respondents are instructed (rather than forced, as the name suggests) to either: answer a sensitive question truthfully or to say YES or say NO (irrespective of the truth), depending on the number they roll on a die. For example respondents may be told: if the die lands on one, two, three or four please answer the question truthfully (YES or NO); if the die lands on five, simply answer YES; if the die lands on six, simply answer NO. The result of the die is never divulged to the interviewer. By knowing the probability of respondents answering the sensitive question, and the proportion of respondents instructed to say YES, the proportion of the population with the sensitive characteristic (the number of truthful YES responses) can be calculated without any individual identifying themselves (St John *et al.* 2010).

The *Unmatched Count Technique* (UCT) has been developed to facilitate investigation of sensitive behaviours, by reducing the sources of bias associated with traditional methods of questioning. The standard UCT requires the study group to be divided into two sub-groups: a control group and a treatment group. The control group is shown a list of non-sensitive items (e.g. card C; [Figure 4.2](#)). The treatment group is shown the same list but with one sensitive item added, this being the item/behaviour of interest (e.g. card T; [Figure 4.2](#)). Respondents are asked to state the number of items that apply to them. By not stating which items apply to them, but simply how many, the method is expected to ensure the respondent's anonymity. As respondents are randomly assigned to each experimental group, the difference in mean responses is taken as a function of some respondents in the treatment group endorsing the sensitive behaviour, enabling prevalence estimates to be calculated (Nuno *et al.* 2013).



*Fig. 4.2 Card presented to control (C) or treatment (T) group (from Nuno et al. 2013)*

Sampling

In these kinds of surveys, where your target groups are identified, snowball sampling would be the most effective way of meeting local people involved in bird poaching activities. For example, your target would be local bird poachers, traders and hunting organisations. One of these interviewees would recruit future interviewees from among their acquaintances. Thus the sample group appears to grow like a rolling snowball and, therefore, your sample would cover all people involved in bird poaching.



*Socioeconomic survey in bird market in Egypt © NCE*

### Case study: Collecting information from hunters/trappers in Egypt

*Salwa El Halawany (NCE/BirdLife Egypt)*

As a first step of an Action Plan for conservation of migratory birds, NCE undertook a socio-economic survey on bird hunting along the Mediterranean coast of Egypt. The data collected was essential for planning purposes to both national and international actors involved in bird conservation. The fieldwork was conducted by a team of 9 persons, including, park rangers, NCE volunteers and the lead investigator/consultant who was responsible for planning and supervision of primary data gathering, data analysis and compilation of the reports. All administrative work and logistics were performed by NCE staff and volunteers.

#### Objectives of the study

1. Evaluate the bird hunting dependency and social resilience
2. Identify and document the spatial patterns and techniques of hunting
3. Evaluate the communities' understanding of bird conservation policies
4. Determine if the communities would consider further bird conservation strategies in the area

#### Study area

The study area covered 20 communities and hunting sites all along Mediterranean coast of Egypt

#### Methodology

1. Semi-structured interviews with bird hunters were conducted, using a questionnaire that entailed set of clear and understandable questions, including information on socio economic variables, such as:
  - a. Socioeconomic variables of the community members involved in bird hunting activities: age, education, marital status, number of people/children in the household, what do you do for living? How much (percentage) of your income comes from hunting? Do you live in this area? For how long? Do you own your house/flat?
  - b. Hunting techniques and attitude: How many person goes to hunt with you? Does any of your family hunt (giving choices: father, son, brother, uncle)? What is your main method of hunting (giving options: nets, lime sticks, munsab, Eb, air gun, shot gun, others)? Do you use any of the other methods? When and why? What areas do you usually hunt in? Are there other areas you are interested in? If yes, where and why? What months of the year do you hunt? Do you need permission to hunt? Which authority do you obtain permission from? How happy are you with the process? How and where do you sell the hunted birds? Do you deal with certain traders? What are the types of bird you target? What are the type of birds that sell better?
  - c. Personal knowledge and perspectives on conservation: Has the number of birds declined over the past few years? Aprox. how many years? What species have declined more? In your opinion, what are the reasons that might have caused this decline? Have you seen these birds (showing pictures of the endangered species) this season? Have you caught any of them over the past five years? If yes, roughly how many bird? Do you keep or sell them? Are they expensive to buy? Do you think we should protect our nature resources for the next generations? Do you think that we should conserve birds for the next generations? Do you think we can stop the declining of numbers of birds? In your opinion, what could be done? Do you think that hunters will abide laws regulating hunting? Why?
2. Group discussions were held with hunters and traders in many visited areas. Themes discussed were related to hunting as a source of income and alternatives, conservation issues and enforcement of environmental laws. Their perspectives on conservation and next generation's rights.
3. Observation was an effective tool to collect more information particularly on hunting techniques and types and numbers of birds that are most likely sought. Visits to markets were conducted to collect information on prices and trading process.

