

# Bird's Eye View

A BirdLife Malta members' magazine

Issue 54 ■ December 2017



**BirdLife**  
MALTA

## Supporting us is the best Christmas gift to Mother Nature

Another year is coming to an end and once again the past 12 months feel like just a week. Many would argue that is a good sign because we kept ourselves busy, and I would tend to agree.

Unfortunately this year for me will be remembered for the horrific autumn hunting illegalities with over 40 illegally shot protected birds recovered by us which, as you can imagine, is the tip of the iceberg. We have never had the strain of rehabilitating so many injured birds, be it Flamingos, herons or various birds of prey, to the extent that we needed to fundraise through a campaign called #ISAVEBIRDS. Read more about this in this issue of Bird's Eye View and help if you can.

The lack of enforcement and the political will to please the hunting lobby is as frustrating as it is ridiculous. Luckily in some cases the Government doesn't have the last say and we are strongly hoping that the imminent European Court of Justice ruling on Malta's finch trapping derogation will finally put an end to this once and for all.

The silver lining remains our education work. Nothing delights me more than seeing our environmental education programme reach outside of our country's borders. What we do in BirdLife Malta has been recognised as a high-level good practice programme that other countries have opted to learn how to adapt it through an Erasmus EU-funded project called One World Learning.

So there is hope, but in the meantime we need more support from many others like you. So I thank you for being with us and hope you will remain for more years to come. I urge you to ask others to join or simply give them a membership as a Christmas gift.

*"Finally I wish you and your loved ones good health, joy and satisfaction for the year to come."*

Mark Sultana CEO



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## An eventful year comes to an end

Believe it or not we are in December...another year is gone. Here at BirdLife Malta, 2017 has kept us busy with several campaigns and initiatives, the most recent one being the #ISAVEBIRDS crowdfunding appeal. Through this campaign over the past three months – which also marked the start of the autumn hunting season – we have been raising funds to help us carry out our rehabilitation efforts in taking care of, and eventually releasing injured birds. We would like to thank all those who donated to our cause and continue to support the work we do.

In this last issue of our members' magazine for the year, we have quite an array of subjects which we hope you will enjoy reading about! This issue, which continues to solidify the work done by Jess and Veerle from the communications team to make our magazine more cheerful and fresh in terms of style but also of content, includes a very interesting piece on our Turtle Dove satellite-tagging project. The bird chosen for the front and profile pages is the Robin, usually synonymous with Christmas but page 4 will tell you how this is in fact a myth! 'Nature in focus' this time round is about Għadira whilst the 'Educate' section narrates what happened during this year's Migration Festival. We will also take you on another walking tour through nature, keep you up to speed on our latest news, events and campaigns, and share with you the amazing work carried out in this year's Raptor Camp, dedicated to the back page. On behalf of the editorial board and the team at BirdLife Malta I would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year - see you in 2018!

The Editor

### Bird's Eye View production team

**Editorial Board** Nathaniel Attard (Editor), Victor Falzon (Naturalist), Jessica Irwin (Communications Officer), Lorenzo Locci (Events Assistant), Veerle van Werde (Design & Digital Media Assistant)

**BirdLife Malta Council** Darryl Grima (President), Saviour Balzan (Secretary General), Marvic Doughty (Treasurer), Nicholas Galea (Council Secretary), Norman Chetcuti, Christian Debono, Maurizio Fenech, Kathleen Galea, Raymond Galea, Eurydike Kovacs, Irene Mangion, Geoffrey Saliba (members)  
**BirdLife Malta Team** Mark Sultana (CEO), Nicholas Barbara (Conservation Manager), Gianmarco Santirocco (Finance Manager), Nathaniel Attard (Communications Manager), Mark Gauci (Reserves Manager), Sarah Brady (Education Officer), Paulo Lago (LIFE Arcipelagu Garnija Project Manager), Janet Borg (Office Coordinator)

**Contact BirdLife Malta** 57/28, "Marina Court", Abate Rigord Street, Ta' Xbiex XBX 1120, Malta, +356 21347644/5/6, info@birdlifemalta.org, www.birdlifemalta.org

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### Autumn hunting season

This year we have seen a drastic increase in the number of illegally shot birds – as much as seven times as many compared to the previous year. The birds targeted have included herons, raptors and even three Flamingos, continuing to highlight the need for a dedicated Wildlife Crime Unit. However, thanks to the hard work and commitment of our conservation department, we have managed to successfully rehabilitate and release some of this year’s victims, returning them to a life in the wild. Amongst the casualties we had two protected birds landing in schools, one of them the same school where a similar incident which had occurred in 2015 had led the Prime Minister to close the season prematurely.



