



CABS & SPA AUTUMN 2025 BIRD PROTECTION CAMP IN CYPRUS



Picture 1: long-eared owl saved from a trapping site (Photo: CABS)

Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS)

1. INTRODUCTION

CABS & SPA coordinate a 'bird protection camp' in Cyprus every autumn since 2010, to take action against illegal poaching of wild birds migrating over the island. In this report, we present data collected during the 2025 autumn activities. In total, were found **126** trapping sites active, of which **45** with limesticks, **71** with nets and **10** with both or unknown trapping methods. Across these sites, poachers used **2001** limesticks and **241** nets. Of these, **1621** limesticks and **139** nets were seized during joint operations with the authorities or collected when patrols were not available. The rest of the trapping paraphernalia could not be dismantled for various reasons. **35** poachers were caught and charged for illegal trapping. During the camp, marginal time is used to address another widespread wildlife crime: illegal hunting. In total were recorded **46** cases of illegal hunting and **20** hunters were caught by enforcement authorities following CABS reports.

In the next chapters we analyse the number of cases of illegal trapping recorded, divided by jurisdiction (Republic of Cyprus and Eastern Sovereign Base Area) and evaluate the response of the authorities to our reports. We also present our findings in relation to illegal hunting and conclude with the final remarks.

2. DURATION, MONITORED AREAS, PARTICIPANTS OF THE CAMP

In 2025 CABS & SPA autumn bird protection camp started on the 10th of September and ended on the 25th of November, lasting 77 days. 20 volunteers from all over Europe took part in it: they were from Cyprus, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Slovenia and Switzerland. The area monitored is the southeast part of the island, which is the main hotspot of poaching and includes Famagusta and Larnaca District within the Republic of Cyprus and the British Eastern Sovereign Base Areas (ESBA).

Alongside the regular camp, CABS organized a protest campaign in Maroni, in Larnaca district, at the end of September to put the spotlight on the illegal trapping activities of a notorious group of criminals considered "untouchable". A group of 10 international volunteers joined this campaign.

3. TRAPPING IN THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

In the Republic of Cyprus, during the CABS & SPA bird protection camp in autumn 2025, **101 active trapping sites were recorded: 45 with limesticks, 46 with nets and 10 with both or unknown trapping method**. At these sites, poachers deployed 2.001 limesticks and 175 nets, of which 1.621 limesticks and 115 nets were seized by the enforcement or collected during joint operations with CABS teams.

Compared with findings from previous year, a slight decrease in trapping activity was recorded in the Famagusta and Larnaca districts in autumn 2025; however, trapping remains widespread. The persistence of trapping is also demonstrated by the number of **newly discovered sites: 45 out of the 101 (45%) were identified for the first time in 2025**.

Moreover, the number of traps and nets found was considerably higher. This autumn, larger trapping sites were identified, with 10 trapping sites with more than 70 limesticks each and including 4 sites with more than 100 limesticks. A similar pattern was observed for nets. For the first time this year, Cyprus police conducted operations against groups of professional trappers in Maroni and Ayios Theodoros, where gangs operate daily with 6-10 nets per site.

The significant enforcement action followed the protest campaign “Occupy Akas” organized by CABS from the end of September, as well as the parallel “Operation Dead Air” during which BBC presenters Chris Packham and Megan McCubbin broadcasted live from Maroni¹. Further details on this campaign are provided in chapter 5.2.

Table 1: Trapping activity recorded during CABS & SPA autumn bird protection camps 2012-2025 in the Republic of Cyprus.

Autumn Bird Protection Camp	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Active limesticks sites	65	111	80	66	105	90	71	60	65	73	59	52	53	45
Active net trapping sites	33	35	39	50	51	21	33	22	35	42	40	32	52	46
Unk or both methods sites	10	2	5	6	8	5	3	0	1	7	7	10	10	10
Total active sites	108	148	124	122	164	116	107	82	101	122	106	94	115	101
Limesticks found	-	-	-	-	-	3298	2560	1893	1916	2371	2321	2033	1788	2001
Nets found	-	-	-	-	-	48	38	25	48	110	96	93	135	175