#### 4.8. Recording casual data on illegal killing from different sources

Illegal killing is difficult to monitor owing to the illegality of the activity. Whether data collection by regular monitoring is possible or not, **casual records of illegal activity are also useful if systematically documented** (see [section 5.1](#)). Such records may come from:

- **Field data from monitoring** (on illegal killing or others, e.g. ringing schemes)
- **Citizen reports** via e.g. SOS phones/hotline numbers (works well but take long time to develop knowledge and experience. People call the hotline for other things, labour intensive work)
- **Internet sources** (posts on facebook and other blogs, website with complaint sheet, apps)
- **Enforcement agencies:** wildlife police report, regular police report and customs (in case of bird traffic or number of cartridges imported in a country)
- **Recovery centres or veterinarian data** (pathology, treatment)

**Much information can be collected from casual data**, such as species and quantity, exact location, date and time, circumstances (trap, net, shot, ... in detail), motivation (if known), photos, what was done to the bird after finding (collection of specimen), was it reported to any authority and is there data on their response, other persons informed, search effort, name of reporter and contact details, habitat type and land use (private/public, fenced/unfenced), weather and migration (intensity of migration and pattern)

**Quality of incoming data should also be ranked by their reliability**, e.g. exact species, location and time is recorded, proof as evidence (photo, video) enclosed etc. vs. anonymous complaint via phone received without any proof of evidence, in order not to jeopardize the later analyse. It also important to check per country the privacy rules about this kind of data.



*Eurasian Buzzards illegally shot in France © LPO*



Case study: Protocol for recording data on incidental observations of illegal killing and taking of birds in the UK

*Alice Tribe (RSPB/BirdLife UK)*

The RSPB receives reports of potential wildlife crime incidents from several sources, which may include gamekeepers, police forces, other charities, or members of the public. In order to gather information on incidental observations of the illegal killing and taking of birds in the UK, RSBP ask the following list of questions to help the team to work out what, if any, action needs to be taken next:

- When did it happen?
- Where did it happen? – as much detail as possible, post codes and grid references
- What?
  - Incident details – what actually happened
  - Evidence? – photos/video footage/dead bird etc.
  - Species involved? – if known and how many
- Who? Suspect details – if known, name/physical description/vehicle registration etc
- Why are they believed to be the suspect?
- Informant details – name, phone number – did they witness the incident?
- Have they informed anyone else, such as the police?
- Is the informant willing for their details to be passed to police if necessary?

The potential risk to the informant needs to be analysed before taking any action or sharing the information with other agencies. For example, if the informant is the only one who could know about the incident, and the perpetrator could link the report back to the informant, that could put them at risk.

The RSPB also grades intelligence using the below table, which is the same table that UK police forces refer to. This table assesses the reliability of the source of the information on a scale of A to E. The extent to which the intelligence itself is known to be accurate is assessed on a scale of 1 to 5, while the handling code assesses the protective measures from 1 to 5. The form has become to be known as the 5x5x5, and this is how the RSPB shares intelligence with police forces and other NGOs, and vice versa. Sharing 5x5x5s with the relevant agencies allows the receiver to manage information which carries a risk with it. For example, a 5x5x5 can help assess the risk of exposure to the source, or how to proceed with an investigation.

Source Evaluation		Intelligence Evaluation		Handling code	
A	Always reliable	1	Known to be true without reservation	1	May be disseminated to other law enforcement and prosecuting agencies, including law enforcement agencies within the EEA, and EU compatible (no special conditions).
B	Mostly reliable	2	Known personally to source but not to officer	2	May be disseminated to UK non-prosecuting parties (authorisation and records needed).
C	Sometimes reliable	3	Not personally known to source but corroborated	3	May be disseminated to non EEA law enforcement agencies (special conditions apply).
D	Unreliable	4	Cannot be judged	4	May be disseminated within the originating agency only.
E	Untested source	5	Suspected to be false or malicious	5	No further dissemination: refer to the originator. Special handling requirements imposed by the officer who authorised collection.

The RSPB records incidents of bird crime on a database which allows the team to analyse long-term trends in wildlife crime, and identify hot spot areas of persecution. This data also gets analysed every year and is compiled together for the team's annual report, *Birdcrime*

(<https://www.rspb.org.uk/forprofessionals/policy/wildbirdslaw/wildbirdcrime/>).

## 5. Analysing and managing information on illegal killing and taking of birds

### 5.1. Data management

**All the observations that are collected during monitoring or from casual observations (see Chapter 4), should be compiled centrally as soon as possible, and collated in a database.** Spreadsheet software, like Excel, can be used to manage a simple database. According to data complexity and/or if more functionality is required (e.g. GIS compatibility), database management software (e.g. My SQL or Microsoft Access) could be needed. It is also highly recommended to have only one active version of the database and to back-up regularly off-site. For collaborative monitoring, it is necessary to decide which organisation will maintain and update the database. Key stakeholders involved in the project should have access to a regular updated version of the database (e.g. via a cloud system). Roles and responsibilities should be clear and surveyors should understand where to send their data, in what form and how often.