BirdLife Malta

► Illegally shot Greater Flamingo retrieved from Hal Farruġ

### BirdLife volunteer acquitted!

In October we celebrated the long-awaited acquittal of BirdLife volunteer and activist Nimrod Mifsud in a court case which saw him face charges for trespassing. The charges, which were brought against him in April 2014 following the filming of ‘Malta: Massacre on Migration’ with Chris Packham in Mizieb earlier that year, were on the insistence of the Federazzjoni Kaċċaturi Nassaba Konservazzjonisti (FKNK). Despite the charges, the court heard that no valid legal title exists to give the hunters’ federation legal possession over this public land – a very welcome result!



Veerle van Werde

► BirdLife Malta volunteer and activist Nimrod Mifsud

### Annual General Meeting 2017

In October we held our 55th Annual General Meeting at the Salina Nature Reserve. The event was a great evening revisiting all of our achievements for 2017 and looking at the opportunities that lie ahead! Staff and members also saw the election of the council, which now includes three new members, and a topical discussion from representatives of each political party on the economic value of biodiversity. A special thank you must go to all who attended and to Charles Grech Co Ltd and Simonds Farsons Cisk for the refreshments that were kindly donated for the event.

### A season for sightings!

Despite the wave of illegalities, the autumn months also brought a stream of fascinating visitors! Rare birds including a Dusky Warbler, Moussier’s Redstart and the first ever Brown Shrike were spotted whilst a much unexpected guest – a Bald Ibis – found its way to Ta’ Qali from its captive breeding colony at the Oasi Dei Quadris Fagagna facility in Udine! After a short stint in Malta and under constant observation from BirdLife Malta, the critically-endangered bird, named Iris, was returned to its hand-rearer Nicole d’Amicis back in Italy.



Domenic Aquilina

► Iris, the Bald Ibis, at Ta’ Qali

### Dinja Waħda Awards success

This autumn, primary and (for the first time) secondary schools across Malta celebrated their achievements at this year’s Dinja Waħda Awards.



Veerle van Werde

► Dinja Waħda Secondary Awards

The ceremonies gifted awards to each of the participating schools for their work in connecting children and young people with nature through the nationwide environmental education initiative. This year also saw the Bank of Valletta renew their support of the programme with a generous sponsorship for the next scholastic year.

WORDS **Jessica Irwin** Communications Officer

# Robin

**Maltese name:** Pitiross

**Scientific name:** *Erithacus rubecula*

**Length:** 12.5-14cm

**Wingspan:** 20-22cm

**Conservation status:** Least concern (IUCN)

**Local status:** Very common autumn migrant and common winter visitor - small numbers are also being recorded throughout summer

**Call:** A rather strong and repetitive call (pit, pit, pit); melodious song uttered especially from perches

**Behaviour:** On the ground looking for insects and earthworms especially on freshly tilled soil, some individuals can be quite tame and easily visit bird tables in winter

**Habitats:** Frequents most habitats from woodland and garigue to marshes and urban areas with a little greenery

Just like the Swallow heralds the arrival of spring, for many the Robin is synonymous with the Christmas period and the wintery cold weather - probably the result of the numerous Christmas greetings cards this species adorns! Though it is true that Robins do spend the winter in Malta, the first birds arrive as early as late September, staying all the way through till the end of March when most then leave to their mainland Europe breeding grounds. Over the past years, a small but seemingly increasing number of Robins also spent the summer months here where they prefer valley beds, especially those which boast some fresh water.

There are two existing records of breeding in the Maltese Islands one dating back to 1997 in Gozo and the other in 2005 in Delimara, Malta, however neither could be confirmed and therefore remain dubious. The Robin has between two and three clutches annually with around three to nine eggs laid each time. Whilst the female Robin gets to do all the incubation, the burden of the feeding and rearing of the young is evenly shared out between both parents. Upon leaving the nest, the young Robins are all brown in colour and lack the orange breast which they acquire a few months later after their first moult.