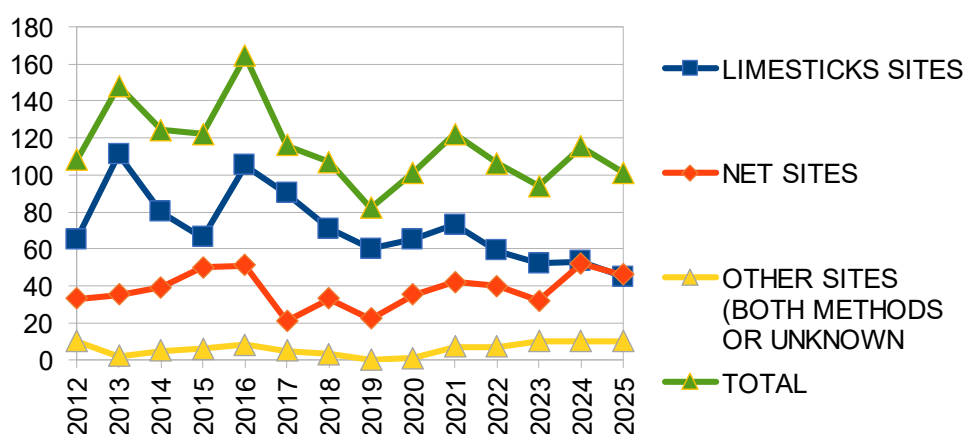


Figure 1: Trapping sites recorded during CABS & SPA Autumn Bird Protection Camps 2012-2025 in the Republic of Cyprus.

¹ https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8IZMOohZNXmrrnbne0c_OtYbl6E29p_8&si=3Vq6lmHLRtuTNoha



Picture 2: illegal trapping site with mist-net (Photo: CABS)

For logistical reasons every autumn operation varies in length, number of participants and modus operandi, in order to adapt to the enforcement conditions. Therefore, to enable year-to-year comparisons, we consider the percentage of sites found active among those inspected. The data confirm that trapping remains widespread, as -excluding 2024- the percentage recorded is the highest since 2017.

Table 2: Ratio between checked and active sites during the period 2012-2025 in the Republic of Cyprus.

Autumn Bird Protection Camp	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Duration of field investigations (days)	17	24	28	40	47	60	75	84	77	70	71	87	84	77
Total no. of activists	13	15	14	22	28	28	29	24	11	14	17	17	15	18
No of trapping sites checked	197	226	176	220	350	277	273	231	230	290	237	206	237	220
No. of trapping sites confirmed as active	109	148	124	122	164	116	107	82	101	122	106	94	115	101
Percentage of active sites	55.3	65.5	70.5	55.5	46.9	41.9	39.2	35.5	43.9	42.1	44.7	45.6	48,5	45,9

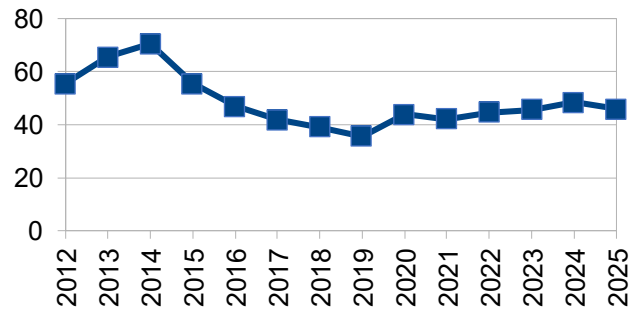


Figure 2: Trapping trend in the Republic of Cyprus based on the comparison between active and checked sites during autumn 2012-2025.

4. TRAPPING IN THE BRITISH EASTERN SOVEREIGN BASE AREA

CABS teams work primarily in the territory of the Republic of Cyprus, with only limited time dedicated to investigations in the Sovereign Base Areas (SBAs). Within the SBAs, fieldwork is conducted mainly in the Eastern Sovereign Base Area (ESBA) of Dhekelia, predominantly at night, with the aim of locating trapping sites using nets. In the Western Sovereign Base Area (WSBA) of Akrotiri, teams instead carry out occasional monitoring of known sites associated with illegal hunting.

For these reasons, CABS findings represent only a fraction of the true scale of trapping activity in the SBAs.

In autumn 2025, **25 active trapping sites** were recorded within the ESBA, representing a 47% increase compared to the previous autumn. At these sites, poachers operated 66 nets, of which 24 were seized by SBA police during joint operations with CABS.

