

The Long Journey

This file contains

1. Instructions and story for playing the game *The Long Journey*
2. Maltese version of the story *Vjaġġ Twil*
3. Nine pictures showing DANGERS that you can print for use with the game:

egg thief	hunter	desert
no food	storm	lost habitat
sea	falcon	poison
4. Maltese version of the nine DANGERS
5. Bird migration factsheet



Poke holes through the circles and slip string for children to hang the placards round their neck.

The Long Journey Game

This game tells the story of a group of swallows from hatching, through migration, to arrival at their wintering grounds in central Africa. The story highlights the perils they meet on their journey. The game is geared for about 30 children but can easily be adjusted to smaller or larger groups. Nine children will be the Dangers, one will be Narrator and the rest will be Swallows.

You need

- Nine Danger placards (with breast pins or ribbon) labelled

egg thief	hunter	desert
no food	storm	lost habitat
sea	falcon	poison
- You can use the pictures in the following pages. Make a printout of each and stick them to stiff card (e.g. used cereal carton)
- Two sets of small cards numbered 1–20 (or the number of children who will be Swallows)
- A bag to hold one set of the cards

Setup

Bring out nine children and give each a Danger placard to wear. Stand them facing the rest of the class. The other children (= the Swallows) are given a number each. All stand up.

Place the bag containing the second set of numbers on a table near the Dangers.

The Narrator reads the story. As the narrative unfolds, the Swallows follow instructions.



Narrator. Last April I hatched in a barn on a farm in Europe. I was alone in my nest, and my parents told me that an egg collector had stolen the other eggs. Those eggs were going to be my brothers and sisters, but now they were gone.

The Danger with the placard EGG THIEF pulls out **one** number from the bag and calls it out. The Swallow with the matching number sits down. This means it has died. The used number is put aside (not back in the bag).

Narr. There weren't many insects where I grew up. Some chicks in other nests went hungry and died.

The Danger with NO FOOD calls out **two** numbers and the matching swallows sit.

Narr. When I was big enough and learned how to fly, my parents said that soon we would leave because the winter gets so cold. So when my parents flew away, I followed them. We were a big group of swallows, and we were going on a long journey to Africa, where it's nice and warm. But first we had to cross the Mediterranean Sea. We got tired because we could not rest on the water. Some of us fell into the sea and drowned.

The Danger with SEA calls out **one** number and the matching swallow sits.

Narr. Suddenly we spotted an island. It was Malta! We swooped down to rest, but as soon as we landed hunters began shooting at us. I flew off in fright, but as I did I saw some of my friends lying dead on the ground.

The Danger with HUNTER calls out **two** numbers and the matching swallows sit.

Narr. Luckily it was getting dark, and many of us landed in secret and slept in some reeds. Next day we flew off again but suddenly a big bird came after us. It was a falcon, and falcons eat swallows! I never flew so fast in my life! The falcon caught one of my friends.

The Danger with FALCON calls out **one** number and the matching swallow sits.

Narr. At last we reached Africa. Now we had to cross the Sahara Desert. We were so tired that some of us just landed in the sand, they were too tired and thirsty to fly. Poor fellows, they never continued their journey!

The Danger with DESERT calls out **three** numbers and matching swallows sit.

Narr. Then a storm broke out. Wind and rain and lightning and thunder. It was really scary! The sand got in our eyes and we could not see each other, and the strong wind made us very tired. When the storm was over, some of my friends were missing.

The Danger with STORM calls out **two** numbers and the matching swallows sit.

Narr. Finally the desert was over and we saw fields. We went down to eat the insects flying around. But some of my friends ate poisoned insects and died. In some countries farmers spray their fields with very strong poison to kill insects. Sometimes it's not the insects that die, but the animals that eat them. Like us birds!

The Danger with POISON calls out **one** number and the matching swallow sits.

Narr. We arrived at the place where my parents stayed last winter. But there was no nice lake there with palm trees. People had dried the lake and cut down the trees, and built a dusty town of stone houses instead. No lake, no shady trees, no delicious insects. We had to go on flying, but some more of my friends died that day.

The Danger with LOST HABITAT calls out **three** numbers and the matching swallows sit.

Narr. At last, we found a really nice place, with a lake and trees and we're spending a great winter here. But I'm really scared because next spring the lake will begin to dry up and we will all fly back to Europe. So many of my friends died last time. It will be a miracle if I get back alive to start my own family.

The few children still standing at the end of the game are the swallows that have made it from the original group. Point out that this is the way nature works, where only the fittest survive. Millions of chicks never reach adulthood. The causes are often natural, but sometimes it is people's fault. Make sure the children realise that a bird's life is hard enough without us adding to its problems!

Vjaġġ Twil

Narratur. F'April li għadda jien faqqast f'maħžen ġo razzett fl-Ewropa. Kont waħdi fil-bejta, u meta staqsejt lill-ġenituri għaliex, qaluli li l-bajd l-oħra kien seraqhom wieħed ħalliel li jfaddal il-bajd tal-ghasafar. Jaħasra, dawk il-bajd kienu ħa jkunu ħuti, imma issa kienu spiċċaw.