Few might remember that the Robin is actually one of the biggest educational and campaigning success stories of BirdLife Malta. Way back in the 1980s when still known as Malta Ornithological Society, the trapping of Robins was an illegal yet very much widespread occurrence in our countryside.

Young and old would equally eagerly await the arrival of the Robins using a small cage trap, locally known as 'trabokki' to trap them. Many sadly used to perish within a few days. Thanks to relentless educational material and campaigns this destructive practice was wiped out within years and nowadays it seems unthinkable to talk about trapping Robins.

Through the study of bird ringing we know that most Robins that winter in Malta return to the same areas year after year. This just goes to show how fascinating nature is! Not only does this small bird - weighing a mere 15 grams - fly across countries to migrate but actually stops at the same site. Ringing has also linked the Robins we have to some far away countries, most notably Russia, Sweden and Finland.

WORDS **Mark Gauci** BirdLife Malta Nature Reserves Manager

# NATURE IN FOCUS at Ghadira

## Golden Samphire *Xorbett Limbarda crithmoides*

There are flowers for every season. In our part of the world most plants flower in spring but the Golden Samphire is in the autumn team. It is a coastal species, braving sea spray, constant exposure and a barrage of other punishments! The trick that helps this rugged perennial survive the odds is its succulent leaves. In botany, succulent does not mean nice and juicy to eat, but refers to a plant that can store water in its structure (usually the leaves). This storage ability is vital in dry or salty habitats. But a few good showers of rain will recharge the Golden Samphire's reservoirs that would see it through the summer drought. And come October, it explodes in gorgeous masses of flowers that many insects, especially bees and butterflies, find irresistible. At Ghadira, this species is hands down the most common low shrub.

## Mediterranean Chameleon *Kamaleonti Chamaeleo chamaeleon*

While not native to Malta – it was introduced from North Africa in the 19th century – the Mediterranean Chameleon seems to have found its niche and settled well in the local scene. Despite our largely treeless countryside, this normally arboreal reptile has also adapted to garrigue habitat and is often encountered walking about stealthily on the stony ground looking for juicy ground prey such as grasshoppers. Given the choice, however, the chameleon will no doubt opt for a nice flowering tree that will attract flying food while it sits and waits, tongue at the ready! The many tamarisks that grow at Ghadira are therefore ideal haunts for this primeval-looking creature. Chameleons fascinate all human visitors, but perhaps the most thrilled are those who come from northern, cooler countries where these heat-loving animals do not occur.

## Tree Sparrow *Gaħgaħ Passer montanus*

Everybody knows the ubiquitous Spanish Sparrow, so familiar wherever there are people. Much less known is its cousin the Tree Sparrow, similar in shape, size and colour but a more retiring and far less common species. Tree Sparrows are less urban and prefer more sparsely built areas such as hamlets, farms and village edges – there is a small but regular population that nests in old farm buildings around the nature reserve. Despite their name, Tree Sparrows rarely use trees to nest, going rather for cracks and spaces in walls. The best way to tell a Tree Sparrow from a Spanish Sparrow is to look for the black patch on its white cheek, which is absent in Spanish Sparrows. Unlike Spanish Sparrows, Tree Sparrow males and females look alike.

WORDS **Victor Falzon** Naturalist and Field Teacher



Victor Falzon

► Golden Samphire



Victor Falzon

► Mediterranean Chameleon



Veerle van Werde

► Sunset at Ghadira Nature Reserve



Aron Tanti

► Tree Sparrow

Migration Festival 2017

3  
events250  
participants1,250  
birds  
observed

# Birds without borders

Political borders are a human invention and do not mean anything to wildlife, birds included. They have their own troubles and obstacles to overcome; towering mountain ranges, huge stretches of open ocean, and inhospitable deserts are crossed by billions of birds each year. Every autumn, they abandon their breeding grounds in the north and head south for the winter seeking more favourable climates and feeding conditions. However, this is no vacation. It is a gruelling journey for which every snack snatched on the way is essential and any wrong choice en route can be a matter of life and death. Thus, migrating birds tend to congregate along 'flyways' which typically offer a shorter ocean crossing and plenty of natural sites where they can rest and feed.