Table 3: Trapping activity recorded during CABS & SPA autumn bird protection camps 2012-2025 in the British Sovereign Base Areas (SBAs) in Cyprus.

Autumn Bird Protection Camp	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016*	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Active trapping limesticks sites	3	0	2	4	7	5	1	2	7	4	0	1	0	0
Active net trapping sites	22	14	6	32	115	59	19	13	8	11	11	25	15	25
Unk or both methods sites	3	1	1	1	15	5	2	1	0	3	3	0	2	0
Total active sites	28	15	9	37	137	69	22	16	15	18	14	26	17	25
Limesticks	-	-	-	-	-	134	36	76	71	102	0	20	10	0
Nets	-	-	-	-	-	90	12	13	2	29	20	69	37	66

* Intensive monitoring of trapping in the ESBA only began in autumn 2016. Data from 2012-2015 are anecdotal and do not mirror the reality on the field.

5. EVALUATION OF THE ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS IN THE REPUBLIC

5.1 THE GAME AND FAUNA SERVICE

When CABS teams discover trapping sites within the territory of the Republic of Cyprus, they normally report to the Game and Fauna Service.

In Autumn 2025, game wardens prosecuted 25 poachers following 42 reports from CABS of illegal trapping in Famagusta and Larnaca District. In most of the cases, CABS teams monitored the trapping sites, collected the evidence to identify and report the suspects, and game wardens attended the sites in order to seize the illegal traps.

The evaluations do not account for the limited night patrol coverage. Wardens' shifts don't cover the entire night, despite the fact that most professional trappers operate primarily during this period, and many trapping sites cannot be approached unseen in daylight, making it impossible for game wardens to conduct effective operations.

Table 4: Quality of the response by the Game and Fauna Service, autumn 2025.

	Positive response	Negative response/operation
Prosecution	23 (in 2 cases 2 prosecutions)	
Patrol not available		0
Inappropriate response*		1
Operation failed**		16
Only confiscation***		1
TOTALS	23 (25 prosecutions in total)	18

* cases of late arrival to the site, not appropriate search of the trapper's equipment resulting in no evidence gathered, short ambushes, poorly performed ambushes, no action taken against offender. ** cases where the ambush fails for no clear reason nor responsibility. Traps can be not found or seized. ***No attempt done to perform any action aimed at identifying the offender, but only traps are dismantled



Picture 3: blackcap caught on an illegal limestick (Photo: CABS)

5.2 THE CYPRUS POLICE

In the absence of the game wardens patrols, CABS may also report to the local police, although most local stations lack sufficient personnel for night patrols. In autumn 2025, one case reported resulted in a prosecution and another in the confiscation of the trapping equipment.

Game wardens are not equipped to deal with large-scale professional trappers, and therefore CABS has always also reported to police. Except for an operation in 2016, results have generally been disappointing, and the largest trappers have continued for years to kill tens of thousands of birds every autumn.

In response, CABS organized the protest 'Occupy Akas' in 2025. The campaign ran from the 21st of September to early October, with activists gathering in front of a notorious trapping site located in a valley northeast of Maroni, or monitoring the area from hidden viewpoints. The protest aimed to highlight the situation at this specific site, where a group of 4-6 trappers operates up to 12 nets daily, yet the police, despite being aware, has never been able to stop the illegal activity.

CABS team was joined by the BBC presenters Chris Packham and Megan McCubbin, who live-streamed the events – including the protest, the trapping, interviews with the trappers and attempts by aggressive trappers to force the protesters to leave.

The international outcry prompted the police to open a channel of communication. A special unit of police conducted 8 targeted ambushes and operations against the two largest trappers in the Larnaca district. The operations resulted in 8 prosecutions, the confiscation of 56 nets, 15 electronic callers, and over 1200 birds, and fines totalling more than 133.000 euros. Below, the timeline of the events.

Table 5: Quality of the response by the Cyprus Police, autumn 2025.

