
Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS)

ANNUAL REPORT - 2019



Dear Friends and Supporters,

In 2019, the various campaigns and operations coordinated by Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) once again saved countless migratory birds from doomed fate being killed, caught or prematurely destined for a cooking pot. As ever, our main field campaigns focused on the bird poaching hotspots in the Mediterranean region, with CABS teams active in Italy, Malta, France, Spain, Cyprus and Lebanon during the migration period. The primary aim of our fieldwork is the same everywhere: Take direct action to stop poachers, document illegalities and to persuade authorities to intervene, with public support and international political pressure.

Another focus of our activities this year was in Germany, where thousands of birds of prey continue to be persecuted and poisoned, shot down or trapped every year. The interim report of our nationwide raptor persecution monitoring scheme (EDGAR), in which we recorded and investigated a total of 1,188 cases of illegal bird of prey persecution, shows that the state of species conservation in Germany is not exactly in good shape either. In the criminal proceedings initiated by the authorities as a result of these records, only one perpetrator was prosecuted in a total of 49 cases. This low prosecution rate is a testament to the deficiency of a country whose government repeatedly demands that other states do more for the environment. However, in contrast to other parts of the world, where poverty, war and corruption cause major social and environmental problems, Germany has sufficient resources available for a fully functioning species conservation system. What is lacking is sufficient political will and official commitment. Until this changes, our employees and activists in Germany and elsewhere in Europe will still have a lot to do.

For the support of our work we would like to thank all our members, sponsors and activist volunteer bird guards. Together with you we want to work on making the flyways of our migratory birds even safer in the year 2020.

The CABS Team

January

- From the beginning of November until mid-January, several CABS teams were deployed to work against illegal trapping of wintering songbirds in Cyprus. >100 active trapping sites were found and 847 limesticks, 142 mist nets and 62 illegal electronic decoys were seized. As a direct result of our field investigations, the authorities were able to convict 7 poachers. 678 birds were released from traps and nets, including owls, warblers, robins and numerous thrushes.



- Illegal migratory bird hunt on the Lower Rhine: CABS filed a criminal complaint against a group of hunters who shot protected geese near Bedburg-Hau (Kleve district). A bird had previously been found seriously injured by CABS members and brought to a veterinarian, where the bird subsequently died. An x-ray revealed a total of five shot which caused the fatal injury. Because it could not be clearly determined which hunter had fired the shot, the case was later discontinued.

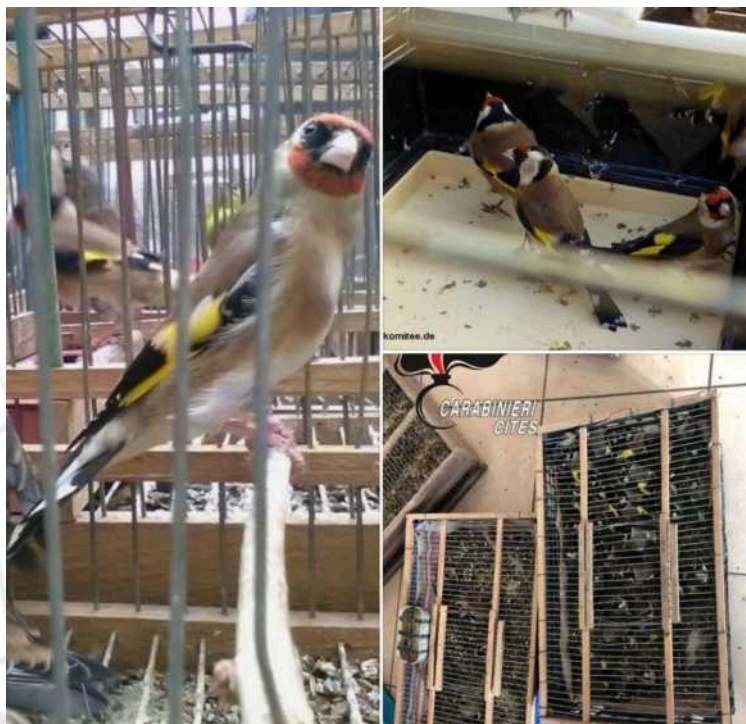




- In Florence (Italy), research by CABS led to the arrest of a highly organised criminal poacher. After our experts together with colleagues from the WWF hunting supervision had observed the man setting up bird traps, he was arrested, and a search warrant conducted at his home address. In the process, 79 wire snares and traps for mammals, 49 snap traps for songbirds, two clap nets, 60 specimens of protected birds, 17 frozen songbirds, 2,200 shots of ammunition and several prohibited firearms were seized.
- Successful action against poaching in southern Italy: Seven poachers were arrested in Reggio Calabria and near Crotone in a joint action by CABS and the Carabinieri Environmental Unit. Four had shot at protected birds, two were caught with illegal semi-automatic hunting weapons and one with a banned electronic decoy. The men's hunting weapons and two dozen freshly shot thrushes were confiscated.