*"BirdLife Malta has therefore taken up the challenge to inspire a fascination for nature, in a country where it is disappearing all too fast"*

Unfortunately, while the borders drawn up between countries are not a problem for birds, there are several other human influences that are. Destruction of habitats, lack of protection from disturbance as well as hunting are affecting birds all along their migratory flyways, and that means in different countries. The conservation efforts of one country to save a species nesting there are backstabbed if its neighbour decides to open wetland habitat - crucial as feeding grounds for tired migrating birds - for construction or agriculture. BirdLife International has recognised this serious issue and is therefore working to increase awareness all along the routes taken by birds, encouraging cooperation between states. There is no better way to start than to let the public experience the magic of migration first hand!

## **EuroBirdwatch17: a continental event**

The concept of migration is fascinating, especially when thinking of tiny birds weighing no more than 10 grams crossing whole continents, but to watch it is an experience of its own! It is no wonder then that on the EuroBirdwatch weekend this year (held in 41 BirdLife partner countries



Verle van Werde

► One of the sessions of the Migration Festival

including Malta), 21,000 participants turned up to witness the spectacle. It is not only about the fun of watching birds though, as data on numbers and species passing is gathered over many years and is vital in understanding migration routes, detect negative trends in populations and define important areas for birds. Observations made across all the countries are therefore shared on online databases with this year's total amounting to four million birds – wow!

## **Malta: small yet significant**

The tiny Maltese Islands have a lot to offer migrating birds despite its size. Its strategic location between two continents means it can be a life saver for birds caught in storms while crossing the open sea, or too tired to continue all the way to Africa without a break. In fact, the Maltese Islands make part of the central Mediterranean flyway. Nevertheless, if you ask many Maltese they might say they have never knowingly seen a migrating bird and will be very surprised if you do tell them that in fact we get thousands! This is very unfortunate if you take it as an indicator of the general appreciation and awareness of our nature but also highlights the room for improvement. Give the size of Malta's geographical area, it has everything to lose on the environmental front; the different terrestrial habitats are already naturally small but restricted much further by a high population density and overdevelopment. BirdLife Malta has therefore taken up the challenge to inspire a fascination for nature in a country where it is disappearing all too fast.

## **Migration Festival 2017**

BirdLife Malta participated in EuroBirdwatch17 with its very own Migration Festival constituting three events held over the weekend of Saturday the 30th September and Sunday the 1st October.

There was no better place to start than the Għadira Nature Reserve! Restored by BirdLife Malta in the 1980s, it offers a truly rare wetland habitat in Malta and all the more important for migrating birds. On the open water and muddy islets birds such as the Greater Flamingo and Ringed Plovers

41  
countries934  
different  
events21,704  
participants>4 million  
birds counted

Pascalie Kouassigian

► Young birdwatchers during the Migration Festival

were spotted searching for food, whilst smaller birds tried their luck in finding their breakfast in the Tamarisk groves and shrubs lining the water. Here, licensed BirdLife Malta ringers put up nets in order to catch birds for ringing. While ringing is a very important scientific tool it has the added value of allowing ringers to show birds to the public, a unique opportunity for children and adults alike to see birds up close! Among the large variety of species ringed that morning, a female Bluethroat was definitely the highlight, a species that is hard to see otherwise due to its skulking behaviour.

*“It was a great opportunity for participants to learn how to identify the different species, but also the importance of going out in nature to look for them”*

After a short rest from the morning’s bird bonanza, the next event was up at Buskett, a well-known raptor watchpoint for the experienced birdwatchers. On this day we were joined by a large number of families, scouts and even a few politicians all eager to see what would cross the skies! The otherwise



Verle van Werde

► Birdwatchers at Laferla Cross

rather quiet location was vibrant with excitement, many of the participants probably spotting their first ever bird of prey as several Marsh Harriers were circling around. Excitement is contagious and definitely reached its peak when a beautiful and scarce male Pallid Harrier migrated overhead!

On Sunday, a second birdwatching event was organised at Laferla Cross, yet another good watchpoint for migrating birds. Hobbies, Kestrels, Marsh Harriers, Honey Buzzards, and even a Black Kite were seen. It was a great opportunity for participants to learn how to identify the different species, but also the importance of going out in nature to look for them, with firsthand assistance from fellow Maltese who have been enjoying the hobby for many years. Our Migration Festival does after all stand for celebrating the migration spectacle together. We were delighted that over the weekend around 250 people joined us and believe that they will spread the word on the wonders of migration, increasing awareness about the birds that pass over Malta and the protected natural habitats they need on their way!