	Positive response	Negative response/operation
Prosecution	9 (8 from special unit)	
Patrol not available/no action		0
Inappropriate response*		0
Operation failed**		1
Only confiscation***		0
TOTALS	9	1

* cases of late arrival to the site, not appropriate search of the trapper's equipment resulting in no evidence being collected, short ambushes, poorly performed ambushes, no action taken against offender... ** cases where the ambush fails for no clear reason nor responsibility. Traps can be not found or seized. ***No attempt done to perform any enforcement action aimed at identifying the offender, but only traps are dismantled. ****cases reported to APS

Table 6: Timeline of events related to CABS protest campaign 'Occupy Akas' and the largest trappers of the island

20.09.25 Agios Theodoros	Trapping. CABS monitor the trapping site of Trikkis and other notorious trappers in Agios Theodoros in the night. The trapping site is active: the electronic caller is playing
21.09.25 Maroni	Protest campaign. The protest Occupy Akas starts. At dawn a group of 15 activists gathers on the hill northeast of Maroni, in front of the trapping site of a notorious gang. They arrive unseen on the location, whilst the electronic callers are playing and the trappers have already set up the nets. With the light they show big banners and the BBC presenters Chris Packham and Megan McCubbin livestream the events with the operation Dead Air. The activists call the police and the trappers with face covered run to free hundreds of birds caught in the nets. CABS writes a mail with request the intervention of the police for the following days of protest for safety.
22.09.25 Maroni	Confrontation. At dawn the activists arrive at the location of the protest and are welcomed by Akas himself with his helper, who confront them and tell them to leave. With the drone CABS observe trappers trapping down in the valley. Later Akas gets interviewed by Chris Packham and Megan McCubbin and admits on camera about trapping. Police is called for safety. Later Police arrive on the site and seize 2 nets.
23.09.25 Maroni	Confrontation and operation. At dawn the group's cars are blocked on their way to the protest site by trappers who ram them to scare them away. CABS and Packham complain by the Police station of Kofinou and Zygi and in the afternoon goes to Nikosia to ask for a meeting with the Police HQ.
24.09.25 Maroni	Chase. The activists try to check if the nets are set with the drone but the trappers follow their cars to send them away.
25.09.25 Maroni	Trapping. The activists see with the drone that the trappers are active: their nets are up and they cover their faces when taking and killing the caught birds.
26.09.25 Maroni	Police operation. MMAD special unit of Cyprus police conduct a successful operation at Akas site: 10 nets, 4 electronic callers and 63 dead birds are seized and 343 birds are freed.
27.09.25 Maroni	Confrontation. Activists try to reach the protest location but are attacked by masked trappers, who block their cars and threaten them and tell them to leave. Police is called: when the patrol arrives, one trapper attack the team with pepper spray before leaving.
28.09.25 Agios Theodoros	Chase. Loud electronic callers are playing from different active sites, trappers monitor the access roads. Activists are spotted and chased away by trappers with cars with no number plates. CABS reports per mail the incident and the trapping sites to police.
29.09.25 Maroni and	Trapping. The activists monitor Akas' trapping site with the drone and see nets set. Trappers with covered faces kill the birds. Later they fly the drone on Trikkis site and it is full with nets.

Agios Theodoros	CABS report both sites to police again per mail.
30.09.25	Report. CABS meets police officials at the police headquarter and reports the situation
01.10.25 Agios Theodoros	Aggression. CABS activists monitor one of the trapping sites of Trikkis and other notorious trappers in Agios Theodoros. In the night CABS is chased away by aggressive trapper with masked face and car with no number plate. The team arrives to the site with game wardens and here, in plain daylight and in front of the officers, Trikkis threatens a young female activist, throws rocks at another activist and slashes all tires of CABS car. CABS reports to local police and headquarter per mail.
02.10.25 Maroni	Trapping. The activists monitor the trapping site with the drone and see nets set and trappers operating in a hurry.
03.10.25 Agios Theodoros	Police operation. MMAD special unit of Cyprus police conduct a successful operation against Trikkis with an ambush at the trapping site and a house search: 16 nets, 4 electronic callers and 1.101 dead birds are seized and 147 birds are freed
05.10.25 Maroni	Police operation. MMAD special unit of Cyprus police conduct a successful operation against Akas: 3 nets and 4 electronic callers seized, 6 birds released
07.10.25 Agios Theodoros	Trapping. CABS team monitors the trapping sites in the night – at least one is active. The activists are chased away by trappers by car.
09.10.25 Maroni and Agios Theodoros	No trapping. CABS monitors the trapping sites and they seem not active: no electronic caller is heard
12.10.25 Agios Theodoros	Police operation. MMAD special unit of Cyprus police conduct a successful operation against Trikkis: 8 nets, 1 electronic caller and 87 dead birds are seized, and 83 birds released
16.10.25 Maroni and Agios Theodoros	No trapping. CABS monitors the trapping site: the electronic caller is playing but no set nets observed by Akas. Chase. CABS monitors Trikkis' trapping site: it is active. CABS team is chased away by trappers in cars with no number plate. CABS reports to police per mail.
17.10.25	CABS thanks the police for their operations per mail.
25.10.25 Agios Theodoros	Police operation. MMAD special unit of Cyprus police conduct a successful operation against Trikkis: 11 nets, 2 electronic callers and 7 dead birds are seized, 26 birds released
28.10.25	Trapping. CABS monitors the trapping site: it is active and nets are set.