Narr. F'dik ir-rebbiegħa waqt li kont qed nikber ma tantx kien hemm insetti bħas-soltu, u mhux kulhadd kiel kemm kellu bżonn. Xi flieles tal-Huttaf f'bejtiet oħrajn spiċċaw mietu bil-ġuħ.

Narr. Ftit ftit kbirt, tellajt ir-rix kollu u tgħallimt intir. Il-ġenituri qaluli li dalwaqt konna ħa nitilqu minn hemm għax ix-xitwa kienet kiesħa wisq. Għalhekk meta l-Papà u l-Mamà lestew biex imorru, jien tirt warajhom. Konna grupp kbir ta' Huttaf u konna sejrjn vjaġġ twil lejn l-Afrika. Fl-Afrika t-temp fix-xitwa kien ħa jkun sabiħ u sħun. Imma biex naslu hemm kellna l-ewwel naqsmu l-Baħar Mediterran. Kif għajjejna biex qsamna dak il-baħar kollu, għax fil-baħar aħna l-Huttaf ma stajniex ninzlu nistrieħu. Ftit minn shabna msieken waqgħu fil-baħar u gherqu.

Narr. B'xorti tajba rajna gżira f'nofs il-baħar. Kienet Malta! Bdejna niżlin biex nistrieħu, imma kif poġġejna xi kaċċaturi bdew jisparaw fuqna. Jien bil-biża' erġajt tirt, imma xi ftit minn shabi spiċċaw mejtin fl-art.

Narr. B'xorti tajba kien qed jidlam, u għalhekk ħafna minna nżilna bil-moħbi u rqadna f'post bil-qasab. L-għada erġajna tirna biex inkomplu l-vjaġġ imma f'daqqa waħda tfaċċa għasfur kbir li ġie jiġri warajna. Kien seker, u konna nafu li l-isqra jieklu l-Huttaf. Qatt ma ġrejt daqshekk f'ħajti! Imma wieħed minn shabna miskin ma ħaffifx biżżejjed, u s-seker qabdu.

Narr. Fl-aħħar wasalna l-Afrika u hawnhekk sibna periklu ġdid. Kellna naqsmu d-Deżert Saħara, post niexef u bla ilma. Ħafna minna bdew jinzlu fuq ir-ramel għax kienu għajjenin u bil-għatx wisq biex ikomplu jtiru. Imsieken ma komplewhx il-vjaġġ dawk.

Narr. Imbagħad qam maltemp kbir, b'riħ qawwi, xita, beraq u ragħad. Twerwirt! Ma stajniex naraw lil xulxin għax ir-ramel beda jidhol f'għajnejna u r-riefnu kompli jkissirna. Meta l-maltemp għadda, xi ftit minn shabna kienu sparixxaw.

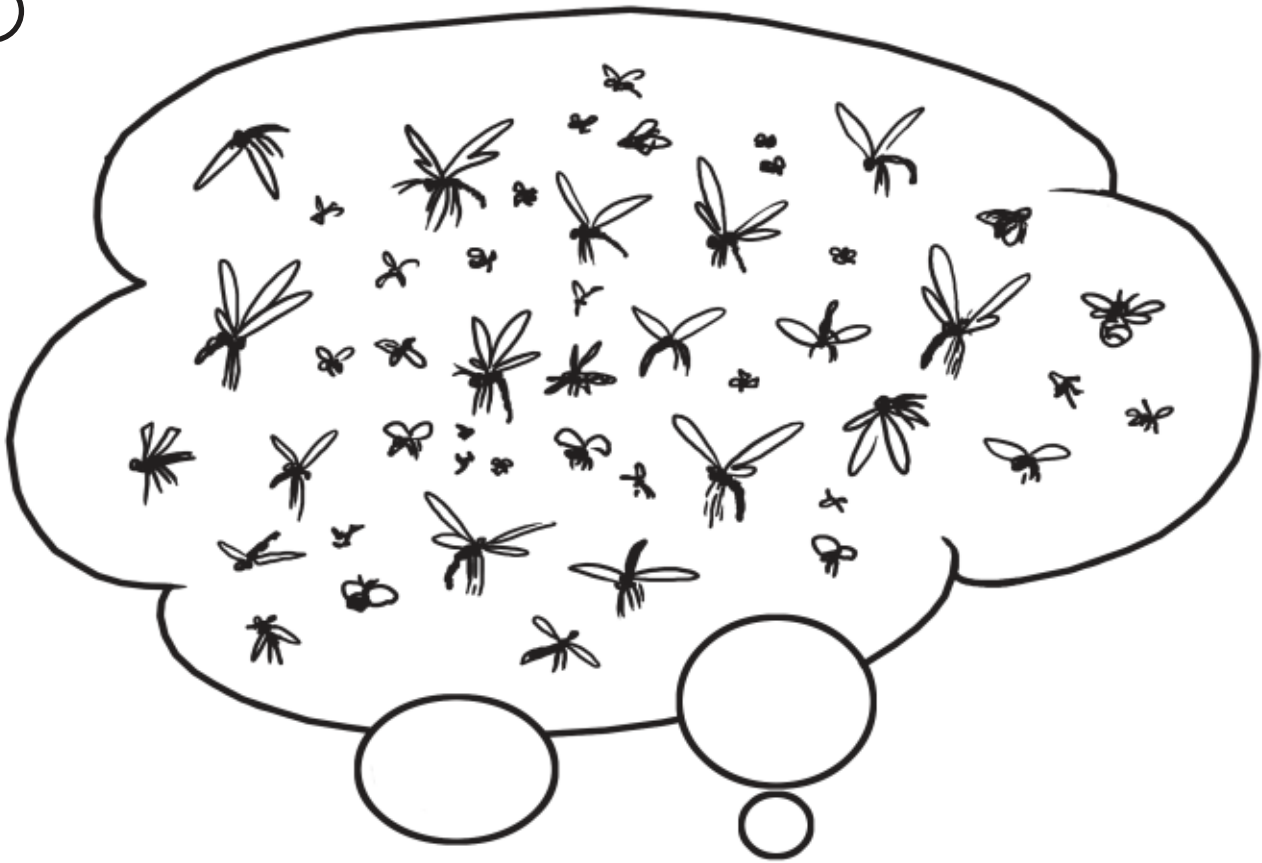
Narr. Wara li qsamna d-deżert, rajna l-għelieqi u nżilna naqbd u l-insetti li kienu qed itiru 'l hawn u 'l hemm. Imma xi ftit minn shabi kielu insetti li kellhom fihom il-velenu. Dawn għamlulhom id-deni u mietu. F'xi pajjiżi l-bdiwa jbexxu l-għelieqi b'velenu qawwi ħafna biex joqtlu l-insetti. Kultant flok ma jmutu l-insetti, immutu aħna l-annimali li nikluhom.