WORDS **Martin Austad** BirdLife Malta ringer and birdwatcher



Pascalie Kouassigian

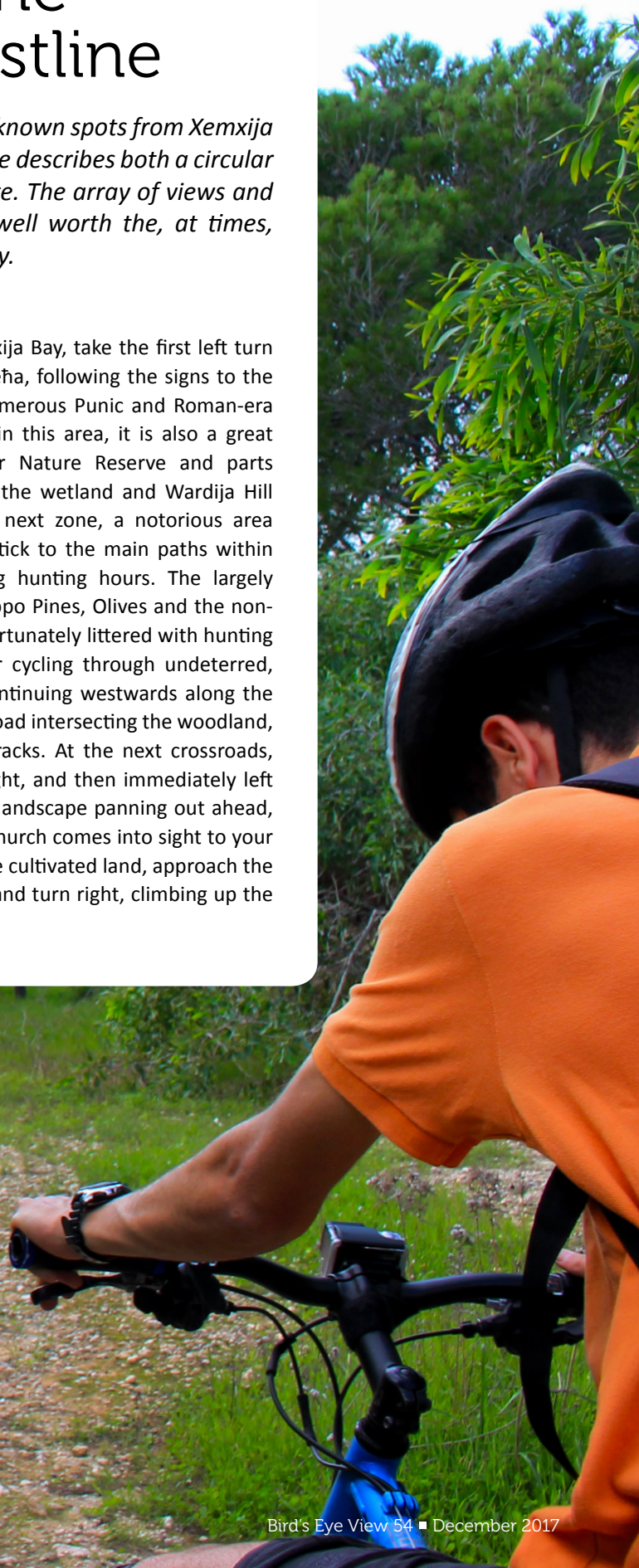
► Birdwatching at Buskett

# Cruising to the coastline

*Linking up a number of well-known spots from Xemxija to Għajn Tuffieħa, this feature describes both a circular hike and potential cycle route. The array of views and habitats awaiting you are well worth the, at times, uneven terrain along the way.*

## **A woodland stroll**

Starting off from the scenic Xemxija Bay, take the first left turn while going uphill towards Mellieħa, following the signs to the heritage trail. Apart from the numerous Punic and Roman-era archeological remains scattered in this area, it is also a great viewpoint, overshadowing Simar Nature Reserve and parts of Pwales Valley. After scanning the wetland and Wardija Hill opposite, the trail leads to the next zone, a notorious area known as Mizieb. It is ideal to stick to the main paths within this woodland, especially during hunting hours. The largely afforested area mostly hosts Aleppo Pines, Olives and the non-indigenous Acacia trees. It is unfortunately littered with hunting hides (duri) but keep walking or cycling through undeterred, as Mizieb is not private land. Continuing westwards along the quite linear walkways, cross the road intersecting the woodland, heading towards more rugged tracks. At the next crossroads, venture down a slope to your right, and then immediately left onto a smoother path. With the landscape panning out ahead, the peculiarly shaped Manikata church comes into sight to your left. As you walk or ride past more cultivated land, approach the road with an adjacent aqueduct and turn right, climbing up the last major hill on this trek.





