



BirdTalk



BIRDLIFE MALTA NEWSLETTER

MARCH/APRIL 1997 • 40

editorial board: Ian Mifsud (editor), Desirée Falzon, Victor Falzon

Days of Destruction

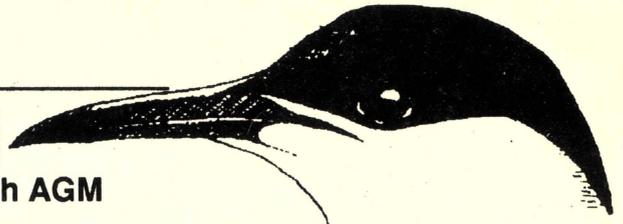
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Hunting at sea									Hunting at sea		
Trapping		Trapping						Trapping			
					Rabbit-hunting						
		Hunting on land						Hunting on land			

The above table shows why last February's changes in the bird regulations were such a complete blow for Maltese natural history. This spring hunters have roamed the countryside with a vengeance, rambo-ing down every feather in sight, as though this was their God-given right. Thanks to the amendments, they can now legally practise their slaughterhouse hobby virtually all year round, switching from land- to sea-craft according to season. All year round, except for 24 days in March, during which birds apparently turn sacred (though *not* sacred enough to avoid the nets). There is also the notorious 9-day break in late May. BirdLife wonders what birds can take advantage of such a ridiculous "close season". BirdLife wonders what scientific grounds were the amendments based on.



Short-toed Eagle - irresistible target!

Rapid Roundup



Highlights of the Executive Report read at the 35th AGM

1996 was a difficult year for BirdLife. The Society was financially in the red, which led Council to discontinue the employment of a paid director. So Birdlife returned to a virtually volunteer-run organisation. This slowed us down for a while, as Council and Executive re-channelled the various jobs among the BirdLife volunteer force. There was work to be done, and no-one was looking back...

Over the period April 96 - March 97...

- Council, Executive and the other BirdLife committees and working groups met a total of 46 times to brainstorm, discuss, plan, organise, effect and evaluate.
- 6 issues of the adult members bi-monthly newsletter *BirdTalk* were published
- 6 issues of the Klabb Huttaf bi-monthly magazine *Il-Huttafa* were published
- 3 issues of the Birdwatchers' Club quarterly magazine *Woodchat* were published
- 6 issues of the Research Group's bimonthly *Ringling Newsletter* were published
- 32 activities for junior members were organised
- 5 activities for adult members were organised
- BirdLife volunteers freely guided visitors to Għadira nature reserve on 64 days
- BirdLife produced an educational leaflet for schoolchildren visiting Għadira nature reserve
- Work at Is-Simar nature reserve continued unabated. 2000-tree nursery established
- BirdLife participated (8th year running) in the Piccole Isole ringing project, again on Kemmuna
- BirdLife won a legal case against shooters' association
- Birdwatchers Club launched, with its own newsletter/magazine and activities
- Report on the Important Bird Areas in Malta drawn up for BirdLife International
- BirdLife hosted a meeting for 16 international participants of the Europe Group Against Bird Crime
- School award scheme Dinja Waħda 2 launched but stalled pending new minister's go-ahead
- Membership registered slight decrease, now standing at 3037
- Participation in television and radio discussion programmes on bird protection and hunting
- Numerous press releases were issued by the Media section of BirdLife
- Education Working Group produced memorandum on Environmental Education
- BirdLife hosted two top officials from the UK's Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
- Various BirdLife volunteers participated in meetings and training courses abroad
- BirdLife held various meetings with MPs and political party delegates
- BirdLife went to court over the bird protection regulation amendments - we lost over a technicality
- Conservation Committee set up network to track reports of illegal shooting - various hunters caught

The list goes on, but it is already clear that in the past 12 months BirdLife was anything but idle!

BirdLife survived a setback and managed to re-organise itself - thanks to you!
BirdLife will strive to do even better in the next 12 months - thanks to you!

All Write!

If every adult member were this year to write (or even fax)
a single letter to the press, we'd have...

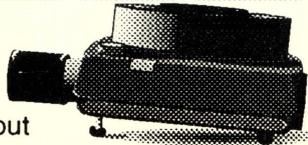
three letters appearing every day!

So go on! Air your view! But keep it short, and give it punch!

(Pick an address from page 4)

Of talks, AGMs and all that

Members who attended the Members' Morning on 6 April were treated to four very interesting talks about fossil birds, Maltese wildlife laws over the ages, a history of BirdLife and a spectacular photographic selection of jewels of Maltese nature.



During the AGM that followed, statute was amended on 3 points:

- A. Council will in future be elected every 2 years
- B. Members will in future be allowed to run for Council indefinitely.
- C. A post of Chairperson has been added to the posts on Council.

