

Press release: 14/07/2014

Government announces major reform of bird trapping legislation

Live-capturing derogations, license application procedure announced

Reform of legal provisions concerning live-capturing of birds

The Parliamentary Secretariat for Agriculture, Fisheries and Animal Rights carried out a reform of legislation related to live-capturing (trapping) of birds to strengthen legal controls over this activity. Legal amendments that shall enter into force tomorrow 15th July 2014, contain clear legal definitions of live-capturing activity, live-capturing sites and various other applicable terms. These amendments impose restrictions on the number and configuration of live-capturing stations, the type of equipment that may be used, and methods of live-capturing. Moreover, the legislation extends legal protection, previously afforded to garigue habitats within Natura 2000 sites, to all protected habitats listed in Schedule I of the Flora, Fauna and Natural Habitats Protection Regulations (LN 257 of 2003 as amended) within Natura 2000 sites, as well as to areas outside Natura 2000 sites that support natural habitats, including Scheduled Level 1 and Level 2 Areas of Ecological Importance and Sites of Scientific Importance. Cumulatively, protected areas where trapping is either prohibited or restricted to registered agricultural land, amount to around a quarter of the national land territory.

The legislation also forbids creation of new live-capturing sites. A rigorous site screening exercise is presently being implemented by the Wild Birds Regulation Unit to ensure that only those sites that conform to the above parameters can be registered. Live-capturing activity on any non-registered sites will not be allowed and regulations will be stringently enforced. All registered sites will be plotted on geographic information system, which shall be used for the purposes of enforcement and regulation.

Autumn live-capturing season

Upon assessing recommendations of the Malta Ornis Committee, as well as the relevant scientific, technical and legal advice, the Parliamentary Secretariat shall be applying two separate derogations in terms of Regulation 9(1)(f) of the Conservation of Wild Birds Regulations (S.L. 504.71) to permit, under strictly supervised conditions, the capture and keeping of seven finch species (Linnet, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Siskin, Hawfinch, Chaffinch and Serin), as well as Golden Plover and Song Thrush this autumn. Commenting on the application of finch live-capturing derogation, Parliamentary Secretary Roderick Galdes said that the live-capturing season would not be a repeat of pre-2009 live-capturing practice, but a very limited and strictly supervised season that will be subject to multiple controls and rigorous enforcement.

The relevant legislation which describes in detail the parameters and controls pertaining to both derogations shall be published in the Government Gazette tomorrow 15th July 2014, and shall be available for downloading from the Wild Birds Regulation Unit's website under the following link: <http://msdec.gov.mt/en/Pages/WBRU/Legislation--Policy.aspx>.

The live-capturing season for these species shall be open between 20th October and 31st December 2014, both dates included. Only those persons who are in possession of a general live-capturing license (*Carnet de Chasse*) and special licenses pertaining to each derogation shall be allowed to practice live-capturing during the season on sites registered with the Wild Birds Regulation Unit. No live-capturing on unregistered sites shall be permitted.

Parameters of the seasons are explained in the table below:

Species	Season dates	Individual bag limits per license per season	Catch reporting requirements	Permitted number and type of live-decoys	Ringling requirement for captured birds	Live-capturing sites	Permitted nets
Golden Plover and Song Thrush	20 th October – 31 st December 2014	6 birds (any combination from the two species)	In <i>Carnet de Chasse</i> and via mobile on the numbers indicated in special license	Any combination from the two species up to a total of 10 birds. All birds used as live-decoys must be fitted with a species-specific single-use ring approved by WBRU	If a captured bird is used on site as a live-decoy, it must be fitted with a single-use ring approved by WBRU	Not more than two stations per licensee, not more than 2 pairs of clap-nets per station. Only sites registered by WBRU are allowed.	Maximum size of each clapnet: 60 square metres. Minimum mesh size: 30mm
Seven finch species: Linnet, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Siskin, Hawfinch, Chaffinch and Serin		10 birds (any combination of species)		Not more than 21 finches/hybrids – any combination but not more than 7 finches/hybrids of the same species at any one time. All live decoys must be either close-ringed captive-breds, or, if birds taken from the wild during the season are used as decoys, these must be ringed with special single-use rings approved by WBRU	All captured birds must be fitted with a single-use ring approved by WBRU		Maximum size of each clapnet: 38 square metres. Minimum mesh size: 18mm

Applications for general and special licenses

Applications for general license (*Carnet de Chasse Għall-Insib*) and Special Licenses shall be received at all MaltaPost branches in Malta and Gozo between 15th July and 2nd August 2014 during normal branch opening hours. No applications shall be received after the closing date.

Applicants who are already in possession of a general live-capturing license (*Carnet de Chasse Għall-Insib*) will have the option to apply either for Finches Special Live-capturing License or Golden Plover and Song Thrush Special Live-capturing License or for both special licenses. Applicants who are not in possession of a *Carnet de Chasse* 2014-15 are required to use the same application form to apply for the general licence and the special licence(s).

Application requirements pertaining to each type of license are explained in below table:

Type of license	Persons eligible to apply	Fees	Application requirements
New general live-capturing license (<i>Carnet de Chasse Ghall-Insib</i>)	Anyone who reached 18 years of age who never had a valid general live-capturing license (<i>Carnet de Chasse Ghall-Insib</i>), and who passes examination on the knowledge of applicable regulations prior to issuance of general license	All fees are payable at MaltaPost upon application €20 <i>Carnet de Chasse</i> fee €13.98 Police fee €30 Examination fee	ID card of the applicant, and, in case application is being submitted by someone else, ID card of the person submitting application. Completed application form. If applicable, evidence of previous possession of general license (<i>Carnet de Chasse Ghall-Insib</i>) – either an old <i>Carnet de Chasse</i> booklet, or confirmation from Police that the person has previously been licensed. Those who renewed their <i>Carnet de Chasse Ghall-Insib</i> this year should still present the 2014-15 booklet at MaltaPost. Applicants who were never in possession of a general live-capturing licence (<i>Carnet de Chasse</i>) are not required to submit any evidence.
Provisional general live-capturing license (<i>Carnet de Chasse Ghall-Insib</i>)	Anyone who reached 18 years of age who had a valid general live-capturing license (<i>Carnet de Chasse Ghall-Insib</i>) at any point in time between December 2002 and December 2011, and who passes examination on the knowledge of applicable regulations within 1 year from the issuance of provisional general license		
Renewal of general license (<i>Carnet de Chasse Ghall-Insib</i>) that expired in January 2014	Persons in possession of general license that expired in January 2014	€20 <i>Carnet de Chasse</i> fee €13.98 Police fee	Up to two site plans per applicant (two copies each) registered with WBRU and bearing WBRU stamp of approval and signature.
Special license for live-capturing of seven finch species in autumn 2014	Persons in possession of valid general license (<i>Carnet de Chasse Ghall-Insib</i>) or who have applied for new or provisional general license	€55 Special License fee €0.50 per single use ring approved by WBRU, up to 10 rings in all irrespective of the species.	Payment of relevant fees.
Special license for live-capturing of Golden Plover and Song Thrush in autumn 2014		€55 Special License fee €0.50 per single use ring approved by WBRU, up to 10 rings for Golden Plover and 10 rings for Song Thrush	

Clarifications can be obtained from the Wild Birds Regulation Unit on Tel: 23886214 / 215 from 9am to 12:30pm during weekdays.