**All observations have to be recorded in a standardised way** and minimum standards on what data must be collected have to be set, including:

- **Who?** e.g. name and address of the person who reported the observation, references of the report with the information
- **When?** e.g. date of observation
- **Where?** e.g. location of observation
- **What?** e.g. species and number concerned
- **How?** e.g. type of illegality

All the documents related to an observation (photos, reports) should also be stored in a standardised way in hard and electronic copy.



### Case study: Managing data on bird crimes in a database in Hungary

*Márton Horváth (MME/BirdLife Hungary)*

Since 2006, when the first mass poisoning cases were reported in Hungary, MME gathers the data from relevant stakeholders about bird crimes into a single national database. This database was developed and extended together with field investigation, veterinarian and police investigation protocols in the frame of a LIFE Nature project ([www.imperialeagle.hu](http://www.imperialeagle.hu)). In the frame of a National Anti-poisoning Working Group the representative organizations of all relevant stakeholder groups (national park directorates, NGOs, veterinarians, police, hunters) are providing data for the database and getting back raw data or queries for they work. The basic structure of the database is listed below. Each record in the database represents a single specimen or bait, except when more specimens of the same species were found under the same circumstances (date, location, possible cause of death/injury).

**Table 5.1** Field name and explanations used in the MME bird crime database

Field name	Relevancy/Legend
Record_ID	Different for each row in the database (e.g. sequential number)
Case_ID	Different for each detected case (this makes a link between the different specimens found in a given case). In our case it is created automatically as: National Park Directorate -Year- Case (e.g. HNPI-2014-08)
Year	
Month	
Day	
National Park Directorate (NPD)	All of Hungary belongs to one of the 10 NPD administrative region, which are responsible for conservation. So we use it also to identify the responsible authority and also as a regional code.
Settlement	Chosen only from a given list of settlements of Hungary
County	Generated automatically from the settlement name.
Settlement_X	Central coordinates of the settlement. Generated automatically from the settlement name.
Settlement_Y	These coordinates are used for mapping the incidents in large scale.
Type of the case	Chosen from a given list (predator poisoning, accidental poisoning, shooting, nest robbery, etc.)
Species	Chosen from a given list
Specimen	No. of affected specimens (see the top comment). Specimens found as poisoned baits are indicated differently, e.g.: "feral pigeon (bait)".
Fate	Chosen from a given list (e.g. found dead, died in captivity, alive in captivity, released).
Precision	Chosen from a given list (e.g. 25m, 250m, 2,500m, 10,000m).
X	GPS coordinates of the given specimens (specimens found in different locations are put in different rows!).
Y	
Type of the poison	It is only relevant in case of poisoning. Chosen from a given list.
Concentration	It is only relevant in case of poisoning
Note	Any notes related to the case/specimens
NPD_ID	ID of the National Park Directorate official report
NPD Notes	Copy of the official report of NPD
Vet_ID	ID of the veterinarian official report
Vet organization	Name of the veterinarian organization analysing the samples
Vet diagnostics	Copy of the official report of the veterinarian organization
Source	Name and contacts of the informant
Found by	Name and contacts of the person found the specimens
Accusation made by	Name of the organization/person made an accusation to the police.
Police body	Name of the police headquarter which got the accusation/started official investigation
Result of police procedure	
Court	Name of the court started the court procedure
Result of court procedure	
Group of specimens	Mammal/Bird/Bait
Protection status	Not protected/Protected/Strictly protected
Conservation value	In Hungary all specimens belongs to a protected species has a theoretical "conservation value", which explains the public how important is the given species.
Sum of conservation value	It is generated automatically (specimens x Conservation value)

## 5.2. Data analysis

### 5.2.1. Dealing with uncertainty

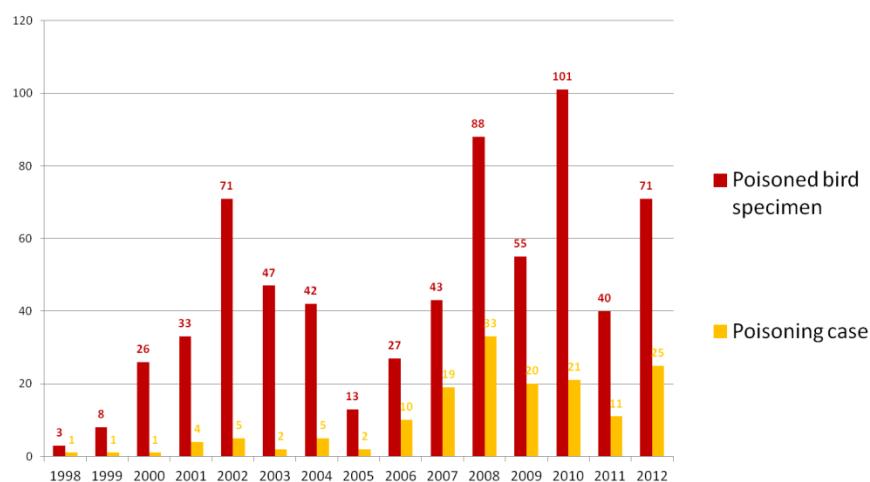
When scientists take a measurement or make a calculation from their data, they generally assume that some exact or “true” value exists based on how they define what is being measured or calculated. Scientists reporting their results usually specify a range of values that they expect this “true” value to fall within. The most common way to show the range of values is:

