

Bird's Eye View

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER Avon Tanti



The process of red listing
The Turtle Dove on the IUCN Red
List of Threatened Species



From research to protection
Malta's first protected marine sites
for birds



contents

news page 3

Updates from BirdLife Malta

bird profile page 4

Little Ringed Plover

what to spot page 5

Summer wildlife

in focus pages 6 & 7

Barometer of life - measuring extinction pressure

nature days pages 8 & 9

Nature Walk at Il-Qammieh

bird lives page 10

Interview with CABS Operation Officer Axel Hirschfeld

research page 11

Malta's first marine SPAs

what's on page 12

Upcoming events & activities



Saviour Balzan
Secretary General

How it all started

It must have been 1977. I was hardly 15 and I had two passions: reading and nature. I made it a point to convince the school mini-bus driver to stop next to the Three Hills bar in Lija so that I could buy a copy of The Times of Malta. Every Tuesday I read every sentence in Joe Sultana's articles about nature and I decided to write a personal letter to Mr Sultana and ask him if I could accompany him on a birdwatching trip. He wrote back at once and asked me to phone him. It was an early start for me as I waited near the bramble infested Wied Inċita. But at 5:00am he was there in his pale blue, creaky mini minor, stacked with giant reed poles and canvas bags.

The first mornings in Buskett down to Wied il-Luq by the poplar trees into the watercourse, accompanied by the musical bursts of the Cetti's Warbler and the distant call of a cuckoo, left me charged for more of these unique experiences.

But that idyllic setting was shaken by the first experience that would turn me into an angry young green warrior. The sight of a flock of Night Herons being shot down by the Aleppo pine grove, one by one by hunters at Buskett left me furious. It would be my first baptism of our ugly side of hospitality, it would change my life forever. I wanted to do something, and something fast. Now at 53, I have returned to the organisation that first introduced me to the beauty and realities of nature in Malta. Generations do not change overnight. Unlike 1977, I have faith that in my lifetime nature and birds in Malta will have a chance. The best and most fruitful tool is education, the formal one and the informal one. The most successful experience is being in the field and seeing nature in action. This is why BirdLife Malta invests in young people. They are the future and they are the ones that can change it.

BirdLife Malta Council

Darryl Grima, **President**

Saviour Balzan, **Secretary General**

Norman Chetcuti, **Treasurer**

Nicholas Galea, **Council Secretary**

Irene Mangion, **member**

Kathleen Mamo, **member**

Eurydike Kovacs, **member**

Ray Galea, **member**

Geoffrey Saliba, **member**



New Communications Manager

Nathaniel Attard has just joined BirdLife Malta as Communications Manager. Nathaniel, who is 41 years old and hails from Gozo but lives in San Ġwann, is the former editor of daily newspaper 'In-Nazzjon'. For the past 17 years he has worked with Media Link Communications first as a journalist, then as News Manager for a number of years managing the largest newsroom in Malta catering for a daily newspaper, a Sunday newspaper, a radio station, a television station and a news portal. He produced and presented a large number of TV and radio programmes, and became a household name due to being one of the newscasters on Net Television since its very first broadcast in 1998. Previously he worked in the banking sector. Just a few months ago he also became a qualified proofreader in the Maltese language. He is married to Joanna and they have one child named Ella.

New Administration Officer

Janet Borg has just been employed with BirdLife Malta as Administration Officer. After years of supporting BirdLife Malta from a distance, she is now working in the environment she loves. In the past, Janet has worked in aviation, tourism and social welfare. She is a mother of three and has many interests to occupy her free time like gardening, travelling, baking, and reading. But she says nothing beats a walk in the countryside listening to nature!



BirdLife Malta is an environmental organisation working to protect Malta's wildlife by managing natural spaces, inspiring the new generation, opposing illegal hunting and undertaking research.