The AGM then approved without objection all nine applicants to the new Council. These are: **Anita Aloisio, Denis Cachia, Richard Cachia Zammit, Alex Casha, Norman Chetcuti, John Grech, Paul Pace and Antoine Vella.** No election was held, since there were only nine applicants.

The AGM then passed a resolution condemning the widespread killing of birds from seacraft.

As BirdTalk goes to press, the new Council will meet to decide on the various Council posts, as well as to co-opt two more members so as to have an 11-strong Council, as presently required by statute.

World Birdwatch 97

The World Birdwatch is an event that takes place every two years, and which is organised by the many Partners of BirdLife International. The aim is to get people out of house to watch, enjoy and learn a thing or two about birds. In this way, BirdLife International hopes to raise environmental awareness through birdwatching. In 1995, about 30,000 people took part. The target this year is to beat that figure.



For this year's event, **BirdLife Malta has taken on the co-ordination of the European section.** This means linking up with over 40 countries, to create a rapid information network via fax. In this way, during two days in October all sightings and records logged by the participating countries will be relayed to our BirdLife office in Valletta. In that short span of time, BirdLife will put together all the incoming data, do the necessary mathematics, and relay back to every country the final results.

Meanwhile BirdLife Malta itself will be holding its own event. But more of that in a future issue of BirdTalk. Watch this space.

REMEMBER

If you see or hear illegal hunting, call 240707 (ALE) and then call 237258 (BirdLife special line) so that we can track your report.
If you come across an injured bird, call 233321.

Shopping for Sponsors

BirdLife has just completed its first **Project Catalogue.** The catalogue lists 13 projects for which funds are required. Projects range from printing a colour magazine for adult members, to building and resourcing a visitors centre at Is-Simar nature reserve. Some of these projects will also appear in the BirdLife International project catalogue - this should give our projects greater exposure to potential sponsors.



Gate still open

Ghadira nature reserve is still open to visitors at weekends (9am-12noon, 2pm-4pm) **until the end of May.** BirdLife volunteers will point out interesting birds and other wildlife.

The past weeks have been rather quiet at the reserve, with the occasional flock of black-winged stilt and other waders. But April and May always produce a heron or two (or more - many members cherish last May's 101 little egrets!). And surprises are never lacking at this time of year.



No limits!

Members (and many others!) will surely have noticed the full-page appeal that BirdLife made in The Times of 16 April 1997. The colourful thing cost quite a penny, but it was worth it.

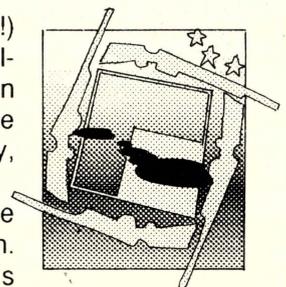
Some may argue that one should not expose one's dirty linen. Fair enough, when the linen is private property. But when applied to environmental matters, this argument becomes narrow-minded, irresponsible and egoistic.

Wild birds are not anyone's private possession. What happens to birds, wherever they are, is everyone's concern. The fact that a bird migrates over Malta gives no gun-wielding moron the faintest right over that bird's life. And if he thinks he does, then it is everyone's duty to try and stop him. **Wildlife, like art, knows no political boundaries.** The migratory nature of birds seems to stress that very point.

Incidentally, how *do* you stop people from seeing the evil that hunters do? Do you tell the population to stay indoors all day, draw all window shutters shut and plug their ears? Do you close down the tourism industry, shut off all communication systems? Rather not...

You could try washing the dirty linen instead - it's what BirdLife has been doing for the past 35 years.

And until that linen is spotless, BirdLife will not stop pushing for ever stronger detergents - preferably of the hunter-degradable type!



24.A.F.
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Alternativa
POBox 521
Valletta
Fax: 224745

Kulhadd
Kwartieri Laburisti
Triq Mile End
Hamrun
Fax: 240717

The Malta Independent
Standard Publications Ltd
6th Floor Airways Hse
High Street
Sliema
Fax: 346062