$$\text{Measurement} = \text{Best estimate} \pm \text{Uncertainty}$$

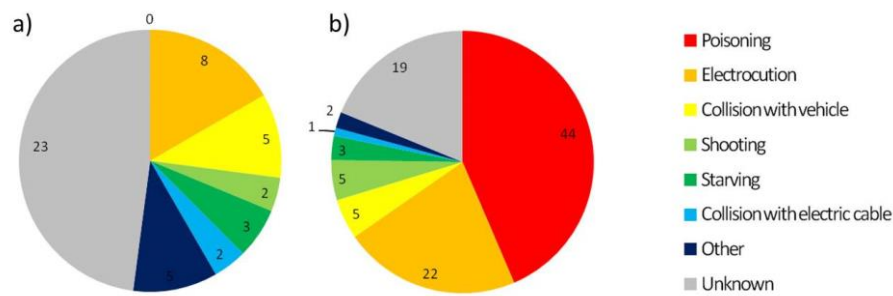
*Uncertainty* is to do with the precision of a given measurement (see [Section 2.7](#)). It can be captured by placing estimates into bands, with a plausible minimum and maximum set to take into account the various sources of uncertainty. This may be multiplicative, yielding quite large ranges for the final answer. *Uncertainty* can be also measured in statistical terms (e.g. as a range, variance, standard error, 95% confidence limits) by looking at the differences in counts between the sampling units.

### 5.2.2. Descriptive analysis

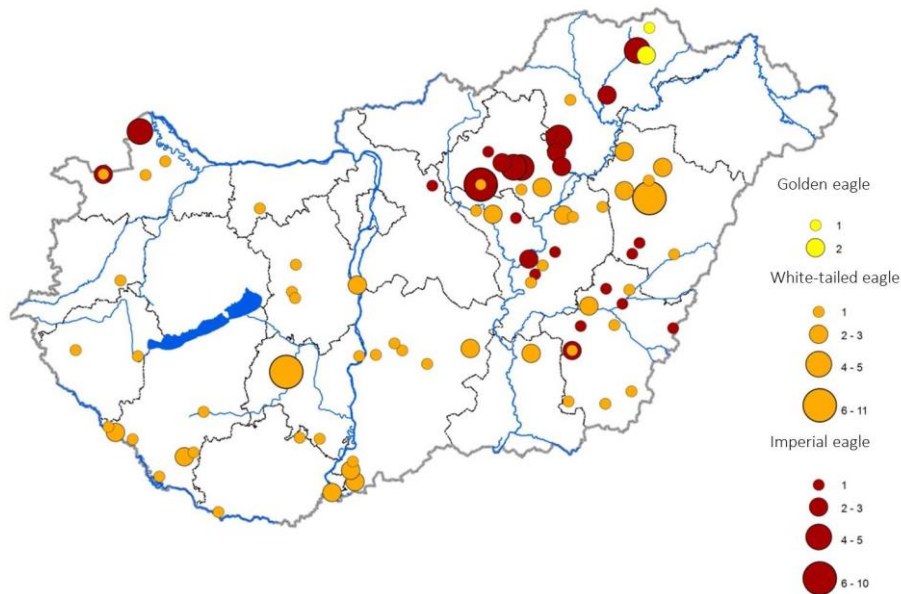
Monitoring and casual data can be analysed easily to describe the number of birds killed, the worst locations, etc. The analysis doesn’t need to be complicated and simple diagrams, figures and maps can present very striking results (e.g. [Figures 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3](#)).



*Fig. 5.1* Illegal poisoning recorded in Hungary between 1998 and 2012 (from MME/BirdLife Hungary, unpub. data)



*Fig. 5.2 Changes in the causes of mortality of Eastern Imperial Eagle in Hungary between a) 1980-2004 and b) 2005-2012 periods (n= 48 and 101 respectively, from MME/BirdLife Hungary, unpub. data)*



*Fig. 5.3 Locations of illegal poisoning cases of three eagle species in Hungary between 1998 and 2012 (from MME/BirdLife Hungary, unpub. data)*

### 5.2.3. Trends calculations

The production of trends requires analysis of counts at each survey location over time. At its simplest level, trends over time can be displayed graphically and/or simply categorised as increasing, decreasing or stable. Support available for calculating trends includes analysis software such as TRIM (TRends & Indices for Monitoring data, Pannekoek & van Strien 2001; freely available at <http://www.ebcc.info/trim.html>).