Narr. Wasalna fil-post fejn il-Mamà u l-Papà tiegħi kienu qagħdu x-xitwa li għaddiet. Imma bqajna skantati għax il-post kien inbidel. In-nies kienu nixxfu l-għadira li kien hawn u qatgħu s-siġar tal-palm, u flokhom bnew belt niexfa b'ħafna djar tal-ġebel. Għadajjar xejn, siġar u dell xejn, insetti xejn. Għalhekk kellna nkomplu ntiru biex insibu x'imkien ieħor. Imma xi ftit mill-ħbieb tagħna ma felhux itiru iktar, waqgħu fl-art u mietu.

Narr. Fl-aħħar sibna post tajjeb: għadira mdawra bis-siġar. Hawnhekk waqafna biex ngħaddu x-xitwa, u kellna kollox: dell, ilma x'nixorbu u insetti kemm irridu. Bħalissa qegħdin komdi hawn, imma qed nibża' ħafna għax la tasal ir-rebbiegħa ħa jkolli nerġa' nagħmel dak il-vjaġġ kollu, għax l-għadira hawnhekk tibda tinxef. Ħa jkolli ntir lura lejn l-Ewropa biex hemmhekk inrabbi familja jien ukoll. Nibża' meta niftakar kemm minn shabna mietu l-aħħar darba. Irid ikun miraklu biex nasal lura qawwi u shiħ.