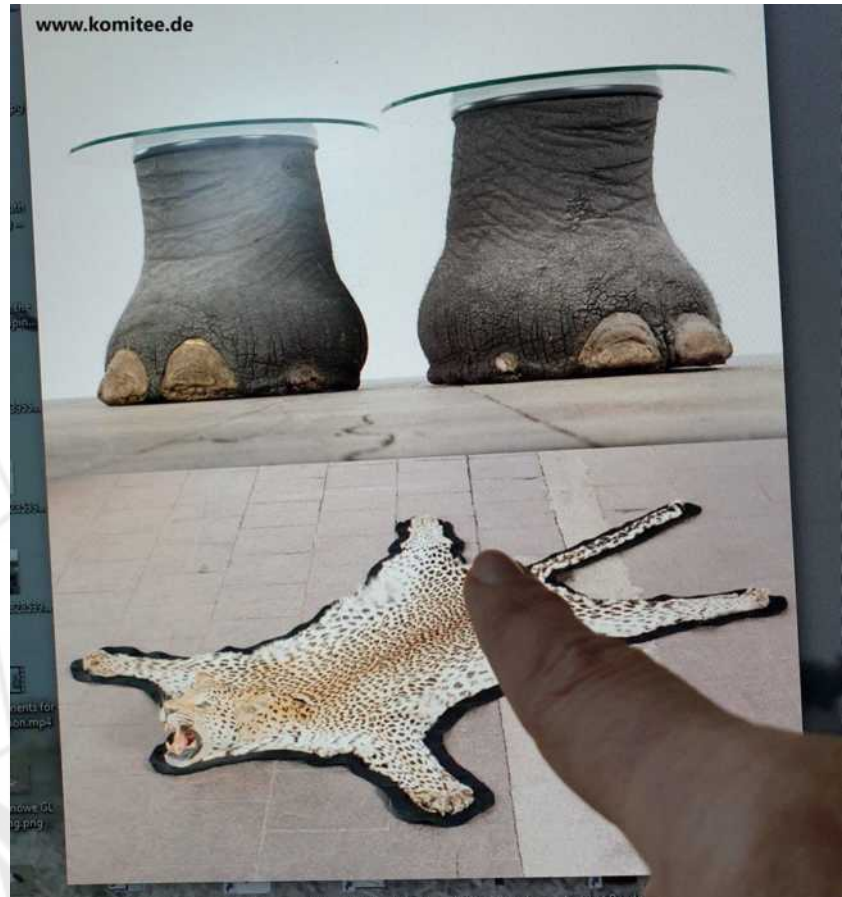
February

- At the traditional Ballaró bird market in the Sicilian capital of Palermo, the police confiscated a total of 140 wildly caught goldfinches, following a tip-off from CABS. Despite the ban, the keeping of wild goldfinches as "ornamental birds" remains widespread in Sicily. In the last three years, the research and work of our Italian CABS members has led to the confiscation and release of more than 1,000 goldfinches in the Palermo area alone.



- In Schleswig-Holstein and North Rhine-Westphalia, our employees are taking action against the illegal capture of birds of prey and crows. During a spot check at the property of a poultry farmer in Kummerfeld (Segeberg) three forbidden live traps were discovered and later seized by the police. After another CABS report, the authorities deactivated an active hawk trap close to a pigeon breeder in Velen (district Borken). A freshly caught sparrowhawk was also released. In both cases criminal proceedings were initiated against the property owners.
- Action against waterfowl hunting on the Po Delta (Italy): South of Venice the police collared four hunters, who clearly exceeded the daily limit of 25 birds per shooter during a CABS monitoring action. At the end of February, another report from our team led to the confiscation of more than 40 dead whistling, teal and teal ducks in a restaurant where the birds were offered on the menu despite a marketing ban.