## Cliff-top views

When at the top of the ridge, move towards a tower, known as Ta' Ciantar. This recently restored structure marks your entry into Majjistral Nature and History Park, a Natura 2000 site. Most of the northwest coastline is visible from this secluded area known as Għajn Żejtuna, as well as having splendid views of Gozo's Xlendi and Ta' Ċenċ cliffs. A rich garrigue covers Majjistral, which hosts a variety of native flora and fauna. Take time to listen and look out for birds in the vast habitat, especially the resident Blue Rock Thrush, and also wintering species such as Skylark, Black Redstart and Meadow Pipit. Tread carefully on the bumpy path as you quickly approach Majjiesa Cliffs, passing by a pillbox closer to the perimeter. The trail then meanders around the cliff's edge above the boulder scree, but you may opt to cut across, taking a shorter track towards Golden Bay. A number of dome-shaped stone huts (giren) typical in our north countryside are another detail to observe,



► Horse riders behind Golden Bay



► Panoramic view from the Maltese cliff side all the way to the northwest coastline

## Majjistral hunting and trapping

### hours:

*Hunting* permitted up to 12.30pm everyday with the exception of Wednesdays and public holidays (where 10am is still valid) during September, October, November and the spring hunting season (in December and January it is permitted till 10am).

*Trapping* permitted up to 2.30pm everyday during the open season.

### Link to online petition:

[www.change.org/p/reclaimmajjistral-change-hunting-trapping-time-back-to-10am](http://www.change.org/p/reclaimmajjistral-change-hunting-trapping-time-back-to-10am)

### Bus stops:

Start - *Roti* (Xemxija)

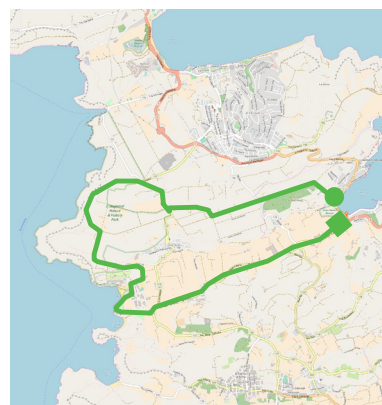
End (optional) - *Riviera* (Għajn Tuffieħa)

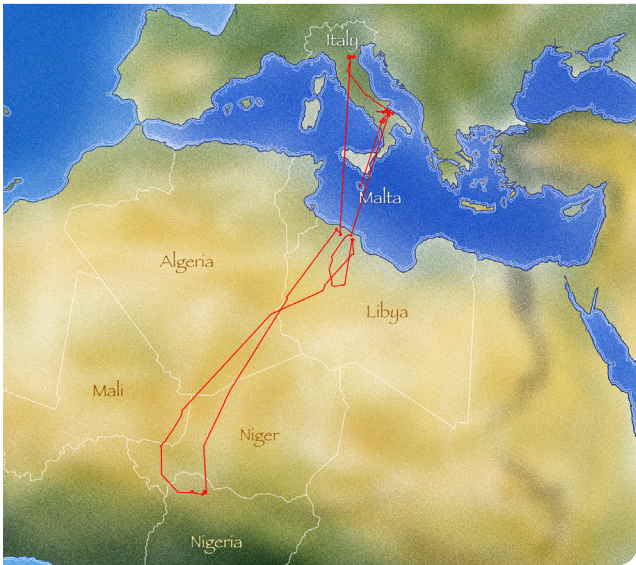
until you see the large hotel further south. Old British barracks are next in line, where the site management have a visitor's centre, offering an interesting and educational interval if open. An important aspect of this park is encouraging public and school visits, and similarly to Miżieb, no amount of bird hunting or trapping activities should hinder you along the way. The latest rollback in regulations has prolonged the daily hours of such activities, which does not bode well for what is supposed to be a conservation area and national park. If you haven't already signed, use the link below to petition the Government for the withdrawal of these unnecessary concessions.

