



## Project Partners



**Deliverable: Minutes of the 1<sup>st</sup> Scientific Committee meeting**

**Action F2: Scientific Committee**

**LIFE13/NAT/CY/000176 "Improving lowland forest habitats for Birds in Cyprus"**

**Konstantinos Dimitrakopoulos**

**Nicosia, February 2015**

## ACTION F.2

### Scientific Committee

## DELIVERABLE: Minutes of the 1<sup>st</sup> Scientific Committee Meeting

### *LIFE-FORBIRDS: Improving lowland forest habitats for Birds in Cyprus*

#### Project Data

<b>Project location</b>	Kavo Gkreko (CY3000005), Koshi - Pallourokampos (CY6000009), Stavrovouni – Potamos Panagias Stazousas (CY6000007)
<b>Project start date:</b>	01/10/2014
<b>Project end date:</b>	31/12/2017
<b>Total budget</b>	978.718 €
<b>EC contribution:</b>	489.359 € (50%)
<b>(%) of eligible costs</b>	100%

#### Beneficiary Data

<b>Name of Beneficiary</b>	Department of Forests, Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment
<b>Contact person</b>	Mr Takis Tsintides
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<b>Project Website</b>	<a href="http://www.lifeforbirds.eu">http://www.lifeforbirds.eu</a>

Beneficiary responsible for implementation:

Department of Forests



with the support of all consortium members



## **Action F.2: Scientific Committee (SCo)**

### **Deliverable F.2: Minutes of the 1<sup>st</sup> SCo Meeting**

The first Scientific Committee (SCo) meeting of the LIFE-FORBIRDS project (LIFE13 NAT/CY/176), was organised according to the relevant provisions set out in the project's proposal (Action F.2). The meeting was held at the premises of the Department of Forests (Coordinating Beneficiary) located at Athalassa, on March 19<sup>th</sup> 2015, with the participation of the members of the SCo, as well as the personnel from associated beneficiaries directly involved in the project. It should also be mentioned that after the meeting an excursion to the project sites took place, in order for the SCo to have a better perspective of the locations and extend of the Concrete Conservation Actions to be applied throughout the project's implementation framework.

Participants included the following:

#### **Members of the SCo present:**

- Mr. Melis Charalampides, Chairman of the Birdlife Cyprus Council, with extensive knowledge on birdlife of Cyprus and of the project sites, habitats, species and threats.
- Dr. Jean – Marc Dufour, expert on the control of invasive plant species (Applied Ecologist).
- Dr. Pinelopi Delipetrou, researcher of the Department of Botany - National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, expert on flora and habitat types.
- Mr. Takis Tsintides, Project Management Team Leader – Project Manager, Director of the Cyprus Department of Forests (DF).
- Mr. Konstantinos Dimitrakopoulos, Assistant Project Manager (AsPM), Professional Forester M.Sc.
- Mr. Haris Nicolaou, Forest Officer, DF.
- Dr. Marios Andreou, Frederick University – Nature Conservation Unit (FU).
- Mr. Constantinos Pericleous, Secretary of the Cyprus Forest Association (CFA).

#### **Consortium Members:**

- Mr. Minas Papadopoulos, Conservator of Forests A', DF.
- Mr. Constantinos Pappasavvas, Forest Officer, DF.
- Dr. Marinos Stavrou, FU.

## Minutes:

Mr. Tsintides welcomed and introduced the Scientific Committee members and the Consortium Members. He informed the 'assembly' that it was not possible for the representative of the Game and Fauna Service (GFS) and member of the SCo Mr. Nikos Kassinis to attend, due to other commitments. He detailed the role of the SCo and explained to each of the three experts that they will help the beneficiaries' personnel on the field so as to ensure that the implementations of Actions C are done in a proper and scientific manner. He asked Dr. Dufour to advise the staff of DF on the proper application of the treatment method for the removal of invasive species in Kavο Gkreko and Koshi sites. Dr. Delipetrou was urged to advise the Project Management Team (PMT) regarding the habitat restoration approach to be followed during the plantations that will take place during autumn. Finally he asked Mr. Charalampides to give his opinion on the reports of the Consultation Committee (Action C.4), and more particularly to comment on the Action's outputs e.g. report on current situation on bird crime, patrol schedule and final report.

Following this short welcome a detailed overview of the project's framework per action was given by the AsPM Mr. Konstantinos Dimitrakopoulos. The power-point presentation is included in the present document in Appendix I.

Following the presentation, Mr. Tsintides asked the participants for any questions and Mr. Charalampides was the first to address the nesting provisions of the project (Action C.2), where he explained that 2 of the eleven targeted bird species (*Lanius minor*, *Circus macrourus*) are migratory species that do not nest in Cyprus at all. Also he placed a concern regarding poaching. He explained that 2014 was the year with the highest recorded poaching incidents since 2002 (the year when the records started). Water points and nests that will be installed through the project actions could attract poachers so the spots should be patrolled intensively and the nests should be installed as high as possible.