Bird's Eye View production team:
Design Communications Team,
BirdLife Malta
Editors and Contributors
Nathaniel Attard, Ketija Riteniece,
Jessica Irwin, Yanka Milusheva,
Sean Bonello
Contact BirdLife Malta
Flat 1/2, Triq Is-Simar, Xemxija,
SPB 9025, Malta
+356 21347644/5/6
info@birdlifemalta.org
www.birdlifemalta.org

Short-eared Owls breed again in Malta after a century

In the safety of the bird sanctuary on Comino a family of Short-eared Owls have been raised this spring for the first time in more than 100 years. Bird ringers working on the island noticed a pair of owls protecting their territory just as breeding birds do and later managed to photograph a young owl chick. The last successful breeding of Short-eared Owls in the Maltese Islands was recorded back in 1909.



SHORT-EARED OWL Raymond Galea

Number of rare vagrant birds stop over

Last bird migration season brought a White-crowned Black Wheatear, found only once before in Malta in the 19th century. The first ever record of Seeböhm's Wheatear was another surprise. The very scarce Cream-coloured Courser, last seen seven years ago, rested in the airport area, while the rare Desert Grey Shrike chose to visit Gozo. Richard's Pipit, never seen in spring, added to the list of rarities.



WHITE-CROWNED BLACK WHEATEAR Ian Balzan

Moratorium announced after world-wide conservation authority calls to end spring hunting in Malta

During this year's spring hunting season, Maltese hunters were allowed to shoot a total of 5,000 European Turtle Doves, despite them now having 'vulnerable' species status. The global Red List authority, IUCN, urged EU Commissioner Karmenu Vella to immediately request the Maltese authorities to protect the threatened birds. Vella suggested a moratorium on spring hunting for the Turtle Dove. A month later, the Maltese Government announced the moratorium after Malta's hunting federation FKNK declared its agreement. FKNK argued that this is the lesser evil since the EU still wants to abolish spring hunting. The federation still denies the decline of Turtle Dove population and Malta's spring hunting having any effect on it.

LIFE Arcipelagu Garnija - a new EU-funded project

Our new project, funded by EU LIFE programme has started. As the title suggests, Arcipelagu Garnija works to make our islands safe for Yelkouan Shearwaters (Garnija), a threatened seabird species found only in the Mediterranean. Already in use, the latest technology will allow our researchers to close all the knowledge gaps about these birds and specific threats they face in each nesting site, thus building upon the achievements of the previous two seabird projects.



ACTION FOR NATURE BirdLife Malta

Inspiring youths to take 'Action for Nature'

We've started a new education project 'Action for Nature', which runs international exchanges for youth groups from Hungary, Norway and Malta. The project encourages them to take an active role in looking after nature and empowering them with the skills to do so. During the first exchange Hungarian scouts visited Malta and worked together with local youth to improve Foresta 2000 Nature Reserve and engage the local community.

A step closer to end seabird bycatch

The European Commission has proposed that all fishing vessels catching seabirds by accident should adopt technical measures to stop it. Every year 200,000 seabirds in the EU waters die in fishing gear. New legislation would encourage governments to create sustainable fisheries management plans in many Natura 2000 sites, such as eight newly found marine areas in the Maltese waters. **Read more about them on Page 9.**



bird profile

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER Aron Tanti



WORDS SEAN BONELLO

- >Body: 15.5cm-18cm
- >Wingspan: 32-35cm
- >Common passage migrant
- >Can be seen March-early November
- >Often seen individually, sometimes in small flocks
- >Recognizable by brownish-grey upper parts, completely white breast and black neck collar
- >Similar to the Ringed Plover, smaller in size and has a yellow eye-ring
- >Best place to see them at Għadira Nature Reserve, also Salina and sometimes on the coast
- >Call sounds like “pew”

Turn to pages 6 and 7 to read about the process of red listing

Little Ringed Plover Monakella

The Little Ringed Plover (Monakella) is surely one of the cutest breeding birds in the Maltese Islands, thanks to their small size and zippy runs along the shores. This little water bird is also one of the few that can be seen through the sweltering Maltese summers. After winter in Africa, the Little Ringed Plover returns to European countries to nest. Breeders usually arrive in Malta in March. Staying until the beginning of autumn, they manage to lay at least two clutches of eggs.