egg thief



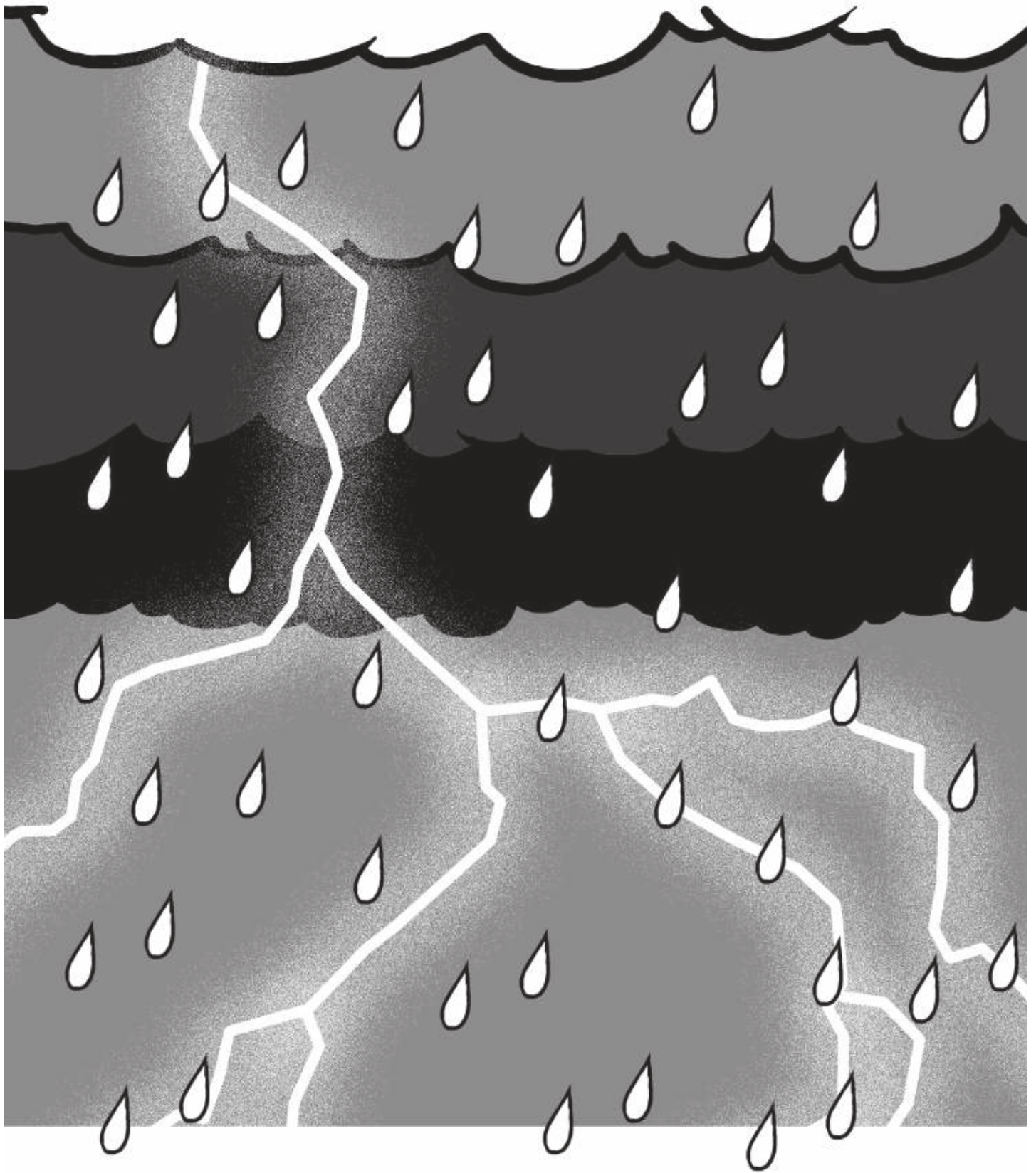
no food



sea



hunter



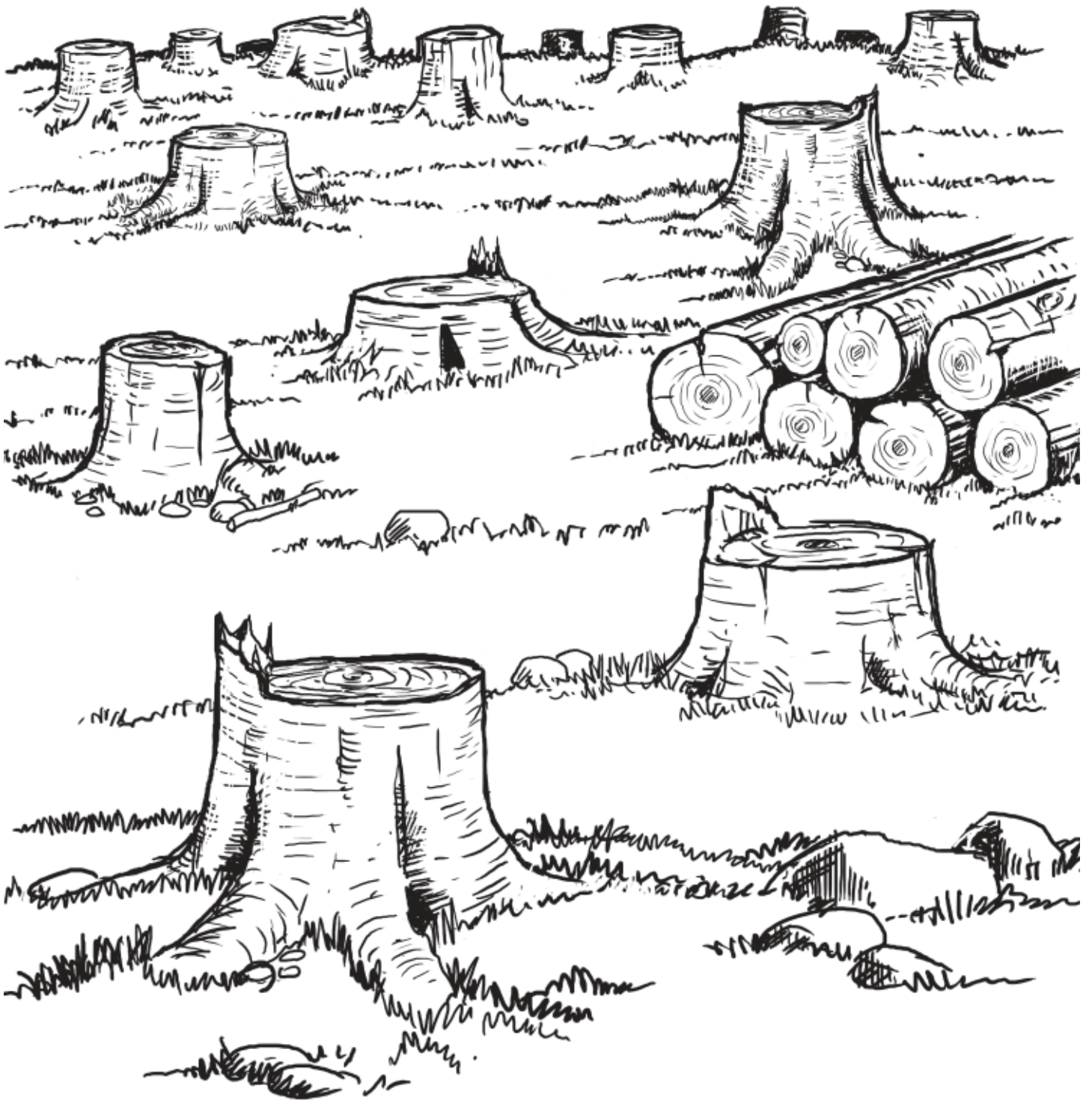
storm



falcon



desert



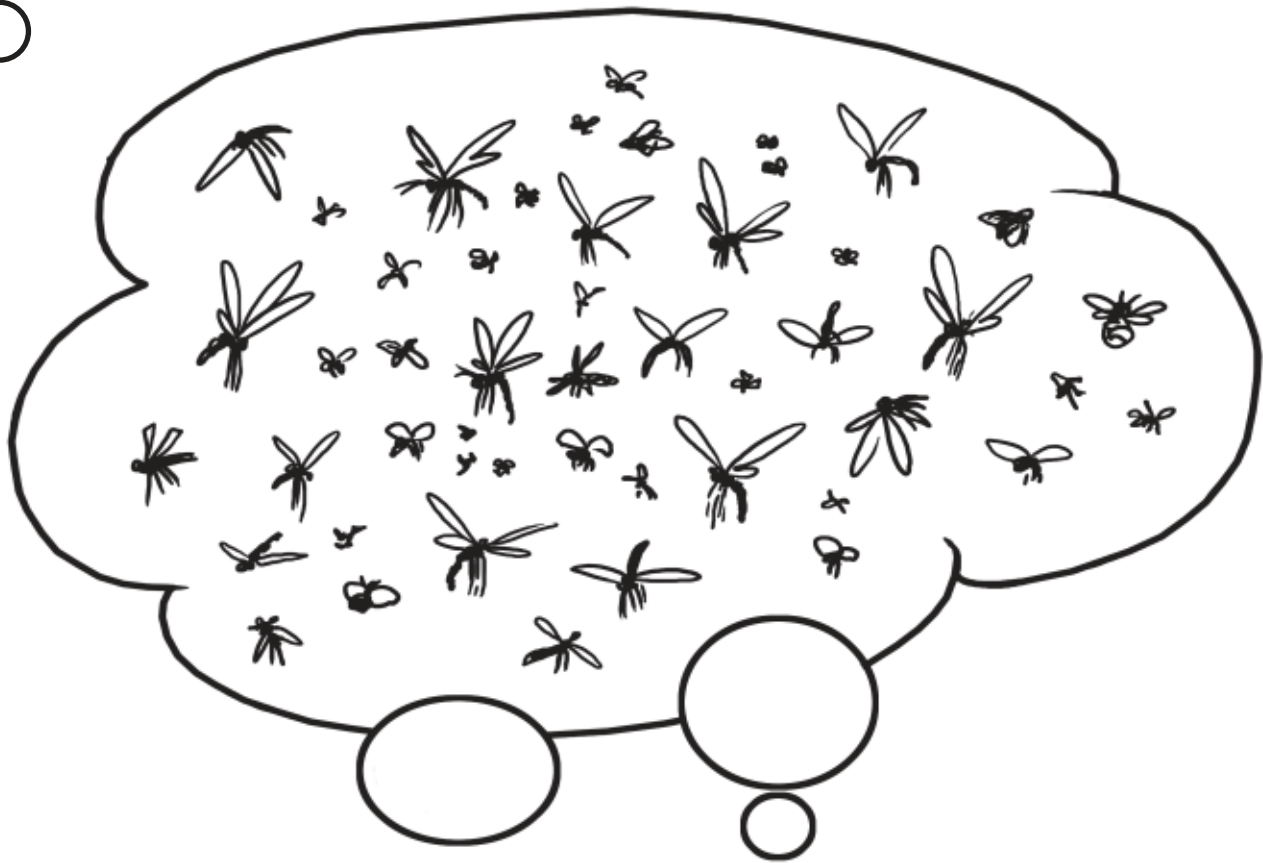
lost habitat



poison



ħalliel



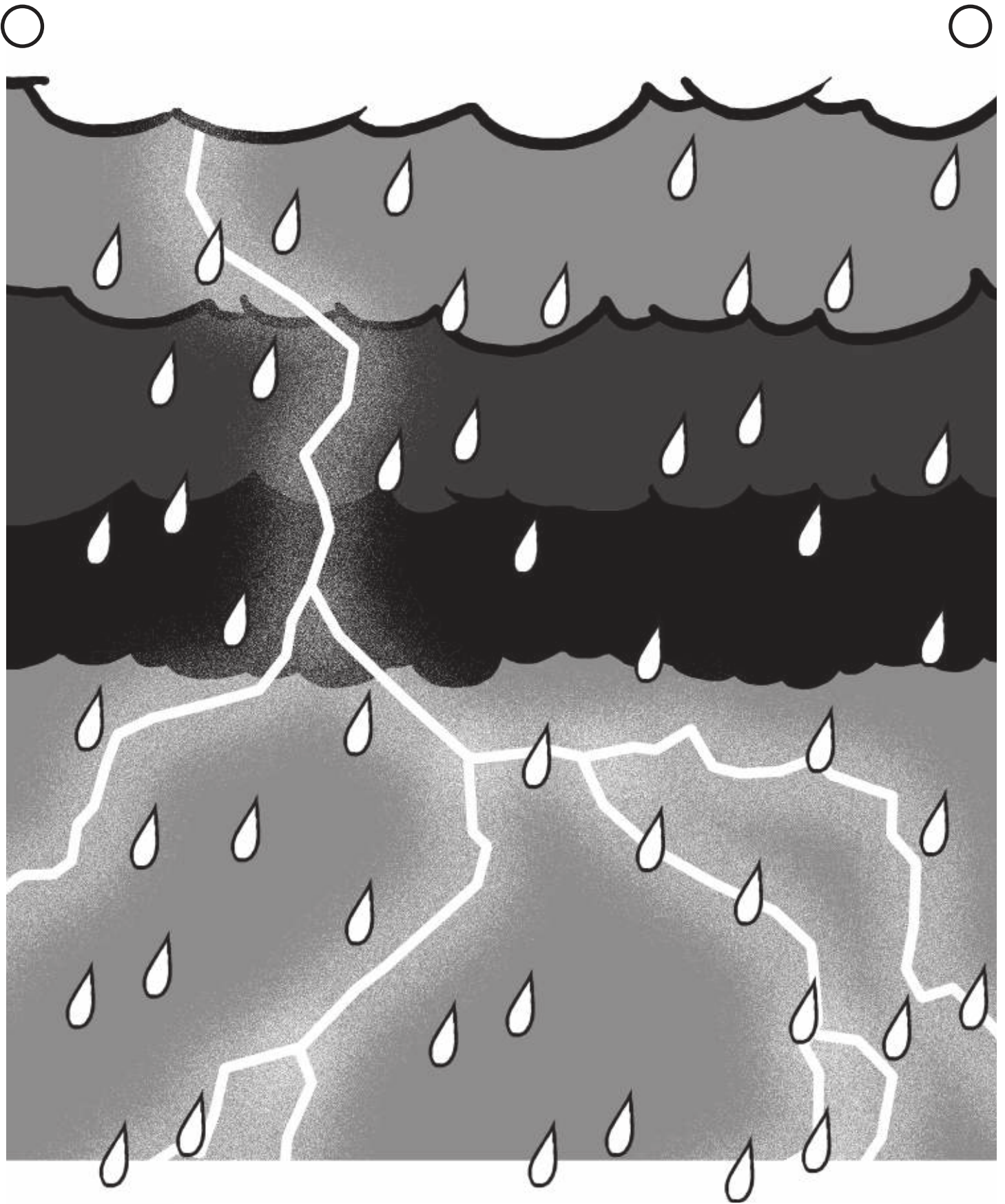
bla ikel



baħar



kaċċatur



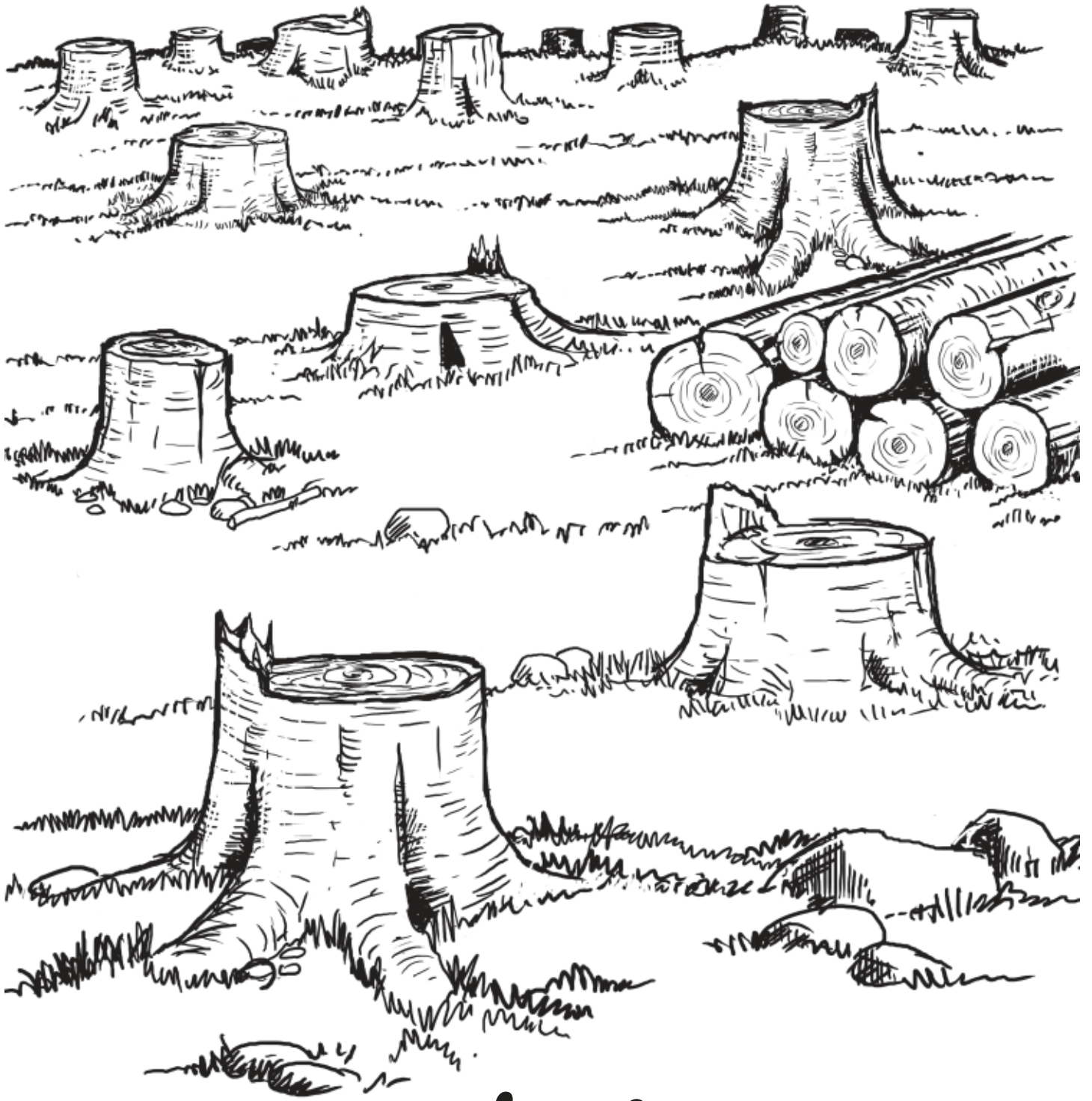
maltemp



seger



deżert



ambjent mitluf





velenu

The feathered travellers

- **Why do birds migrate?**

Birds migrate because of the weather. They travel to escape weather that is too cold or too hot and dry. Most birds do not have survival strategies to find food or live in extreme weather conditions. Being warm-blooded like us, they must feed regularly