## The perfect finishing line

Next, leave the barracks onto a road which brings you to the bus terminus above Ir-Ramla tal-Mixquqa, better known as Golden Bay. While advancing south to Għajn Tuffieħa on the same road, veer right onto a final nature trail. A second fortification known as Għajn Mixkuka Tower is close at hand, standing between the two picturesque inlets, with swimming opportunities on both sides. So, do consider taking your bathing suit for a brisk dip! Just beyond the Għajn Tuffieħa car park, a 4km roadway takes you back to the starting point. Unless cycling or up for more walking, you should bus it back to Xemxija, Buġibba, Valletta or Sliema from the nearby bus stop.

WORDS **Tim Micallef** Bird ringer & Falko leader





Victor Falzon

► The route undertaken by the first satellite-tagged Turtle Dove released in spring 2016

# On the Turtle Doves' trail

*If one had to choose the most iconic bird to symbolise the political context of hunting in Malta, and BirdLife Malta's work in reaction to it, it has to be the Turtle Dove.*



Petra Quillfeldt

► One of the satellite-tagged Turtle Doves from Comino in April 2017

### A species at risk

In April 2015, the country went to the polling booths to vote in a referendum to decide whether to abolish the hunting in spring of this species -

after more than 10 years of campaigning to align such practice with the EU Birds' Directive, adopted by Malta in 2004. In June 2015, the IUCN placed the Turtle Dove on the 'vulnerable' list. Meaning the fight to keep seeing this species migrating over Malta was not simply a local one, but one requiring efforts across the whole of the population range where this species still occurs, as well as its migratory range – from its breeding grounds in Europe to its wintering grounds in Africa.

### Moving forward

To date, our knowledge about Turtle Doves in Malta has come through ringing records. Birds ringed at their breeding grounds in several European states got shot in Malta and hunters, which found such ringed birds, would report the matter. This has contextualised the impact of hunting on these birds; Malta gets Turtle Doves from Austria, Hungary, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, and Poland. Needless to say, the minute such ringing records started pointing to Turtle Dove populations which are not doing well in Europe, ringing records from the hunting community came to a stall.

Despite the importance to ring these birds and study them, ringing records still do not give us a whole picture of the habits of this bird. This is where the latest technology is giving us the edge on their biology and – with a declining species such as the Turtle Dove – such research is crucial for knowledge-based conservation work. As efforts across all of Europe are ongoing to define an action plan to tackle the European populations of the Turtle Dove as a whole, BirdLife Malta, with the support of our German partners NABU, has been contributing to an innovative research technique aimed at tracking these birds as they make their way through Malta.



Ben Metzger

► Dr Petra Quillfeldt releasing a satellite-tagged Turtle Dove this spring

Thanks to funds made available by NABU, and the help of ornithologists Dr Benjamin Metzger and Dr Petra Quillfeldt, five Turtle Doves have been fitted with expensive satellite tags on their spring migration through Malta in the last two years. These devices, weighing no more than 5g each, are fitted like a backpack on a Turtle Dove, allowing their battery to charge through a tiny solar panel, powering a GPS device that transmits the location of the bird via satellite on an almost daily basis.

### Amazing new results

The results that this pilot project have given us to date are amazing. A male Turtle Dove tagged in spring 2016 spent its breeding season in Italy, migrating to Nigeria for the winter to return through almost the same route up to Italy again for spring 2017. Malta's spring hunting moratorium on Turtle Dove in 2017 gave us a better opportunity to tag another four birds during their peak migration period in spring. Some of them stayed around the Maltese Islands for quite a number of days before eventually ending up in Italy, Slovakia, and on the border between Bulgaria and Romania. Sadly, one was lost over Gozo - possibly illegally shot. In autumn this year all three remaining birds started off their migration south. The Slovakian bird was lost over Greece – coincidentally during the open hunting season period, while the Italian bird is in Burkina Faso and the Bulgarian bird in Cameroon.

While we hope both birds shall keep transmitting in the coming spring, it is clear that gathering such information is crucial to saving this species. Our work now goes not only to contribute to ensuring these birds safely pass through the Maltese Islands during their spring migration, but also to gather more information to know how to conserve this bird beyond our shores.