The nest of a Little Ringed Plover is a simple scraped small area, usually on a sand or gravel patch close to water. During the courtship, the male scrapes several areas on the ground, but the female chooses only one she thinks the best for breeding purposes. During the breeding season, in a bid to defend their eggs, these small birds become very territorial and chase off other birds, mostly waders, when they are too close to their nest.

Freshly hatched Little Ringed Plovers are ready to run around in just a couple of hours. Not bigger than an olive, these tiny creatures can already feed on their own. Similar to most wading birds, Little Ringed Plovers search for food in shallow water, mostly in muddy or gravelly areas. Their diet mainly depends on insects or on small invertebrates.

The only known breeding location in Malta is Għadira Nature Reserve, where a few pairs have been regular breeders. In fact, the first breeding record dates back to 1995 when a single pair raised two chicks. This was actually a result of human effort ten years earlier to encourage these waders to breed in then newly restored wetland. To create a suitable place for Little Ringed Plovers to nest, several islands in Għadira were covered with shingle and seashells. Since then, breeding has taken place every year. Fingers crossed they also start breeding in Salina salt pans soon!

Sean Bonello is a birdwatcher and leader of BirdLife Malta's youth group Falko



LITTLE RINGED PLOVERS MATING Tim McCallif



WORDS YANKA MILUSHEVA

Moorish Gecko *Wizgħa tal-Kampanja*

Often seen basking on walls and rocks, these little Mediterranean guys appear to love the sunny days, but actually they are most active during evenings and nights. They can be easily spotted near street or garden lamps, as these attract various tasty insects. Geckos even change their colour – in daytime the skin turns almost black, but at night it gets light brown. There are two gecko species in Malta, but you can tell the Moorish Gecko by its toes – only two of those have claws. The Moorish Gecko grows to about 15cm. Other cool gecko features are the ability to lose their tail as defence mechanism and lick their eyes instead of blinking as they are covered with a transparent membrane.

Maltese Salt Tree *Xebb/Sigra tal-irmied*

During summer take a good look at the salt tree because that's when its flowers bloom. The flowers are tiny and inconspicuous but that only seems to add to the character of this survivor-plant, which braves strong coastal winds, sea spray and lack of water and soil. The small cylindrical leaves are made to save water, but the fruits have 'wings' to use the wind for spreading seeds. This dense shrub can be easily found on cliff sides and boulder screes. It is an endemic plant which means one can only see it in the Maltese Islands.

Kestrel *Spanjulett*

Kestrels are regular migrants showing up in September; however few birds are here during summer. They used to be common breeders in Malta, and last summer a family of kestrels was raised again after four years. They choose cliff sides for nesting and open areas for hunting. Kestrels can be easily recognised when hovering in mid-air, looking for small mammals below. These small falcons have a long tail and wings. The males have a grey head while females have brown. Their backs are spotted, and in flight you can see pale under wings, also with dark spots.

Praying Mantis *Debba tax-Xitan Kbira*

The Praying Mantis is a slow moving insect which grabs its prey at once with the two modified legs. Excellent vision and rotating head provide maximum accuracy in this task. They are usually either green or brown. These highly adaptive creatures camouflage very well with their surroundings and that's why they are difficult to spot. Their body can reach length between five to seven centimetres and the female mantis is generally bigger than the male. Look for them in low vegetation.



Barometer of life measuring extinction pressure

WORDS JESSICA IRWIN & KETIJA RITENIECE

With one of the most debated of Malta's bird species – the European Turtle Dove – recently red-listed as 'vulnerable' to extinction, our magazine looks into the story of the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. The Red List of the International Union for Conservation of Nature has been the most comprehensive information source on the conservation status of wildlife species for over half a century. Why are such statuses given to wildlife species and how does that help protect them?