Mr. Papadopoulos explained that the project goal is not only to improve nesting conditions, but food and water as well, so the 2 aforementioned species could benefit from an increase in the availability of food and water. Also he explained that not all bird species build nests approachable to poachers e.g. *Alcedo atthis*, the nest of which is on steep cliffs along the beach front.

Mr. Tsintides assured Mr. Charalampides that the patrol schedule that GFS is implementing emphasizes on the protection of the areas near project infrastructures. Also he explained that the 10 IR motion sensor cameras that were acquired can be moved accordingly to the needs that may rise up.

The conversation then changed subject and focused on Action C.3 "Removal of alien species and restoration of indigenous vegetation".

Dr. Dufour asked Mr. Tsintides about the estimated numbers of alien / invasive trees and shrubs that will be treated as it is written in the proposal (6.000), as well as the area that they cover (6 ha). Working already 3 days in the field with two crews he calculated that around 80 individuals per day are being treated, so the numbers estimated in the proposal will demand a lot of time or manpower. He explained that the *Acacia*

*saligna* trees, present in abundance in Kavο Gkreko, were cut in the past in an effort to be removed from the area, but as a result they resprouted and produced a multitude of small stems.

Mr. Tsintides replied that the numbers written in the proposal were an initial rough estimation of the extent of the invasive species population. In that estimation each stem was considered as an individual, hence the number 6.000. He also explained that this number includes around 1000 hybrid pines (*P. halepensis* – *P. brutia*) as well. These trees were planted in Kavο Gkreko around 30 years ago and now due to their poor health status are going to be removed. Their removal will not place a financial burden in the project's budget, since they will be sold as firewood to the locals of the area. Lastly, he noted that the results of the mapping carried out in A.1 will reveal the true extent and distribution of the invasive / alien species.

Dr. Delipetrou asked Mr. Tsintides if pine hybrids are present in Koshi area as well. He replied that they are indeed, but hybrid pines removal will only take place in the southern side of Kavο Gkreko as the area of Koshi is quite large to be treated in whole within the framework of this project. They both agreed that in order for the habitats to benefit from the removal of invasive / alien species, the treatments must cover the whole extent of the invasive species distribution. If this is not feasible, the treatments should not take place in patches, but in one - as large as possible - compact area. Finally when Mr. Tsintides asked if some measures can be taken in order to promote natural succession of the suppressed phrygana vegetation in Koshi site, Dr. Delipetrou replied that the only supplementary measure that can be taken is the removal of the invasive / alien species.

The participants discussed about the habitat types that will be restored in each of the two project sites, and in particular the *Olea* and *Ceratonia* forests habitat type (9320) which restoration will take place in Koshi, and Kavο Gkreko as well. There was a debate regarding the use of *Ceratonia siliqua* plantlets for habitat restoration purposes.

Dr. Dufour expressed his concern regarding the selection of *Ceratonia siliqua* species, since it attracts *Rattus rattus* which can be harmful for the birds. Also he asked the participants if the planting of *Ceratonia siliqua* is really necessary in Kavο Gkreko site, since it is not present in the southeast part of the area where *Acacia saligna* trees and shrubs are currently being treated.

Dr. Delipetrou replied that *Ceratonia siliqua* trees are only present in the northwest part of Kavο Gkreko site so their planting could only take place there. She agreed with Mr. Tsintides that the ratio of *Ceratonia* / *Olea* trees that will be planted could be taken into consideration. Finally she explained that in the southeast part of Kavο Gkreko gaps will be created from the removal of the hybrid pines and the acacia trees as well. These gaps will be filled with other species naturally occurring in the area or the ones we want to promote through plantation. Mr. Tsintides confirmed that the gaps of that southeast are will be filled with *Juniperus phoenicea* plantlets.



Mr. Papadopoulos supported the fact that both *Olea* and *Ceratonia* trees were chosen to be planted due to the absence of tall trees in the Kavo Gkreko area, trees that will serve as nesting spots for birds as well.

Mr. Charalampides explained that *Acacia saligna* trees serve poachers in bird trapping. *Acacia saligna* branches are ideal to place lime sticks because of the cover they provide with their branches that touch the ground. He said that *Olea* trees could be also used by poachers, whereas *Ceratonia* trees not. Finally, he along with Dr. Stavrou and Mr. Nicolaou stated that *Tito alba*, which nests will be installed through action C.2, can control effectively the population of *Rattus rattus* in the area as both studies and field experiments have already shown.

The discussion closed and an excursion introduced the SCo expert members to the areas of the project.

## Appendix I:

Project's summary presentation download link:

[Presentation of the 1st SCo Meeting](#)

Pictures of the SCo Meeting and the excursion to the project areas:



**Pic.1: Presentation of the Project's summary**



**Pictures 2,3: The SCo Committee along with Consortium members at Koshi site**



**Picture 4: Surveying the weir to be constructed at Koshi site**