TRIM enables the analysis of a time series of counts with missing observations. The program can be used to estimate indices and trends and to assess the effects of covariates on these indices and trends. TRIM analyses time series of counts, using Poisson regression, and produces estimates of yearly indices and trends. If observations are missing, TRIM estimates the missing values on the basis of changes observed on plots that were monitored. In other words, TRIM enables the use of data from all the sampling units, even though these sampling units were not all surveyed each season. The program ‘fills

in' missing values for sampling units that were not covered in a particular year on the basis of the general trend derived from the data as a whole. The TRIM software is very widely used for analysis of field data from ecological or biological studies. It produces an index, setting the first year of a time series of data the value of 100 and showing changes in subsequent years relative to this baseline value of 100.

TRIM allows the user to select various models to undertake the analysis. A 'time effects model' estimates parameters for each year and should be chosen if one wants to assess indices for each year. A 'linear trend model' should be chosen if one is interested in testing whether a significantly positive or negative trend has occurred across a number of years, by selecting one or more years as changepoints. The linear trend model should also be chosen when the data are too sparse to run the time effects model.

### *5.2.4. Modelling*

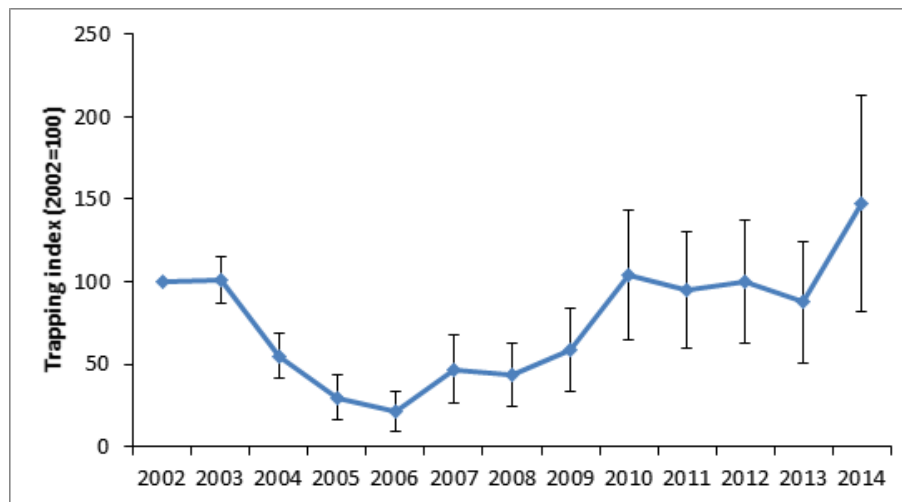
A number of more sophisticated modelling approaches are also possible. For example, illegal killing monitoring in one location can provide spatial data that can be used to create maps projecting the intensity and distribution of the illegal activity in a wider region, by modelling the association between the location of illegal killing activities and various environmental parameters (e.g. altitude, slope orientation, slope angle, ridge, distance from the sea, distance from a road, habitat type).

### Case study: Estimating trends over time for illegal mist-netting in Cyprus

*Tassos Shialis (BirdLife Cyprus)*

See section 4.4 for more background information on monitoring illegal mist-netting activity in Cyprus

The TRIM program is used to analyse the survey data to produce trends in autumn bird trapping in Cyprus, from 2002. The metres of net rides that are active or prepared for trapping within each survey square are used as the response variable, with autocorrelation and overdispersion also accounted for. The TRIM changepoint model is used with a changepoint in every year (which returns the same results as a fully time-dependent model). The TRIM program is a good way of analysing these data and will produce a model of the change in trapping activity between a base year (2002) and each subsequent year of sampling. Figure 5.4 shows the results based on a stratified random sample of 104 squares surveyed during 2002-2014.



**Fig. 5.4** Trends in the intensity of autumn illegal bird mist-netting in Cyprus. Error bars show 95% confidence limits.

The output from TRIM includes an overall trend over the time period, and is the slope of the regression line through the logarithm of the indices. The output gives the multiplicative trend over the time period 2002 to 2014, of 1.061 (standard-error 0.017), which reflects the changes in terms of average percentage change per year. If the trend is equal to 1, then there is no trend. In this case, there is an increase of 6% per year. The TRIM output shows a significant moderate increase ( $p < 0.01$ ).