Once upon a time in the faraway islands east of New Zealand, a small seabird with a unique black and white underwing pattern, called Chatham Petrel, was on the brink of extinction. It was 1995 and their global population was at the very low of around 700 birds. The petrels were predated by cats and rats, and other seabirds were taking up their nesting sites. For about 14 years their conservation status according to IUCN Red List was 'critically endangered'. Conservationists worked on eradicating predators and creating special flaps for nesting burrow entrances, to save the dying species. Their status improved from 'critically endangered' to 'endangered' and last year Chatham Petrels were already listed as 'vulnerable' – although still a threatened species, their numbers were growing.

However, red-listing is not just about giving statuses to animals, fungi and plants and it is certainly not just a list. Data might seem boring, but without it, we cannot protect nature wisely and effectively. By assessing species populations, their threats, trends, and habitat needs, this list is key in identifying areas where conservation actions need to be taken. This can then be used in making vital policy changes to ensure the long-term survival of species, prevention of extinctions and the overall improvement of biodiversity.

From 34 to 80,000

The very idea of such a list came from John C. Philips, an American conservation pioneer. He travelled the world to collect wildlife specimens for research and soon saw the need to gather and review the world's scientific knowledge of the threatened mammal species. Philips believed that this would pinpoint those animals which could be saved from extinction and so in 1933 he started raising money for studies needed to fulfil his intention.

Later, many different versions and volumes of red-lists followed. They expanded gradually including more classes and more species; however the very idea has stayed the same – compiling knowledge, saving biodiversity and stopping extinction.

From a card index of 34 threatened mammal species, the Red List has now developed into a searchable online database with nearly 80,000 species and subspecies assessed.

This could not be done without collaboration with over 8,000 species experts, global specialists and leading partners including BirdLife International, which coordinates the categorisation and documentation of all bird species.



Curlew Sandpiper has a large range across the world, but different populations are declining due to the loss of stopover habitat. Last year they were up-listed to 'near threatened' for the first time. Regular migrant in Malta



Audouin's Gull was one of the world's rarest gulls with only 1,000 pairs in 1975. The 2015 Red List update saw its status improve to 'least concern' category, thanks to protection of its breeding colonies. It has also now become a regular visitor in Malta

Looking for larger patterns

Although being the world's most comprehensive and objective source of information on wildlife species status, the IUCN Red List is far from being perfect and complete. In fact, only a few taxonomic groups, such as mammals and birds, have been fully measured. On the contrary, plants, invertebrates, freshwater and marine species are those groups where main knowledge gaps remain. For example, mammals as a group are in greater danger than our feathered friends, with 21% of all mammal species ever described as threatened, whilst the percentage of all bird species facing extinction is 13%. With this information, the Red List acts as a 'barometer of life', measuring important shifts in our ecosystems and even forecasting potential changes which can impact plants and animals and which can then be prepared for.

But just as barometers also measure low pressure, so does the 'list of threatened species' by including those species that are not threatened at all and are sometimes even considered pests, such as feral pigeons or grey squirrels. Those plants and animals that are widespread and abundant are categorised as 'least concern'. By including this category, a more complete picture of the status of world's biodiversity is available.

Shifting from Red List's 'traditional' role of pointing out most endangered species to a role of assessing as many species as possible is a step towards a more

ecology-based view. Plants and animals don't live in isolation, but in relationships with other wildlife. Today conservationists more often look at ecosystems rather than one species.

This approach allows using the Red List to look for larger patterns, compare threatened and non-threatened species and do multi-species analysis. For example, seven out of eleven vulture species in Africa are facing extinction, showing the critical state of this group of birds in the continent. The latest Red List assessment update showed that the status of these species has worsened, giving a wake-up call for complex action to target multiple vulture species at once.

Up-listed, down-listed

Making regular evaluations and updates ensures any fluxes in populations and geographical ranges are recorded, and if need be, species can be up-listed or down-listed, depending on the improving or deteriorating statuses.

In 2015, BirdLife International's assessment of the world's birds revealed that one in eight birds are threatened with extinction, a statistic which is more common amongst larger-bodied species. The 2015 assessment from BirdLife International also concluded that 23 species had been downgraded to a lower-level threat, thanks to conservation efforts, such as reintroduction or site protection followed by natural reproduction. However, 40 more species worldwide were classified as having a higher risk of extinction, including the iconic European Turtle Dove, up-listed from 'least concern' to 'vulnerable' due to loss of foraging and nesting sites and hunting along its migration.