to keep their body temperature from falling. To avoid starvation or death from exposure in seasons of extreme weather, many birds fly to regions with milder climates.

- **Where do they go?**

Birds of northern Europe usually escape winter by migrating in a generally southern direction, mostly to the milder Mediterranean region, but many also continue across the Sahara Desert and as far as central and southern Africa. When the northern winter is over, the birds return home to nest. Similar patterns happen in other parts of the world. In the Americas, Canadian and US birds migrate to central or South America for the winter; in the Far East, birds of northern China and Siberia migrate to warm places like India and tropical places, even as far as New Zealand!

- **How long are these migrations?**

Most migrations are a few hundred kilometres and last a few days, but some birds accomplish epic journeys that span thousands of kilometres and take several weeks to complete. The Barn Swallow (*Huttafa*) regularly travels 5000km or more, and the Arctic Tern (a kind of gull) actually flies from the Arctic to the Antarctic. And they all do this twice a year.

- **How do birds find their way?**

It is not known exactly how birds navigate thousands of kilometres – often across featureless expanses of sea or desert – and find their way without getting lost, sometimes returning to the same spot year after year. It is thought to be a combination of learning, instinct and navigation by landmarks, celestial bodies and detection of the earth's magnetic field. Many studies, such as scientific bird-ringing and the use of satellite-tracking devices, are carried out to learn more about bird migration. BirdLife Malta is very active in this kind of research.

- **Do all birds migrate?**

Most European birds are migratory, but some species (like woodpeckers and jays) stay put and manage to survive winter by gathering food to consume during the hard months. Others (like crows) have learned to capitalise on human litter – which is in constant supply all year round! – and in this way survive the winter without starving.

