



## ZAKYNTHOS, KERI PENINSULA ILLEGALITIES CONNECTED WITH ILLEGAL SPRING HUNTING



**Image 1 Turtle dove found shot by a hunting hide on the peninsula of Keri**



## ILLEGAL HUNTING OF TURTLE DOVES

The Keri peninsula represents the southernmost point on the Greek island of Zakynthos and is therefore the place where most of migratory birds make landfall after crossing the Mediterranean.



Image 2: The peninsula of Keri is at the southernmost point

According to the study “Monitoring Confirms Significant Poaching Pressure of European Turtle Doves (*Streptopelia turtur*) during Spring Migration across the Ionian Islands, Greece” [1] Keri peninsula is, together with Vasilikos, the most affected area for illegal Spring hunting. During our Bird Protection Camp in 2023 and 2024 between mid-April and early-May, dozens of hunters were recorded daily in the woodland of Keri targeting turtle doves and other protected species.

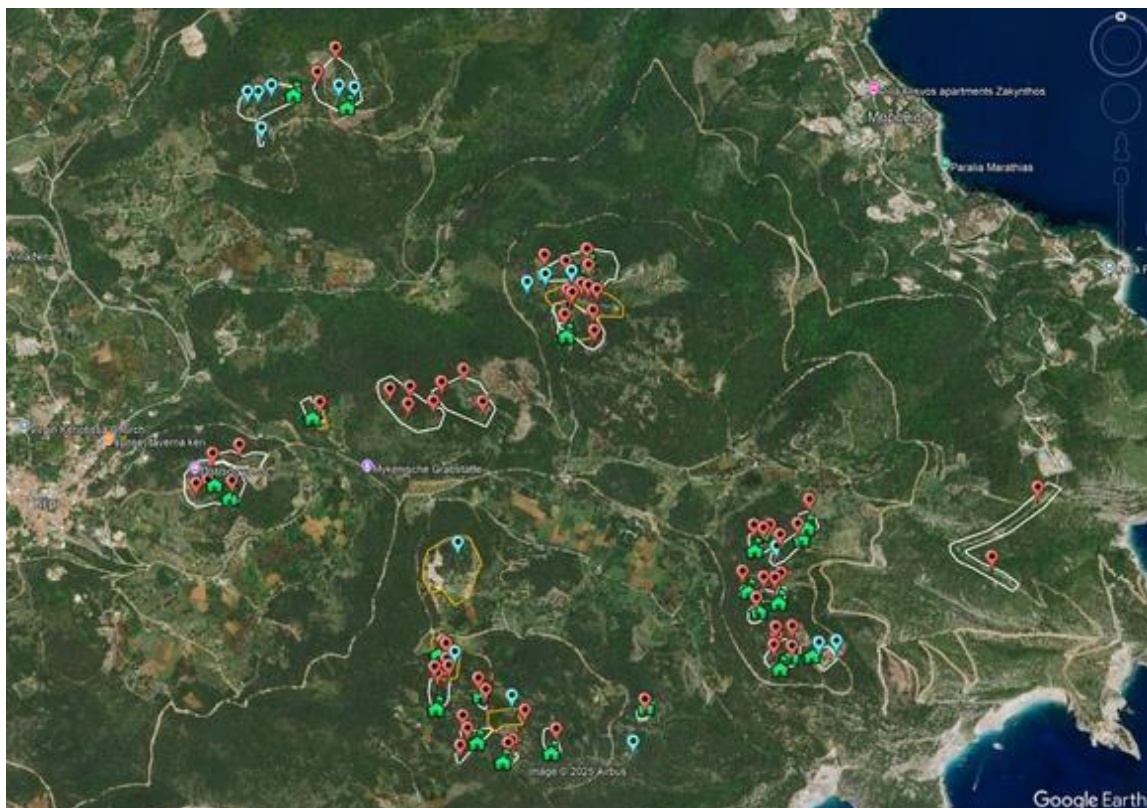


Image 3: Known “hunting villages” on the peninsula of Keri



**Image 4-5: Density of hunting hides: examples of groups of hunting hides (red pins) on the peninsula of Keri within each “hunting village”**

Unlike in other parts of the island, where individuals hunt occasionally, Keri seems to be the meeting point for groups of hunters who spend entire days shooting. The number and distribution of the hunting hides confirm the pattern of such “hunting parties”. The woodland of the peninsula is scattered with numerous groups of hides, each with a central hut or building that likely serves as a meeting point. At each site groups of 3 to 15 hunters are found at the same time.