WORDS **Nicholas Barbara** BirdLife Malta Conservation Manager

## Upcoming Events

### Christmas Nature Fair

Sunday 10 December

10:00 – 16:00 | Simar Nature Reserve

We want to celebrate Christmas 2017 together and invite all of you to enjoy outdoor activities at our Is-Simar Nature Reserve! Along the track, there will be different stations offering games, crafts and so much more! This is a unique opportunity to get closer to nature during winter whilst engaging in fun-filled activities related to the festive season. Children will have an unforgettable Christmas time!

### Valletta 2018

With Valletta ready to fill the role as European Capital of Culture 2018, Malta will be in the spotlight next year! We are looking forward to celebrating this and raising awareness about the Maltese environment on a European-wide level – sharing some of the wonderful wildlife that makes our Islands and our capital so unique!

## Past Events

### Reserves Open Days

It has been amazing to see so many children coming and enjoying the nature reserves! In Għadira - whilst the parents were busy trying to spot the Flamingo - a small group of children became wardens for a day by helping the reserve team with hands-on activities and learning about wildlife! At Is-Simar, the children enjoyed face painting, insect workshops and a magical storytelling session, narrated by Karen Gilson from the National Literacy Agency.

### Weekend break to Nebrodi Mountains in Sicily

An enthusiastic group of BirdLife Malta members guided by our Events & Activities Committee explored the reserve and surroundings of the Nebrodi Mountains in Sicily. Nebrodi is the largest national park of the region and one of the few areas to retain the pristine appearance of a century-old Sicily. Besides the trekking during which they observed Griffon Vultures, Booted Eagles and Buzzards, they visited the beautiful town of Taormina and tasted the local specialities in a typical Sicilian restaurant! Part of the trip was led by Italian conservationist and winner of the prestigious Goldman Prize, Dr Anna Giordano.



BirdLife Malta

▶ Group photo taken during the Nebrodi Mountains visit

## Science in the City & Notte Bianca

In order to promote a culture of socio-environmental awareness, BirdLife Malta participated in both of this year's events with a stand focusing on how research and science are applied to monitor bird migration. We presented our Turtle Dove satellite-tagging project and the LIFE Arcipelagu Garnija team showed how their valuable work protects Yelkouan Shearwater populations in the Maltese Islands.

## NEW children's book

BirdLife Malta has just published the second edition of Għasafar Madwarna, the popular junior bird guide that won the national award for Best Illustrated Children's Book when originally published in 2004. This extended edition has been revised and all illustrations improved or redesigned entirely. The book introduces birdwatching to budding naturalists and covers 104 species that include common birds that occur in Malta, along with some colourful, rarer or more famous birds. Each species is painted and carries tips on identification, habitat, season, and voice.

The perfect Christmas gift idea!

€5

*BirdLife Malta is very grateful to SOF (BirdLife Sweden) for kindly sponsoring the printing of this book. Written and illustrated by Victor Falzon. Language: Maltese. Full-colour, number of pages: 64. Available from BirdLife Malta nature reserves and office.*

### Want to join an event?

More details: [www.birdlifemalta.org/events](http://www.birdlifemalta.org/events)

Email: [events@birdlifemalta.org](mailto:events@birdlifemalta.org)

Call: +356 2134 7646

### Want to help us continue our work?

Join: [birdlifemalta.org/become-member](http://birdlifemalta.org/become-member)

Donate: [birdlifemalta.org/donate](http://birdlifemalta.org/donate)

Help our crowdfunding campaign:

[zaar.com.mt/projects/isavebirds](http://zaar.com.mt/projects/isavebirds)

[birdlifemalta](https://www.facebook.com/birdlifemalta)

[birdlife\\_malta](https://twitter.com/birdlife_malta)

[BirdLifeMT](https://www.youtube.com/BirdLifeMT)

[birdlife\\_malta](https://www.instagram.com/birdlife_malta)

# #ISAVEBIRDS

This year, our conservation team and a 20-strong group of plucky volunteers kitted with binoculars and cameras took to the Maltese countryside again for Raptor Camp 2017. The annual camp, which monitors peak migration as well as any potential illegalities saw its fair share of action! The dedicated team worked together over a challenging three weeks and despite a stark

increase in the number of protected birds targeted, they were rewarded with news of successful rehabilitations, releases and even some rare sightings! A big thank you to all of the volunteers for their commitment and hard work as well as all of our members for your ongoing support, ensuring we are able to continue to carry out our work and save as many birds as possible.