- Animal trader shut down in Germany: Action was taken against an auction house in Cologne offering two tables made from the feet of elephants as well as a leopard skin for sale in the customer order, following a tip off from CABS. The tasteless trophies were seized and a procedures against the responsible persons launched because of offence against the federal nature protection law, CITES and the European Union species protection regulation.



March

- Bird protection camp on Malta: From mid-March to mid-April, a total of 12 CABS members search for clap nets for trapping finches and other small birds. A total of 22 trapping sites were discovered and subsequently monitored with video cameras. The police, who were informed by us, managed to catch six trappers in the act and to identify three more on the basis of the video material we had produced. The men are awaiting trial.



- After the shooting down of numerous white storks in northern Lebanon, the new Interior Minister Ria Haffar El Hassan called on the Lebanese Internal Security Forces to take more decisive action against poaching. Among other things, the minister demands more patrols in the hot spots of bird hunting as well as better cooperation with nature conservation associations. CABS and our partner associations such as Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL) and the Association for Bird Conservation in Lebanon (ABCL) had previously published pictures of freshly shot storks.



- At the CABS bird protection camp in Cyprus, 20 volunteers spend the whole month searching for illegal traps for migratory birds. A total of 206 limesticks and over 500 metres of ground nets were dismantled. Around 80 freshly caught songbirds were released unharmed from the traps. For the first time, several cases of illegal hunting of turtle doves and swallows was reported. Four of the poachers reported by us are later were identified by the police and sentenced to fines.



April

- Malta: From mid-April to early May, our Bird Guards monitor compliance with the new hunting ban for turtle doves in spring. Three hunters were filmed shooting protected species and using illegally modified weapons were arrested by the police. On the neighbouring island of Gozo, we are able to identify and close four huge cage traps, a collapsible net and a 30-metre-long mist-net used to catch turtle doves. Criminal proceedings are initiated against the landowners.

- On the Mediterranean islands of Sardinia and Ischia, the CABS fight against the illegal songbird trapping rolls on: For the first ever, we found just one active trapping site with 10 snap traps on the former bird-trapping stronghold of Ischia. Eight large mist-nets and one site with limesticks was discovered in Sardinia. During the subsequent covert monitoring of the trapping sites, it was possible to film a total of four poachers. The men were later identified and charged by the police.
- Actions in Cyprus: Follow information gathered during a CABS field investigation, the police succeed in catching a notorious repeat offender near Paralimni. His CABS "file" revealed that the man had already been caught five times by us since 2012 and only had to pay a fine of a few hundred euros each incident. This time he was fined a total of 8,000 euros.
- Action against bird dealers in Calabria: Police in Reggio Calabria (South Italy) arrested two bird dealers following a CABS report: The men had drawn the attention of one of our CABS members after selling birds with obvious falsified rings. 50 illegally caught hawfinch, siskin, greenfinches and goldfinches were found by the police in a subsequent house raid. The birds were fit for release again after a short stay in a care station.



May

- Raptor persecution by pigeon fanciers: CABS staff from our head office filed criminal charges against two pigeon fanciers from Diepenau (Lower Saxony) and Goch (North Rhine-Westphalia) who have set up ladder traps for hawks on their properties. In both cases (independent of each other) our employees had discovered the active traps during inspections and informed the police. The men are now await final sentencing for violation of the Federal Nature Conservation Act.
- On the road with National Geographic: In spring, reporters from the magazine accompanied CABS actions against illegal bird-trapping in Sicily and Malta. The report, published in the May issue of National Geographic, gives a detailed insight into the difficult work of our teams on the ground and attracts worldwide attention to our campaign. It also reports in detail on the activities of criminal bird traders who smuggle tens of thousands of wild finches from Italy to Malta each year.
- Illegal bird-trapping in Germany: Following a tip-off from a member of the public, CABS members inspected a hunting ground on the outskirts of Hamburg. They come across three traps baited for crows with live decoy birds and a hawk trapping basket. The remains of eight crows and a bird of prey are found in the surrounding area. The police are informed, confiscate all traps and initiate criminal proceedings against the property owner - a hunter.
- Cyprus: During our spring missions against illegal bird-trapping, a total of 17 active trapping sites for songbirds with 206 limesticks are found and dismantled. Compared to the 2017 spring camp, where more than 1,800 limesticks were found, this corresponds to a decline of more than 85%. A nice success! It shows that our longstanding and relentless work is finally paying off!