During our monitoring, 65 hides and sites were found active on the peninsula of Keri. This is an extremely high number, considering that the area we were able to monitor covers only part of the peninsula. We estimate that at least 100 active hides are used in this area alone during spring. It is also worth noting that each hide is often shared by 2 or more hunters.

The presence of organised parties gives a general feeling of impunity among hunters who violate different laws in the area. Also our teams were regularly harassed and verbally abused, with individuals and groups of hunters attempting to intimidate and threaten us for reporting instances of illegal hunting in Keri. Some accidents were so serious that they required the intervention of the police and highlight the feeling of impunity among those illegally shooting and damaging the local landscape.

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[1] Astaras, C.; Sideri-Manoka, Z.-A.; Vougioukalou, M.; Migli, D.; Vasiliadis, I.; Sidiropoulos, S.; Barboutis, C.; Manolopoulos, A.; Vafeiadis, M.; Kazantzidis, S. Acoustic Monitoring Confirms Significant Poaching Pressure of European Turtle Doves (*Streptopelia turtur*) during Spring Migration across the Ionian Islands, Greece. *Animals* 2023, 13, 687. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani13040687>



## ILLEGALITIES

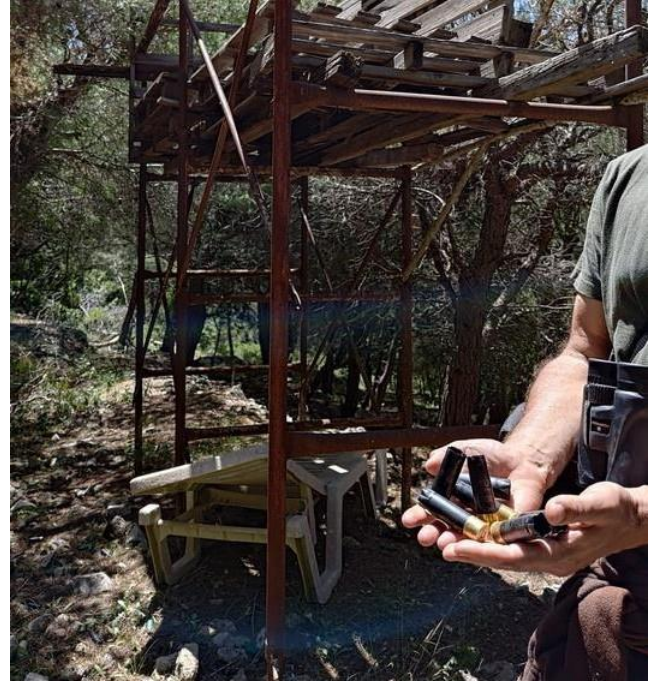
Beyond the widespread illegal hunting, CABS recorded other activities which we presume to be illegal and related to spring hunting on the peninsula, including fires, tree cutting, littering, fencing and building in public woodland.

1. FIRES: Every hunting site has at least one point where firepits are created and used within the woodland. We detected all types of rubbish being burnt, including used cartridges, plastics (single use coffee cups etc.) and food waste. We are concerned that fires in the woodland are a safety hazard, especially as they appear uncontrolled, close to other flammable vegetation and contain waste including used ammunition.

2. LITTERING: We observed a wider waste issue, with rubbish scattered widely in the woodland close to hunting sites in Keri, particularly near hunting huts and at points where hunters meet. We found that used ammunition is a particular issue and it is possible to recover dozens of fresh and old used cartridges in just a short time. Not only is this negatively impacting the beauty of the landscape, but it is also contaminating land and creating bigger issues for future generations.