- **Do Maltese birds migrate?**

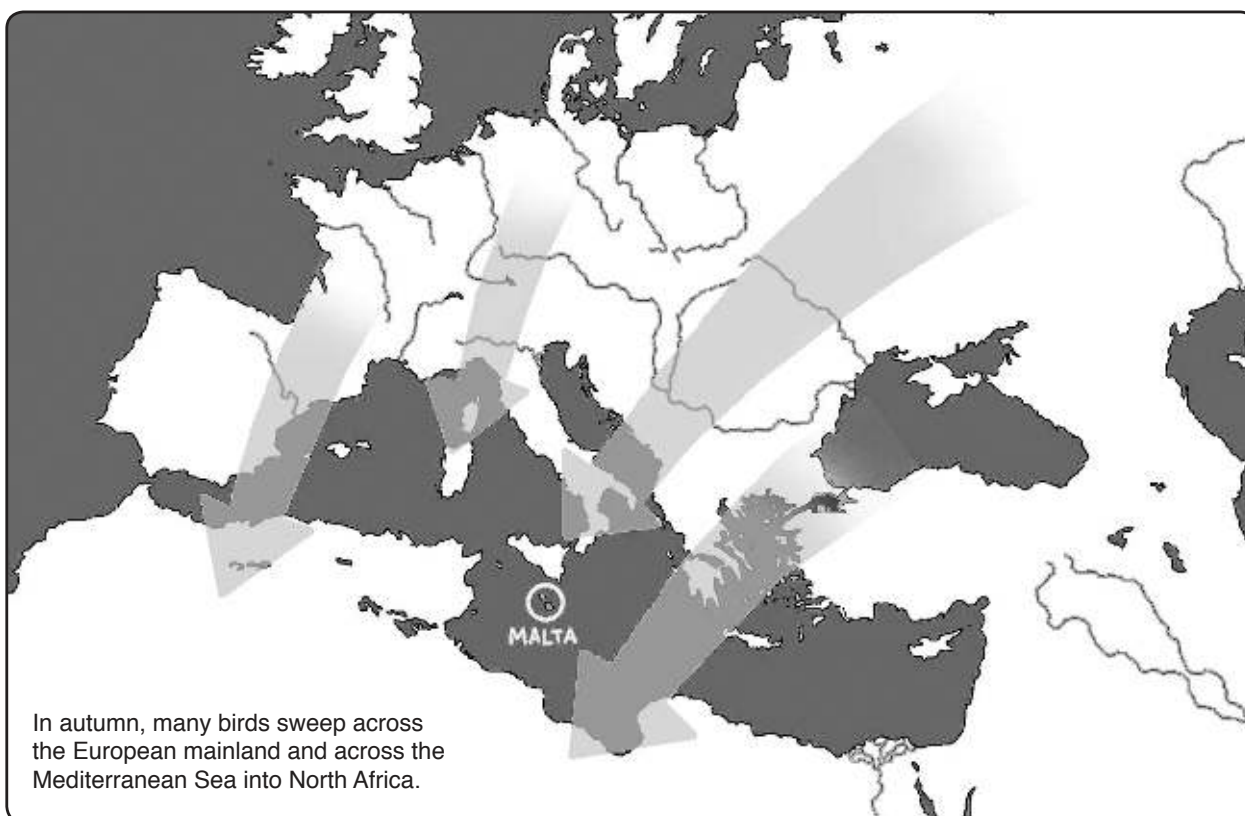
About 400 species of birds have so far been recorded in the Maltese Islands, and almost all of them are migratory. We can place Maltese birds in four categories:

- **Year-round residents**

These birds do not migrate. As their name implies, they live all their life here and do not travel much except maybe from Malta to Gozo or vice-versa, which is not really migration. In Malta we have just 11 species in this category, and these include the widespread and familiar Spanish Sparrow (*Għasfur tal-Bejt*) and the Blue Rock Thrush (*Merill*), our national bird. Our winters are mild, so these resident birds do not face much hardship.

- **Winter residents**

These are birds that nest in mainland Europe but migrate south in autumn, stopping here to spend the winter. These birds usually arrive in October and leave in March. There are about 50 species in this category, and they include Robin (*Pitirross*), White Wagtail (*Zakak Abjad*), Common Starling (*Sturnell*) and Black Redstart (*Fjamma Sewda*).



- **Summer residents**

These birds too are migratory. These birds come to Malta in spring and stay here to nest and raise a family, then in autumn they leave to spend the winter elsewhere. We have seven of these birds, and they include the Short-toed Lark (*Bilbla*) and the Scopoli's Shearwater (*Ċiefa*).

- **Passage migrants**

Most Maltese birds are in this category. More than 110 such species are seen regularly every year, but only for a very short while. Most of our passage migrants come from central and eastern Europe and, contrary to the winter and summer residents, these only stop for a day or two, just enough to rest – and maybe grab a meal – before they continue on their journey south or north (depending on the time of the year). These birds visit in spring (mostly in Apr–May) on their way to Europe, and in autumn (mostly in September–October) on their way to Africa. Passage migrants include the Barn Swallow (*Huttafa*), herons like the Little Egret (*Agrett Abjad*) and many birds of prey, like the Honey-buzzard (*Kučċarda*).

- **Why do we get so many passage migrants?**

Since most birds cannot swim, they generally migrate along routes with the shortest sea-crossings. Birds crossing the central part of the Mediterranean Sea find the long Italian peninsula very convenient, with Sicily and Malta as stepping stones. This is why so many millions of birds travel up and down the Italian land corridor during migration, and we are lucky that our archipelago lies right on this migration 'highway'. Despite this, birds still face many obstacles along the way and many die before arriving at their destination.

- **Do other animals migrate, apart from birds?**

Yes. Whales, dolphins, reindeer, zebras, wildebeest, bats, sea turtles, dragonflies, butterflies and many fish – like tuna and Dolphin-fish (*Lampuki*) – regularly migrate.