June

- Bird of prey poisoning in Germany: Within just a few weeks, our raptor persecution and wildlife crime monitoring scheme (EDGAR) receives evidence of bird of prey poisoning from Bavaria, Lower Saxony and North Rhine-Westphalia. Among the victims are three red kites, a goshawk and a peregrine falcon, all of which have been proven to have been killed with poisoned baits. In all cases, criminal charges will be filed against persons unknown and an appeal for information was launched.



- 'Bird Guards' at the ready: In order to deter criminal nest robbers, CABS organise daily patrols in the gigantic fruit plantations around Bozen (north Italy). In recent years, hunters and bird traders have stolen countless thrush chicks from their nests in the low fruit trees in order for the birds to be used and sold as live decoy birds for hunting. Thanks to the constant presence of our teams, things are relatively quiet this year. Only two poachers are arrested by the police with a total of seven nests and 26 chicks.



- Judgment against raptor killer: A poultry farmer from Bingen (Rhineland-Palatinate), who could be proven to have caught and killed several raptors, has to pay a fine of 2,000€ (50 daily rates of 40 € each). The public prosecutor's office regarded it as proven that the man caught the birds in February 2018 with a hawk basket-trap and then killed the birds afterwards. CABS employees had documented the evidence and had brought forward the criminal case. The verdict is final.
- Bonelli's Eagle Project: Sicily is home to one of the largest populations of the endangered Bonelli's eagle. The birds are notoriously difficult to breed in captivity and are therefore repeatedly the victims of poachers, who rob chicks from the nests and sell profitably to animal collectors and falconers. For nine years, members of the nature conservation group "Grupp Tutela Rapaci", supported by CABS, have been guarding the huge breeding area of the birds of prey. In 2019 a total of 52 nature lovers monitored the 55 known nests (in 2018 there were only 45), 33 young birds successfully fledged.

July

- In the Zülpicher Börde (NRW), staff from CABS HQ in Bonn record active marsh and montagu's harriers' nest in cereal fields. In order to protect the young birds from certain death by combine harvester, four nest protection zones are established in consultation with the farmers. All 15 young birds from these nests survive and successfully fledged. Three young marsh harriers from a destroyed nest are brought to a rescue station in Dusseldorf and later successfully released into the wild.
- Breeding success: On the artificial breeding rafts installed by CABS on the Pritzerber See (Brandenburg) and the Alte Elbe near Jerichow (Saxony-Anhalt) a total of 38 breeding pairs of the endangered Black Tern successfully breed this year. By the end of the breeding season, 35 young fledged - a great success for this highly sensitive and highly endangered species.
- Alliance against migratory bird poaching in Lebanon: In West-Bekaa, experts of CABS meet with Lebanese bird conservationists to prepare the actions against poaching planned for September and October throughout the country. The Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL), the Middle Eastern Sustainable Hunting Centre (MESHC), the Association for Bird Conservation in Lebanon (ABCL) and the German Embassy, which supports our campaign politically were all on board.





- Freedom for flamingos: In the lagoon of Cervia (Italy), 20 flamingos were released by our partners at Centro Fauna Selvatica (CFS). The birds had previously been confiscated by the police from an animal trader who had offered the wild captured animals for 1,000 € each. The impressive pictures of the release make positive headlines nationwide and make an important contribution to the much-needed environmental education in Italy.

August

- Under the title "Hannes Jaenicke in action for the birds" German broadcaster ZDF showcased a 42-minute documentary about the alarming decline of our migratory birds. The search for the causes leads the actor and nature conservationist with his team to Cyprus, where they document the industrial scale trapping of songbirds for several days with activists from CABS and the Pro Biodiversity Foundation. The contribution reached almost two million viewers and thus attracted nationwide attention for CABS in Germany.



•British Birdfair on Rutland Water, UK: For the fourth year in a row, CABS members hosted a stand to present our work on migratory bird protection at the "British Birdwatching Fair" in Rutland, England. With more than 100,000 visitors, the fair is the largest of its kind in the world and is used by numerous organisations to present their projects to an international audience. In addition to our stand we provided lectures on the projects in Italy, Malta and Lebanon.

September



•On Malta the participants of our bird protection camp monitor compliance with the law during the official hunting season. In addition to several cases of illegal bird-trapping, the shooting of protected bee-eaters and a kestrel is documented. Compared to previous years, illegal bird hunting has continued to decline. The attack on a parked CABS car, which is severely damaged and shot by persons unknown, causes a stir in the media.