**Image 6-9 Fires and littering around hunting sides: old and new cartridges, plastics...**

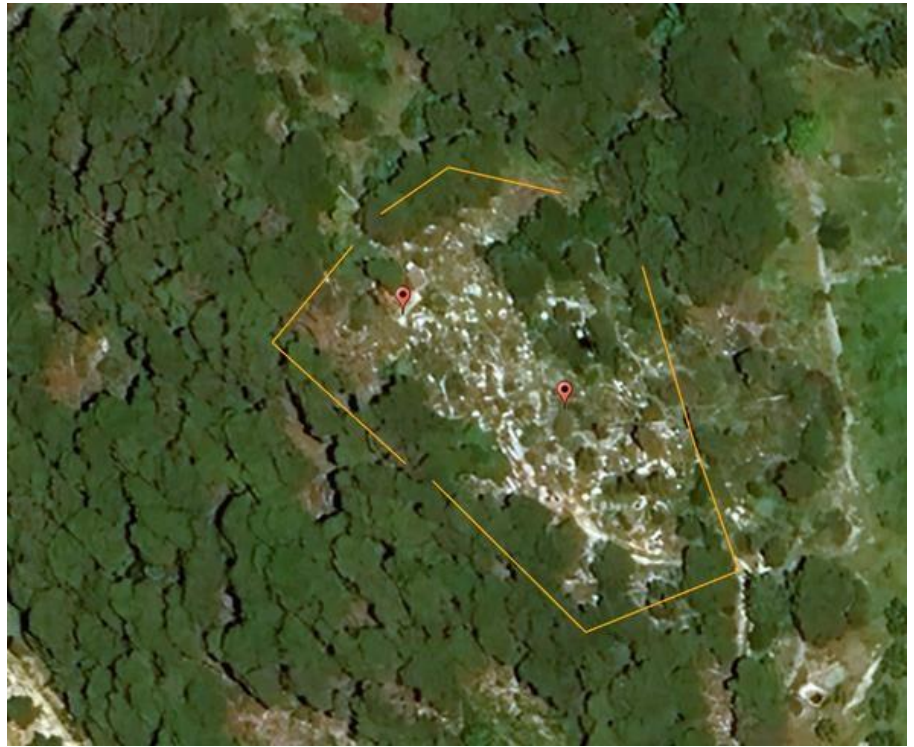
3. **FENCING:** Our monitoring revealed that illegal spring hunting regularly happens in fenced portions of the woodland. A large amount of fencing was observed within the woodland and appeared to divide hunting areas, whilst restricting or complicating access for law enforcement.

4. **TREE CUTTING:** At hunting sites, larger trees are regularly cut to create a clearer view to shoot birds and trees and bushes are cut or pruned to help cover the lower part of hunting hides. It therefore appears that woodland is being damaged and manipulated specifically to facilitate illegal spring hunting.



**Image 10-11 Closed roads and fences are common at hunting sites on Keri peninsula**





**Image 12-14 Fences: examples of hunting sites withing fenced areas inside woodland**













**Image 15-22 Habitat changes: tree cutting and pruning**



5. **BUILDING:** We noted that every hunting site has some form of meeting point where groups of hunters would meet before moving to the hunting hides. These meeting points often had a type of substantial storage building, sometimes constructed of wood, concrete or other permanent materials with a lockable entrance. Such structures are built within the woodland itself, and it was observed on numerous occasions that they are used as places where hunters would hide guns used for illegal spring hunting, making it almost impossible for wardens and police to access and find them.







**Image 23-28 Building: wood, concrete, in clearings made in the wood**

Hunter groups perfectly show in Keri their lack of interest and sensitivity towards nature and law-abiding behaviors. The landscape in the peninsula shows the heavy marks of the misuse hunters make of nature, by littering, burning plastics, cutting trees, building illegal structures and killing protective and vulnerable species like the Turtle Dove. It is highly important that the authorities intervene to restore legality in the area.