**In-Nazzjon Taghna and
Il-Mument**
Independence Press
Hubert Ganado Str
Pietà
Fax:242886

**L-Orizzont and
It-Torċa**
Union Print
A41 Industrial Estate
Marsa
Fax: 244557/238484

**The Times and
The Sunday Times**
Allied Newspaper Ltd
341 St.Paul's Str
Valletta
Fax: 247901

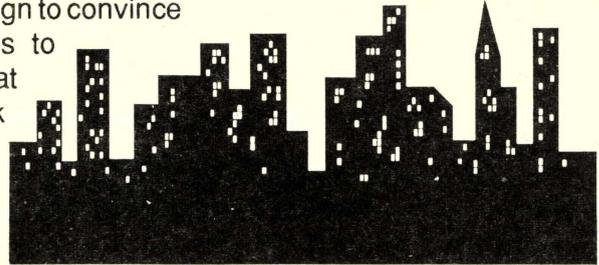


Here's the World News



Lethal Light

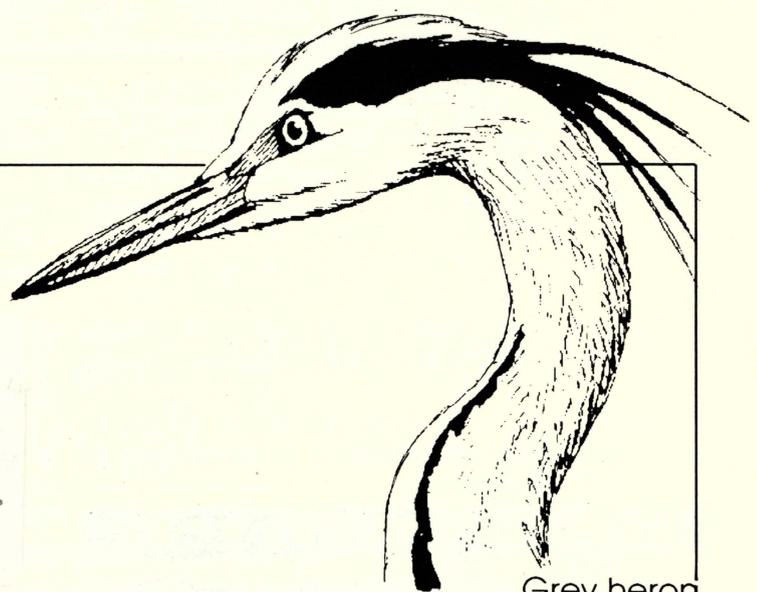
Migratory birds, navigating by the moon and stars in pre-dawn hours, are distracted and disoriented by city lights. Crashing into such brightly illuminated structures, thousands of birds are killed or maimed. In Canada, conservation groups, including WWF, have launched a campaign to convince tenants of tall buildings to black out their windows at night, especially at peak migration times. Buildings enrolled in the programme are designated "Bird-friendly"



Edward's back!

Ornithologists from WWF are on the lookout for **Edward's pheasant**, a rare species that for half a century was presumed extinct by the scientific world! Villagers living near the Bach Ma national park in central Vietnam claim to have sighted the bird.

Another long-lost bird, the **grey-crown crocias**, was also rediscovered in Vietnam about three years ago.



Grey heron

A2235
Mr. Eric German,
Assistant Librarian,
Melitensia Special Collection,
University of Malta Library,
Msida.



**BirdLife Malta is the Society for the protection of birds and the natural environment.
BirdLife Malta is the Partner of BirdLife International in the Maltese Islands.**

We're off to

Kemmuna

Coming?

Kemmuna in spring is a magnet to birdwatchers and nature lovers. This spring will be no exception. Come along and spend a quiet day away from it all. Some details...

Date: Sunday, 4 May 1997
Meeting place: Marfa jetty (not Ċirkewwa!)
Time: 7.15am sharp
Back : Around 3.00pm
Price: Lm1.50 (Lm1 for children under 14)

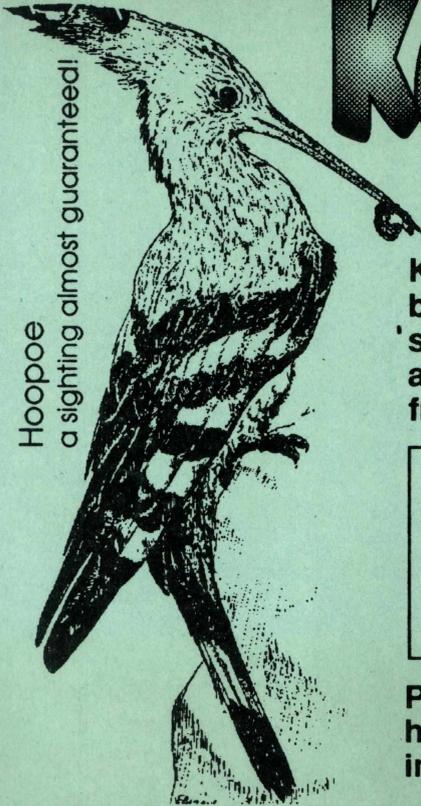
Please bring food and drink... and a hat. Bring comfortable shoes if you intend to join the walk.

Please fill the application below, and send it in **by not later than 30 April**. It is important that we know beforehand how many people are coming since we are chartering a boat for this activity.

Please make cheque/Postal Order payable to **BirdLife Malta**
Send application to **BirdLife Malta - Kemmuna Trip, POBox 498 Valletta**

A supplement of BirdTalk Newsletter No40 - March/April-1997

Hoopoe
a sighting almost guaranteed!



Yes, I'm coming to Kemmuna!

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ Number of adults

Phone: _____ Number of children

Enclosed please find cheque/PO to the order of **Lm**