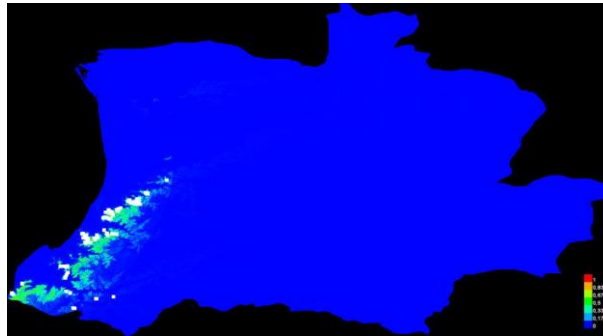
As shown in Figure 5.4, the trend shows a decline in autumn mist-netting activity between 2002 and 2006 of 79%, but an increase from 2006 to 2014 of 588%. A shallow decline in activity during 2010-2013 was followed by a sharp increase in autumn 2014.

### Case study: Analysing the magnitude of raptor shooting in Georgia

*Johannes Jansen (Batumi Raptor Count)*

The Batumi-bottleneck is a crucial migration crossroad for the raptor populations of north-eastern Europe and west-Asia. Every autumn a huge concentration of soaring migrants gets funnelled in the narrow stretch between Black Sea's east-coast and the high mountains of the Lesser Caucasus. Recent monitoring has shown that up to 35 bird of prey species use this flyway and around 1 million individuals passed through in only two months in autumn (Jansen 2012). Illegal shooting of raptor being a common practice in the area, Jansen (2012) estimated here the magnitude of the raptor shooting using modelling approach. The presence of raptor shooters was fairly easy to verify: they usually discarded wings and other body parts at their shooting stand. This occurrence was then used to extrapolate the amount of casualties found in sample sites, to estimate the total number of casualties across the area.

To be able to predict the intensity and distribution of the raptor shooting along the bottleneck, a probabilistic distribution model MaxEnt was applied. 169 coordinates where raptor shooters were present or signs of raptor shooting have been found were used in the model. As environmental layers, several topographical characteristics of the area were used: altitude, slope orientation, slope angle, ridge, distance from the sea and distance from a road. Based on this extrapolation, a habitat suitability (hs) map was thus rendered, giving each pixel a suitability value for raptor shooting between 0 and 1 (Figure 5.5).



**Fig. 5.5** MaxEnt habitat suitability map for Adjaria and Guria (habitat suitability in colour scale between 0 in blue and 1 in red). White squares represent hunting presence locations.

The number of casualties was then predicted using a Generalized Additive Model (GAM). The number of birds found per location was calculated by adding up the remains found of early migrants (surveyed in Aug-Sept 2011) and of late migrants (surveyed in Sept-Oct 2012). The GAM was validated and then applied to all the points predicted to be suitable from the hs-map. This rendered, per point, the total number of shot raptors expected to be found there. This was then multiplied by the number of raptors that were assumed to be shot, but where the remains were not found. This happens when a bird is shot but falls somewhere beyond the shooters' reach, or when a bird is taken home whole, without discarding feathers or other trace at the site. Shooters were observed directly, and the number of shots fired, birds hit, killed and found (recovered) were counted. Because of the lack of observed shots for several species, the overall success-ratio was used for all species.

The total number of raptor shot was estimated at  $7,379 \pm 1,021$  individuals in 2011 and to  $10,713 \pm 1,482$  individuals in 2012. On average, the estimated yearly toll for migrating raptors is  $9,046 \pm 1,251$  individuals killed.

## 6. Communicating results of monitoring illegal killing and taking of birds

Outputs from monitoring schemes can be used in a number of ways for nature conservation. **Three distinct audiences can be identified, all of which may require targeted communication:** the wider conservation community (e.g. scientists, hunting organisations, NGOs), government authorities (e.g. local and national enforcement authorities, government Ministries (e.g. of environment, justice and agriculture) and the general public (surveyors are an additional distinct audience covered in [section 3.1](#)). This chapter aims to summarize suggestions for the use of monitoring data for nature conservation and discusses the principles of communication and promotion of the results.

### 6.1. Communication challenges and opportunities

In common with other conservation efforts, the results of monitoring illegal bird killing should be publicised and communicated to a wide audience, but **may face a number of particular challenges:**

- **Low awareness about illegal killing (and more generally about birds)** among the public and authorities.
- **Potentially unreceptive audience among communities** in which a high proportion of individuals may be involved in the illegal killing of birds.
- Illegal activities may be seen as a **cultural right or part of cultural heritage and traditions**, and great care is therefore needed to ensure any communications are sensitive and culturally appropriate.
- **Avoiding antagonising local communities who may respond negatively to outsiders' views**, by tailoring messages to audiences and using local champions to communicate messages

There are also **several opportunities to communicate more efficiently results of illegal killing monitoring:**

- **Targeting younger age groups** who may have views that may be more sympathetic to conservation than older people.
- Harnessing the **popularity of famous individuals** within the country to get behind any campaign.
- Involving authorities by **offering them the opportunity to join forces and state their intention to scale up their efforts to tackle the issue**, rather than being the target of criticism.
- Supporting the **capacity building** of judges/police in using the results from monitoring of the illegal killing.