Agios Theodoros	
29.10.25 Maroni	Trapping. CABS monitors the trapping site: it is active. Trappers operate in a hurry. CABS reports the sites in Agios Theodoros and Maroni to the police per mail.
02.11.25 Agios Theodoros	Police operation. MMAD special unit of Cyprus police conduct a successful operation against Trikkis: 21 nets and 41 dead birds are seized, 121 birds released
05.11.25 Agios Theodoros	Trapping. CABS monitors the trapping site: it is active
08.11.25 Agios Theodoros	Trapping. CABS monitors Trikkis' trapping site: it is active
18.11.25 Agios Theodoros	Trapping. CABS monitors the trapping site: it is active
20.11.25 Agios Theodoros	Trapping. CABS monitors the trapping site: it is active. CABS reports to police per mail.
02.12.2025 Agios Theodoros	Trapping. MMAD informs us on phone that they won't prosecute Trikkis anymore for the season.



Picture 4: Protest campaign 'Occupy Akas' (Photo: CABS).

5.3 ESBA POLICE

Within the ESBA, CABS teams traditionally reported cases of wildlife crime to the special unit of police, the Crime Action Team, with which they had maintained years of effective cooperation. Unfortunately, in 2025, police resources for antipoaching activities were heavily reduced, and the special unit was often unable to respond to CABS reports of illegal trapping. As a result, CABS teams mainly reported to regular police units, which consistently provided full support, but could only confiscate the illegalities and not plan operations to apprehend the culprits. Consequently, only one case led to a prosecution in 2025.

Table 7: Quality of the response by the ESBA Police, autumn 2025.

	Positive response	Negative response/operation
Prosecution	1	
Patrol non available		
Inappropriate response*		2
Operation failed**		
Only confiscation***		6
TOTALS	1	8

* cases of late arrival to the site, not appropriate search of the trapper's equipment resulting in no evidence collected, short ambushes, poorly performed ambushes, no action taken against offender...

** cases where the ambush fails for no clear reason nor responsibility. Traps can be not found or seized.

***No attempt done to perform any action aimed at identifying the offender, but only traps are dismantled

6. CABS & SPA PARTICIPATION IN THE OVERALL ENFORCEMENT RESULTS AGAINST BIRD TRAPPING

BirdLife Cyprus reports that in the period from August to end of October 2025, Game Wardens of Larnaca and Famagusta Districts, Cyprus Police and ESBA Police secured 63 prosecutions related to bird trapping².

CABS assisted the enforcement with 28 of them, 44 % of all prosecutions. For these cases CABS assistance was not only in finding active trapping cases but also gathering evidence needed to secure prosecutions.

² BirdLife Cyprus, UPDATE on illegal trapping activity in Cyprus, February 2026 at: [Surveillance Programme - BirdLife Cyprus](#)

Table 8: Prosecutions for bird trapping in the period August-October 2025

	GAME WARDENS	ESBA
Total number of prosecutions ³	61	2
Number of prosecutions secured with CABS assistance	27	1
Percentage of prosecutions secured with CABS assistance out of totals	44,26%	50%

7. ILLEGAL HUNTING

In Cyprus illegal hunting is widespread and largely goes unchallenged. CABS teams devote most of their time to investigating illegal trapping sites, with only limited resources available to address cases of illegal shooting. Authorities are rarely proactive in tackling illegal hunting.

