

Tanzania kills millions of birds to save rice fields

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Quelea birds move in large flocks.

Tanzania has culled millions of quelea birds to prevent them from destroying rice fields, using drones and planes to monitor commercial farms, the country's plants and pesticides watchdog said Wednesday.

The Tanzania Plant Health and Pesticides Authority (TPHPA) which is also responsible for controlling [desert locusts](#), killed five million quelea birds in the northern region of Manyara last week where about 1,000 acres of commercial crops were under threat.

"We killed swarms of five million destructive birds and now we are monitoring other zones," Joseph Ndunguru, acting director general of TPHPA, told AFP by phone.

The tiny red-beaked birds, which move in large flocks, are notorious for ravaging crops, with invasions generally occurring during the onset of the dry season in September and October.

Ndunguru said the agency targeted the swarms with [aerial spraying](#) over a four-day period, killing them before they damaged the [paddy fields](#) in northern Tanzania.

Aerial surveillance is now under way in other regions, he added.

According to TPHPA, the birds are capable of destroying more than 50 tonnes of food crops in a single day.

Quelea birds are thought to be the most numerous bird species in the world, with governments across Africa initiating aerial and ground efforts to contain them in the past.

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