The results of monitoring the illegal killing of birds should be used effectively by proactively engaging with policy makers and the general public through regular talks, participation at strategic workshops

and meetings, regularly updated websites, newsletters, etc. This requires considering the needs of end-users, because without their support, monitoring is unlikely to be sustainable in the long term (Senyatso *et al.* 2009).

It may be necessary to explain the utility of monitoring data to potential users as well as to specify how the results from a monitoring scheme can be used most effectively. Such messages often need to be repeated and reinforced to remind policy- and decision-makers of the utility of the data and the importance of appropriate funding streams (often requiring relatively modest amounts of money) to allow basic monitoring to take place (Voříšek *et al.* 2008).

### **6.2. National, regional and global fora where illegal killing monitoring data are useful**

To maximise support from national stakeholders (especially statutory institutions), whether financial, technical, statutory, moral or publicity support, it is important that monitoring of illegal killing of birds feeds results into national priorities and policy processes. Consequently, at the outset, it is important to identify potential end users of the data, and ensure that their concerns and needs are adequately addressed by the scheme. This includes government departments, particularly those responsible for wildlife, habitats, protected areas and hunting regulation (issuing licenses etc.) Particularly important end-users to identify are those responsible for reporting to regional instruments like the European Commission Birds or Habitats Directives, or Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) such as the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the Bern Convention on the conservation of European wildlife and natural habitats.



Case study: Using the results of monitoring of illegal killing of birds to change local attitudes in Italy, Greece and Spain

*Umberto Gallo Orsi (LIPU)*

The BirdLife partners in Italy (LIPU), Greece (HOS) and Spain (SEO) have decided that transboundary action and a common approach are required to address the problem of illegal killing of birds, and have obtained the financial support of the European Union through a LIFE + Information and Communication project. The project aims to radically change the attitude towards illegal killing in local communities at three hotspots: Sulcis (SW Sardinia), Ionian Islands (Western Greece), and the East of Spain (Catalonia, Valencia and SE Aragon).

The BirdLife partners, with the support of JWT, an international communication agency, have launched the 'Leaving is Living' campaign (<http://www.leavingisliving.org/life/pdf/leaving-is-living-pdf.pdf>), which advocates that migratory birds have the right to migrate, as this is a crucial part of their life cycle, that illegal killing of birds must stop and that this activity is no longer an acceptable tradition. The campaign unfolded in three developmental phases, which gradually engaged the audiences in a growing level of involvement with the aim of a public statement of support to the campaign by people. Communication tools include a user-friendly website, a set of inspiring press advertisements, radio spots targeted at local communities, a number of original and engaging videos and a nature documentary. "Leaving is Living" is supported by national celebrities, such as TV personalities, singers, actors and writers. Most importantly, the campaign targeted local communities in a creative, educational and non-confrontational manner. Public events involving local people, decision makers were organised where people openly expressed their views, a travelling exhibition in Greece and Spain caught the communities' attention. Education, being key to halting the recruitment of poachers, informed all activities with local schools in order to raise the awareness of almost 15,000 students about the illegal killing and its impact on local and European biodiversity. Finally, in order to push illegal killing issues up the political agenda, national and international workshops were held with Law Enforcement Agencies and experts in Greece and Italy to exchange expertise, share best practices and publicly recognise the environmental crimes that take place in these countries.

So far the campaign has amazingly reached over 20 million people. Along with the campaign, the partners continue their more traditional and direct anti-poaching activities, involving volunteers removing traps in Sardinia and identifying and sharing the location of the 'parany' (trapping technique) on a webpage in Spain through the collaboration of different NGOs, as well as the fight against those who try to turn a blind eye or even 'legalize' illegal killing activities.

## 7. Suggested reading and further sources of information

All the resources below are available online on the BirdLife extranet at <https://partnership.birdlife.org/display/1CTRIKIMP/Literature+on+IKB>. If you are not a BirdLife Partner staff member, please contact [science@birdlife.org](mailto:science@birdlife.org) to request access to the documents.

### 7.1. Guidelines for bird monitoring schemes, survey design, fieldwork methods and analysis

**Gregory R.D, Gibbons D.W. & Donald P.F.** (2004) Bird census and surveys techniques. In: Sutherland W.J., Newton I. & Green R.E. (eds) *Bird ecology and conservation: a handbook of techniques*, 17-56. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

**Pannekoek J. & van Strien A.J.** (2001) *TRIM 3 Manual. Trends and Indices for Monitoring data*. Research paper No. 0102. Statistics Netherlands, Voorburg.

**Senyatso K., Sheehan D., Eaton M. & Butchart S.** (comp) (2009) *Guidelines for the development of Bird Population Monitoring in Africa*. BirdLife International & RSPB, Cambridge.