The cases reported below include only those that were identified and investigated; therefore, the figures do not reflect the full scale of the problem. The main illegal activities involve the shooting of protected species – particularly blackcaps, Spanish sparrows, pipits, bee-eaters– and the use of electronic decoys to lure birds to hunting sites. These devices are banned because they dramatically increase the number of birds killed, yet they are regularly used by hunters to attract both protected and huntable species, such as quails, skylarks, song thrushes.

In autumn 2025, CABS recorded 46 cases of illegal hunting and their reports led to the prosecution of 20 hunters for shooting protected species and/or using an illegal decoys - 19 in the Republic of Cyprus and one in the ESBA.



Picture 5: Illegal electronic caller used for hunting and seized by Game Wardens (Photo: CABS)

³ Ibid

Table 9: Cases of illegal hunting dealt with by CABS volunteers in autumn 2025

	REPUBLIC	ESBA	TOTAL
Hunting with electronic caller emitting recorded quail calls	10	1	11
Hunting of protected bird species with electronic caller emitting recorded blackcap call	14	1	15
Hunting of protected bird species	1	0	1
Hunting with electronic caller emitting recorded song thrush calls	7	0	7
Hunting with electronic caller emitting recorded skylark calls	11	1	12
Hunting in a protected area	0	0	0
TOTAL CASES	43	3	46
NUMBER OF PROSECUTIONS	19	1	20

8. DISCUSSION

- Illegal trapping is still rampant in the south-east of the island.
- In the Republic of Cyprus, certain criminal gangs of trappers appeared to be untouchable, operating daily during the autumn season, but too dangerous for the Game and Fauna Service to intervene and largely ignored by police. In response, CABS organised a protest campaign, supported by BBC presenters Chris Packham and Megan McCubbin, to draw public and official attention to the issue.

Following the campaign, the Cyprus police acted on CABS reports and carried out several successful operations, resulting in the seizure of large number of illegal traps and the apprehension of trappers responsible. For the first time, the police sent a clear message to notorious criminal trapping gangs: nobody is above the law.

This is hoped to mark the beginning of a serious enforcement against professional trapping. However, CABS teams have already recorded the same trappers resuming their activities and have reported the incidents to the police.

- In general, in Famagusta and Larnaca districts, trapping remains at high levels, but although a slight decrease was recorded compared to last year. Nevertheless, CABS findings indicate an increase in larger trapping sites with limesticks, operated by groups of trappers or hunters, possibly encouraged by the lower penalties for limesticks compared to net trapping.

Considering the high number of active trapping sites and the timing of the illegal activities -at night or at night and early morning- enforcement remains insufficient to affectively address the problem or serve as deterrent. Game wardens remain understaffed and mainly unprepared for effective operations and ambushes.

- In the ESBA, the situation regarding illegal trapping is becoming increasingly critical. CABS monitoring in known hotspot areas documented multiple large trapping sites active on same nights, while access roads to the countryside were closely monitored by poachers.

It has been evident for years that professional trappers in the British territory respond rapidly to enforcement activity, and as soon as enforcement is reduced, poachers take the opportunity to set up new trapping installations. Nevertheless, police anti-poaching activities in the ESBA were once again reduced to a minimum this autumn and wildlife crime, unsurprisingly, increased dramatically.

While in the Republic of Cyprus police are beginning to address larger criminal trapping operations, the ESBA has taken a step back in tackling trapping activities.

- In Autumn 2025 CABS teams were able to dedicate only limited time to illegal hunting, but the situation remained unchanged: illegal hunting continues to be widespread. Blackcaps, Spanish sparrows and other protected species are regularly targeted, with some known locations where dozens of hunters gather daily to specifically target protected species. Enforcement authorities rarely intervene, unless a report is filed. Loud callers are used both at night and during the day to attract these protected species as well as huntable species such as quails, song-thrushes, skylarks, bringing them within the range of hunters. Enforcement again enforcement appears either incapable or unwilling to address the phenomenon. As a result, hundreds of thousands of birds are killed illegally with shotguns, adding to the hundreds of thousands killed with nets and limesticks.



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