The Red List serves not only as a reasonable indicator or essential resource for conservation action. Undeniably, it also has as an emotional role to play, reminding of the past extinctions due to human impact.

Jessica Irwin is the Communications Assistant at BirdLife Malta and **Ketija Riteniece** is the Communications Officer



Il-Qammieħ

WORDS KETIJA RITENIECE

Even without many birds and plants around in summer, Qammieħ is a great option for a walk. The area is geologically interesting, has arguably the best views in Malta and covers a wide range of habitats, including garrigue, clay slopes, agricultural land, woodland, steppe and finally lets you catch a refreshing sea breeze. Choose between two options: either a challenging walk through the boulder scree or an easier one at the top part.

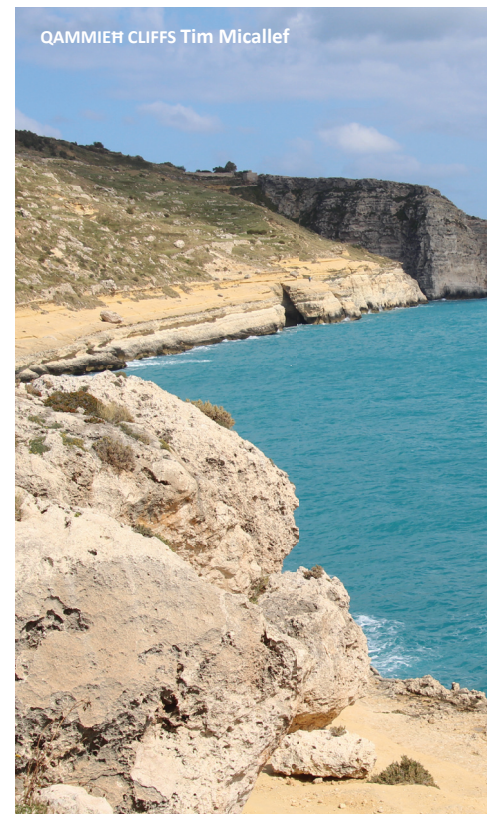
Option 1. Surely you'll need more energy and better shoes for this option, but at least you've avoided people with expensive cars for most of the walk! Choose your start by either walking through Foresta 2000 or the road behind the green shanty town, where after about one kilometre walk uphill on your right. Either way, you should reach a gorge beneath a pillbox. Stop to take a look at the three rocky promontories along the south-west coast. Then follow the road until you reach a very big boulder on the left side of the road that marks where you should head down to the coastal step. Depending on the month, you can see Wild Artichokes, Golden Samphire or Sea Squill in bloom around you.

By the sea, look out for some amazing fossils embedded in the limestone. From this point, the only building visible is the far-away Ġħajn Tuffieħa tower in Majjistral Park, allowing you to easily picture how this island might have looked centuries ago. This is also a good spot for a short break and light meal, as some heavy (and exciting) walking waits ahead. When reaching the clay slopes climb up those and continue by the visible path. The slopes are largely covered with the Esparto Grass – favoured breeding

how to get there

Take any bus to Ċirkewwa and get off at 'Riserva' bus stop for **Option 1**; Musa or Marfa for **Option 2**. Driving and parking might be problematic, as the walk is not circular.

QAMMIEH CLIFFS Tim Micallef





habitat for our resident Zitting Cisticolas. You might get lucky to find the delicate Sea Lavender, a purple summer flower. Another summer bloomer in this arid area is the yellow Maltese Fleabane. Wild Rabbits, Weasels and Western Whip Snake are known to live here. Bird-wise, look out for the Blue Rock Thrush, Corn Bunting and Spectacled Warbler. Continue your way along the coastline, enjoying the solitude and the views of Comino and Gozo. Soon after entering a reed bed, the road will take you up the hill, and back to reality with a view of the ferry terminal.