**Steidl R.J.** (2001) Practical and statistical considerations for designing population monitoring programs. In: Field R., Warren R.J., Okarma H. & Sievert P.R. (eds) *Wildlife, land and people: priorities for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Proceedings of the second international wildlife management congress*, 284-288. The Wildlife Society, Bethesda.

**Voříšek P., Klvaňová A., Wotton S., Gregory R.D.** (eds) (2008). *A best practice guide for wild bird monitoring schemes*. First edition. CSO/RSPB, Czech Republic.

### 7.2. Literature on illegal killing and taking of birds

**Aloufi A. & Eid E.** (2014) Conservation perspectives of illegal animal trade at markets in Tabuk, Saudi Arabia. *TRAFFIC Bulletin* 26: 77-80.

**Baha el Din S.M., Salama W., Grieve A. & Green R.E.** (1996) Trapping and shooting of Corncrakes *Crex crex* on the Mediterranean coast of Egypt. *Bird Conservation International* 6: 213-227.

**BirdLife Europe** (2011) *Review of the illegal killing and trapping of birds in Europe*. BirdLife Europe, Brussels.

**BirdLife International** (2013) *State of the world's birds: indicators for our changing world*. BirdLife International, Cambridge.

- CMS Preventing Poisoning Working Group** (2014) *Guidelines to prevent the risk of poisoning to migratory birds*. CMS, Bonn.
- Curial T.** (2003) *Synthèse de la migration prenuptial du 24 février au 15 avril 2003 au col de l'Escrinet – Ardèche*. CORA, Lyon
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### **7.3. Relevant contacts within the BirdLife Partnership**

To contact individual BirdLife Partners who may have relevant experience and resources on monitoring illegal killing of birds that they can share, see <http://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/partnership>.

To contact BirdLife regional secretariat offices, see <http://www.birdlife.org/regions>

For further information from the BirdLife Global Secretariat on monitoring illegal killing of birds, contact [science@birdlife.org](mailto:science@birdlife.org)

## **Appendix 1. List of illegal activities and methods**

*Based on the document prepared by BirdLife International on behalf of the Bern Convention*

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 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.



In 2008, police and RSPB officers raided egg collector's home. Inside they found an extraordinary collection of more than 7,000 wild bird eggs ©RSPB

- *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.

### **2. Killing**

- *Illegal use of firearms*: such as with silencers, night vision scope, automatic and semi-automatic guns.
- *Lime-sticks*: lime-sticks are twigs about 50-70cm long that are streaked with a sticky type of glue. 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. Method known as "gluaux" in France.



Red-backed Shrike trapped on lime-stick in Cyprus  
© BirdLife Cyprus



Glauaux traps in France © LPO PACA

- *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.
- *Snares or bow trap*: snares are anchored cables, wire nooses or made from horsehair set to catch wild birds. Birds are lured by berries to perch on the horizontal stick. This causes the bow to spring apart and the bird's legs are caught in the cord. They then hang head downwards with crushed legs until they are killed by the trapper. Snares are one of the simplest traps and most often used to kill the bird. Trap known as "tenderie" in France.



Horsehair snares used in France © LPO Champagne-Ardennes

- *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. Trap known as "tendelle" in France and "stone-crush trap" in Croatia.





Stone-crush trap in Dalmatia (Croatia) © BIOM



Tendelle trap in Aveyron (France) © LPO Aveyron

- *Snap traps*: snap traps operate on the mousetrap principle - when a bird, lured by a worm or berry, brushes against the sensitive release mechanism, the clamp snaps shut and crushes the bird. Death is usually instant.



Snap trap used in Brescia region (Italy) © LIPU

### 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.
- *Cagebirds*: popular cagebirds like finches are relatively easy to catch and are kept in captivity in large numbers.
- *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.
- *Dead birds for food*: protected species are traded to countries like Italy where there is a high demand for wild birds as food.

### 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.
- *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.



Cage used in Italy © LIPU

- *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. Also known as Trammel nets in Egypt.



Blackcap trapped in mist-net in Cyprus © BirdLife  
Cyprus



Trammel nets in Egypt © NCE

- *Clap net*: mechanism allowing poachers to trigger nets (several hundred square metres in area) to clap together over the birds, when enough individuals have landed in the trap area. Trap known as “Filets matoles” in France.



Clap net installation on the Atlantic coastline (France) © CABS

- *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 are known to be strongly attracted by the played song.
- *Munsaab*: trap used in Egypt composed of grass or sticks in a tent like structure to catch ground-dwelling birds seeking shelter (quail, larks, wheatears, corncrakes etc.).



Munsaab nets in Egypt © NCE

- *Eb nets*: trees and scrub are covered in large mist-nets to catch perching species, technique used in Egypt.



Eb nets in Egypt © NCE