- In Lebanon, our third large autumn bird protection camp against illegal migratory bird poaching begins: Together with our Lebanese partner associations, our CABS teams monitor bird migration at the most important geographical "bottlenecks" and once again document numerous shootings of lesser spotted eagles and other large birds. In cooperation with the local authorities, 19 poachers are arrested in the first two weeks and 9 shotguns, 38 large nets for songbirds, 16 electronic decoys, two loop traps for falcons ('Bal-Chatri') are also seized.



- CABS submit an extensive environmental complaint against France, Spain and Italy to the EU Commission. The reason being the hundreds of thousands of shooting permits still issued for skylarks and turtle doves, which pose an additional threat to the conservation of these already declining species. Our lawsuit is based, among other things, on current studies which prove the legal shooting of around 900,000 skylarks and 1.5 million turtle doves per year in the Mediterranean region.
- Hunters caught in the nature reserve: In the southeast of Calabria - the "boot top" of Italy - together with a special unit of the Carabinieri, CABS takes action against the illegal bird hunting in the nature reserve "Marchesato e Fiume Neto" (near Verzino): During a check, six hunters are caught in the middle of the no hunting zone. Criminal proceedings were instituted against them. In addition, two men have to answer for possession of illegally modified hunting weapons.

October

- Success in court: The administrative court in Milan declares a law planned by the regional government in Lombardy allow bird-trapping as illegal. Specifically, to authorise the capture of a total of 12,700 blackbirds, song thrushes, redwing and fieldfare with nets. The birds were then to be used as live decoys for hunting songbirds. This verdict is the result of an urgent motion by CABS, which was now granted a few days before the planned start of the trapping season.



- In Malta, our CABS teams are doing a great job: within 10 days, a total of 38 illegal trapping sites for hawfinches, linnets and other finches are discovered and reported to the police, five bird-trappers were caught red-handed, 15 nets and around 50 live decoy birds were seized. In a further 13 cases, the perpetrators managed to flee before the police arrived, but are filmed and several suspects are deemed identifiable to the authorities - the video material is handed over to the police.
- Deployment in the Southern Alps: 52 bird conservationists from all over Europe take part in our 35th autumn bird conservation camp in Brescia. The province is considered one of the strongholds of bird-trapping with nets and traps. In total, 55 poachers were arrested on the basis of our information (compared to 46 in 2018). 234 bow traps, 283 snap traps, 5 small clap nets, a cage trap and 97 mist-nets are seized by the police, in addition, 2,400 dead songbirds and about 330 living decoy birds were also seized.



- International press conference: In Lebanon, CABS and our partners denounce the mass shooting of lesser spotted eagles and other endangered species. Together with the German Embassy in Beirut, we held a major press conference on 8 October in Eghbe, one of the poaching hotspots in the heart of the Lebanese Mountains. In addition to numerous media representatives, including the BBC, ARD and the New York Times, the Lebanese Minister of the Environment will also participated in the event.