Option 2. If you prefer a more effortless walk, we suggest starting other way around – Ċirkewwa to Għadira, as the walk gets from harder to easier this way. After reaching Paradise Bay, follow the road leading uphill to the cliff. Moving south along the sea line, don't miss the 'cave'. Such a depression was formed through limestone erosion and eventual surface collapse. Follow the visible pathway commencing from the cave until you get to the flat area of the Qammieħ garrigue. This habitat, poor in soil, is usually taken over by low-lying, aromatic plants. Enjoy the scent of the wild thyme, which flowers in June, and the buzz of the insects it attracts. Thyme gives Maltese honey a special flavour. Open garrigue is also liked by Short-toed Larks that can be heard singing high in the air. Arriving on the ridge, go right to explore the old radar station and the views, whilst standing on the most western point of mainland Malta. Then turn back to the public road and proceed to the Red Tower or take the steep steps down to finish the walk through the Foresta 2000 woodland. Either way, a short walk down the hill will take you to Mellieħa Bay where ice-cream awaits.

Ketija Riteniece is the Communications Officer at BirdLife Malta



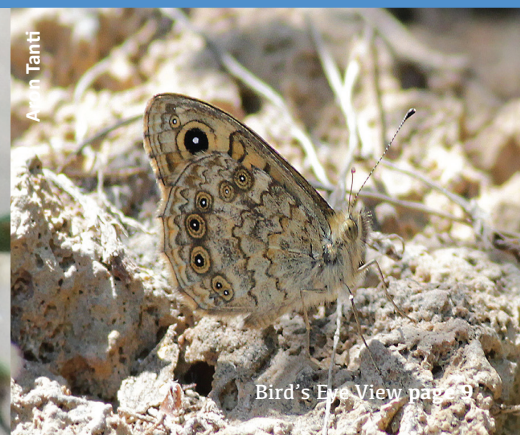
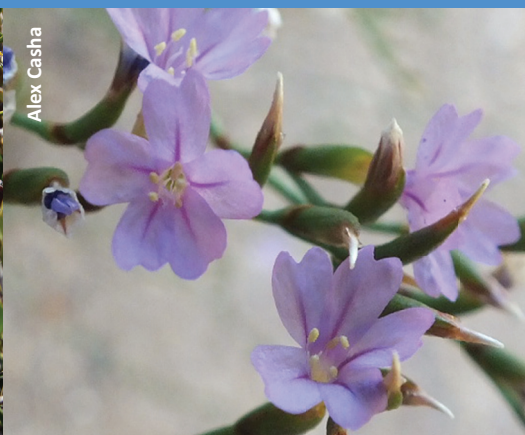
Looking for more nature day ideas? Make sure you renew your membership to receive a booklet 'Discovering nature in Malta' with many ideas for days out.

what to look out for

Wolfbane When the distinctive horn-like follicles break open in summer, you can see the silky white hair of the seeds. That's why in Maltese this dense shrub is called silk tree. Poisonous!

Sea Lavender These summer bloomers like salty soils and are found in coastal habitats. There are three species on the islands, one of them - the Maltese Sea Lavender - is a rare endemic that grows also on clay slopes. With many intermediates, they are hard to tell apart.

Wall Brown This is a common butterfly, often found on rough ground, country tracks, near stone walls.



Sixteen years ago, the Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) from Germany started bird protection campaigns in Malta. Operating since the 70s, this small organisation has seen the end of bird trapping in Belgium and many other success stories. Being our partners in combating bird crime in Malta, we asked CABS Operations Officer Axel Hirschfeld: “Will Malta be another such success story?”

INTERVIEW JESSICA IRWIN

How did you come to love nature and birds?

I was 15 when one of my teachers – a keen birder – took me out in the forest to map the nests of Red Kites. It was an incredible experience. Finding the nests fulfilled me with a sensation of wellbeing. Later I became a ringer that allowed being in direct contact with birds. When I was 17 I met the first people from CABS. That’s how it all started.

Why did you choose to work in enforcement, not e.g. research, policy or other fields of bird conservation?

Many organisations were creating nature by planting trees and doing education work, but I felt that nobody really cared if the laws were abided by. In Germany we have a problem with raptor persecution, but without a wildlife crime unit, you have to call the normal police and explain everything as they aren’t necessarily educated in this. If we wanted to make a change, we had to choose a field that nobody was working on.

How did CABS begin and what was this in response to?

CABS was founded in 1975 in response to the first reports of the mass killing of birds in the Mediterranean. At the time in the press, there were pictures of thousands of robins and thrushes sold on markets in Northern Italy, so at this point the founders of CABS decided to send teams there, and start bird protection camps. Today we have offices with full-time staff members in Italy, Cyprus and Germany from here we organise operations in many European countries, including Malta. We are also active in France and Spain - where songbirds are still trapped with limesticks and nets.

Why did you choose to work in Malta?

We read reports of the large-scale shooting of birds of prey and decided to focus also on them, not just songbirds. Birds of prey are much more vulnerable to persecution as they do not have such high reproduction rate. In the beginning the work was much more focused on intelligence gathering than action. Later we extended a close relationship with the ALE and since 2007 we are conducting camps every spring and autumn. That year BirdLife Malta also conducted its first real Raptor Camp. We are happy that we have this close cooperation with BirdLife Malta, because for a foreign organisation, it’s essential to have a local partner.

What do such camps involve?

Catching as many poachers as we can. The most important



Axel Hirschfeld
CABS

tactic is working as a deterrent – to be there and be seen. During the hunting season, in the afternoon we have to find where the birds are roosting, and send the teams there in the morning. We also do covert operations to collect evidence – faces, number plates, pictures of people operating with nets, cages or protected birds. If we have enough evidence, it is up to the police to take them to court.

Have you seen progress? Is there less trapping and hunting in Malta?

Trapping and hunting are two different cups of tea. In terms of illegal hunting, over the last 16 years in Malta we have observed a significant decrease. In terms of trapping, since the government opened a legal season for finches in autumn, we observed a large increase in illegal trapping in spring. They need certain species as decoys and the prices of finches on the black market have boosted up. I’m confident that European Commission will sack this derogation for the finch trapping, but we will see more seasons before this goal is finally reached.

Have you seen greater interest from the public about your work?

Yes, most clearly because of the spring hunting referendum. When we started working here, wildlife crime was not so much in the public eye. But now Malta cannot be compared to any other country in the EU on how much attention the media and the public pay to the issue. This puts pressure on politicians. The number of locals who give us tip-offs has also increased massively – we would never reveal their names and often they don’t even tell us their name!

Do you have a favourite natural place in Malta?

The area from Selmun Palace down to Mistra Bay is one of the few places in Malta where, watching down from the cliffs, there is still some really wild nature. Most of the times there is nobody there and I can still imagine that I’m on a remote island.

Jessica Irwin is the Communications Assistant at BirdLife Malta



First protected marine sites for Malta's seabirds

WORDS JESSICA IRWIN

Since starting in 2011, the LIFE+ Malta Seabird Project has continuously worked to find the most important areas out at sea for three protected seabird species; the Yelkouan Shearwater (Garnija), Scopoli's Shearwater (Ċiefa) and the European Storm-petrel (Kangu ta' Filfla), all of which can be found in significant numbers in the Maltese Islands. Our researchers created an inventory of marine Important Bird Areas (IBAs). IBAs are key in identifying priority areas for site-based conservation efforts, helping to ensure the survival of a variety of seabird species. With many seabird species across the world facing decline, local efforts are crucial for safeguarding not only bird populations, but also global biodiversity.

After four years of intensive and innovative research by project staff, BirdLife Malta volunteers and partners, BirdLife International confirmed eight new IBAs, covering a total of 27% of the Maltese Fishing Management Zone (FMZ) and extending up to 25 nautical miles from the coastline. The identified sites are used by all three seabird species for foraging and rafting during the breeding season.