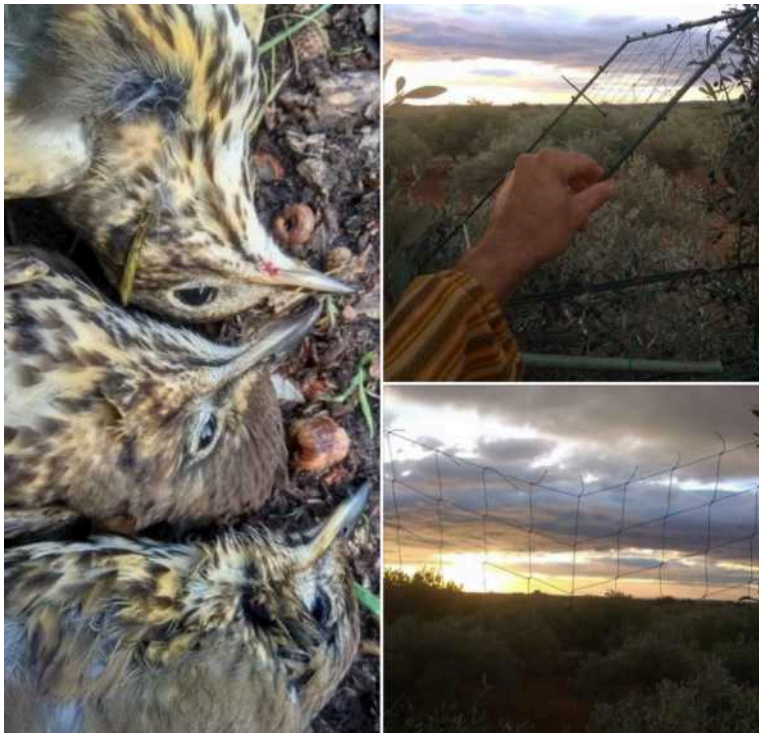
November

- The longest bird protection camp of this year takes place in Cyprus from the end of August to mid-November. More than 30 participants found 109 active trapping sites and 105 illegal hunting grounds. Police and game wardens arrested 27 poachers as a result of our field investigations. A total of 1,960 limesticks, 87 nets and 154 electronic decoys (41 blackcap callers and 113 quail callers) were seized and 770 birds freed unharmed from nets and traps. Some operations also take place in the Turkish-occupied northern part of Cyprus and in the buffer zone secured by the UN Blue Helmets.



- On behalf of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, CABS is preparing a comprehensive analysis of the data from the monitoring project "Illegal Bird of Prey Tracking in Germany" (our EDGAR project). The results are shocking and show the helplessness and indifference of German authorities in dealing with the problem: In a total of 1,188 cases investigated, just only 49 conviction was made. Even in the case of confessed perpetrators, numerous proceedings are dismissed without necessity and the perpetrators are merely given a verbal warning.
- Further evidence of bird massacres: for the first time, CABS publishes film material comprehensively documenting the mass shooting of nightjar, owls and other nocturnal migratory species in Lebanon. To kill the birds in the dark, the poachers use powerful searchlights and electronic lures and attract and stun the The strongholds of nocturnal migratory bird hunting is in northern Lebanon, where one of our teams succeeded in recording the incident in October.





• Protection of migratory birds in eastern Spain: During inspections of the approximately 1,500 limestick trapping installations (parany) in Valencia, which we had mapped in previous years, this autumn most of them proved to be inactive and abandoned. Only 25 cases of illegal bird-trapping were documented and reported, a decrease of more than 90% compared to 2014. Another nice success, which shows that our persistence and the good cooperation with the police is paying off in the long run.

December

- In Modena, CABS support the largest wildlife rescue centre in Italy. In 2019, more than 5,400 animals were brought in - besides 3,860 small birds, 360 birds of prey and 380 water birds, there were 300 large mammals (including 110 deer), 80 Greek tortoises, 420 hedgehogs and 70 bats. In addition to injured wild animals, animals seized by the authorities from animal dealers and hunters are also nursed up and prepared for later release.
- Balance of the work in the reserve "Raisdorfer Teichlandschaft" (Schleswig-Holstein): In order to further develop the area acquired by CABS back in 1984 for the protection of birds, extensive maintenance measures were carried out last year. For example, two of the large ponds were heavily silted up and had to be dredged with heavy equipment. At the same time, numerous trees and shrubs were removed near the shore to make these areas more attractive for dragonflies and other heat-loving species.
- Since 2016, CABS has been supporting the "Frogland" project. A CABS member in northern Germany coordinates the creation of water bodies in the east of the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein in the programme, which is 100% financed by the state of Schleswig-Holstein. In 2019, a total of 40 new bodies of water were created or silted up ponds rehabilitated - the target species are amphibians such as fire-bellied toads, moor frogs and tree frogs as well as wetland dependent bird species such as reed warblers, kingfishers and divers.
- Social media: In recent years, our channels and pages on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube have repeatedly proven to be important campaign tools. The videos and reports published on them were viewed and read more than 15

million times in 2019. This can also be attributed to the increasing internationalisation of reports in English and to the steadily rising number of around 95,000 subscribers and "followers".

SUPPORT US 2019:

In 2019 - Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) brought together more than **250** volunteers from Europe and the Middle East to conduct a total of **28** bird protection camps across **7** countries in the poaching hotspots of the Mediterranean basin.

5243 traps, **458** nets, **249** electronic decoys were collected, **176** poachers were convicted and over **2739** birds were liberated from illegal traps. A countless number of other birds had their fate changed for the better by our presence and field work.

All of our operations are funded entirely by supporter donations and cost around **€400,000** per year. Please help us to continue and expand our work with a donation - every cent is used to put boots on the ground and deliver direct action to protect migratory birds from illegal poaching.

visit: www.paypal.me/forbirds

Or

Komitee gegen den Vogelmord e.V. / Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS)

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