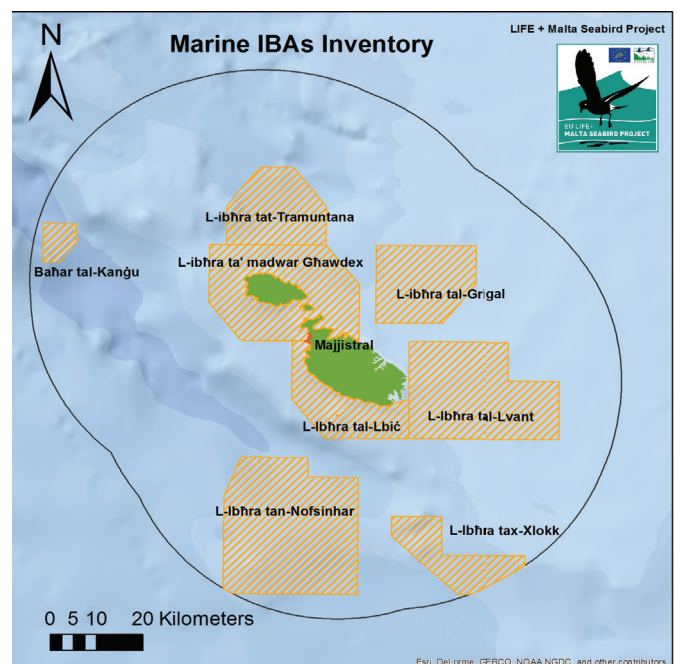


A flock of Scopoli's Shearwaters feeding offshore

With these areas successfully confirmed as IBAs, they have now been proposed by the Maltese Government to the European Commission to be declared as marine Special Protection Areas (SPA) under the Birds Directive – the first of such in Malta.

As an SPA, this will become part of the EU-wide Natura 2000 network, enabling the Maltese Government to manage these sites effectively, ultimately protecting the future of Malta's internationally important seabird populations.

Jessica Irwin is the Communications Assistant at BirdLife Malta



The eight areas of sea proposed as marine IBAs

what's on

FALKO EVENTS

Trip to Dwejra

Sunday 10th July

Gozo

Meeting Point & Time: 08:30 Ferry Terminal, Ċirkewwa

Have a great day outside joining our walk along the cliffs in Gozo in search of breeding swifts in the area. Falko events are aimed at young adults interested in exploring nature and meeting like-minded people.

For bookings and more information, please contact falko@birdlifemalta.org and follow our Facebook page 'Falko, BirdLife Malta'.

Swift Celebration Event

Saturday 2nd July

16:00 – 19:00

Meeting Point: Playground next to Mellieħa Parish Church

Join us and learn more about these superb fliers quite often seen in the sky above Malta. Check the BirdLife Malta Facebook page for further details.

OVERSEAS EVENTS

UK Bird Fair 2016

19th – 21st August

Rutland Water Nature Reserve

We will be returning to the British Birdwatching Fair this year to raise awareness and funds for bird protection in Malta. Come and see us if you're there!



Steven Williams

Sunset Shearwater Boat Trip

Friday 22nd & Saturday 23rd July

18:45 – 21:00

Meeting Point: Marfa jetty

Our favourite summer adventure is on again! Join the sunset boat ride to see one of Malta's most spectacular natural phenomena – the Scopoli's Shearwater 'rafting' on the water before returning to their nests in Ta' Ċenċ cliffs.

Members: €7 adults, €5 children (under 14s)

Non-members: €10 adults, €6 children (under 14s)

Members will have priority in bookings

Please send your booking to events@birdlifemalta.org including:

- Name and mobile contact number
- Membership number if you have one
- Names and number of all the people in your group
- Date of the boat trip you want to attend

This graceful Greater Flamingo (Fjamingu) arrived at Salina salt pans on June 9, attracting bird watchers and photographers wanting to see the rare visitor.

The flamingo wears a plastic ring and was most likely ringed in Spain as a young bird back in 2003. The fully-developed pink plumage also shows it is an adult. Salt pans are flamingos' natural habitat as they are rich in brine shrimp – their favourite food.



GREATER FLAMINGO Ray Galea