

# BirdTalk



**BirdLife**  
MALTA

BIRDLIFE MALTA NEWSLETTER

MAY/JUNE 1997 - Issue 41

Editorial Board: Ian Mifsud (Editor), Desirée Falzon, Victor Falzon, Antoine Vella

## World Environment Day Event BirdLife Malta protests against hunters' participation



The Birdlife stand at the Environment Day Exhibition

Freedom Square was dressed up for the occasion: potted trees and rustic wooden stands set a suitable atmosphere for the exhibition held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Environment to commemorate World Environment Day on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June. BirdLife Malta participated together with several other environmental NGOs and Government Departments. This was an excellent chance to explain to the public our aims, achievements and ambitions. Moreover, houseplants were sold as a fund-raising activity called "A Flower for Life" which we are happy to announce was quite successful.

Unfortunately the "green" character of the event was marred by the presence of two hunting associations which were allowed to

take part as if they were real "conservationists". This was nothing but a provocation and could not pass unremarked and BirdLife duly protested publicly about the matter. Let's hope that this lapse is not indicative of the way that things will be in future.

*Good will should be ta'en in part of payment . . .*

*Scottish proverb*

**ALIVE**  
fund for bird protection in the maltese islands



. . . . but money is usually preferred. Unfortunately, good intentions will not pay our bills. Lack of funds is the chronic bane of all voluntary societies and BirdLife is no exception. In order to solve at least part of the problem, BirdLife has joined forces with medEcology to set up *ALIVE*, a fund for bird protection. *ALIVE* intends to operate in both the local and the international scene: a series of appeals,

initiatives and events are planned for the coming years.

The first activity - A Flower for Life - was sponsored by F.Zammit Nurseries and was held on the 5th of June (see above). The funds collected through *ALIVE* will be utilised for educational and conservational purposes such as the Dinja Wahda Environmental Awards, Project Millenium, the Environment Education Centre at is-Simar, and many others.

This summer keep in touch with BirdLife events, including a barbeque and a boat trip around Gozo. Further details in the next issue of BirdTalk.

# LOOKING AHEAD

Last March, Klabb Huttaf started a new initiative to recruit members. Klabb Huttaf is the junior section of BirdLife and aims to foster and spread nature

appreciation among young people. Education is really the long-term solution to our environmental problems, which means that the club depends on having a large membership.

Four volunteers have been visiting primary schools regularly to encourage children to enroll in the club. They carry out an activity involving the children in a 'swallow migration' game, which introduces them to the rigours of a bird's life.

Started on a trial basis, the project has now taken off with the encouraging result of 330 new members enrolled in a very short time, bringing the total to 1600 Huttaf!

Keep up the good work Marthese Attard, Marisa Grech, Thelma Saliba and Agnes Scicluna.



BirdLife animators with a group of school children (photo D.Falzon)

## 1922-1997 75 YEARS OF CONSERVATION

This June, BirdLife International celebrates its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It started off in 1932 as the International Committee for Bird Preservation. The eleven founding members met in London with the aim of creating a network of conservation organizations. At that time, the two major issues were marine pollution and bird trade; unfortunately these are still of concern to conservationists.

On March 1<sup>st</sup> 1993 the ICBP transformed itself into a partnership of bird conservation societies and changed its name to Birdlife International.

BirdLife International is today represented in over 85 countries, including Malta, giving it a worldwide membership of more than 1.5 million individuals. The bird species known to science are now about 9700 of which at least 1000 are threatened

with extinction. In an effort to halt the decline, Birdlife partners are pooling their expertise and their resources to be in a better position to tackle these threats.

BirdLife has lobbied successfully in international fora as well as with individual governments for better protection of birds and their environment. The identification of important bird areas, bird species action plans and the development of biodiversity conservation information system are some of the recent achievements of Birdlife.

Some of the pioneers who, in 1922, set up the International Committee for Bird Protection, later re-named BirdLife International



## Great news from the Ghadira front!

The Planning Authority has finally approved the building of the new reception centre in the Ghadira Nature Reserve. Work has already started and, should funds be available, the new centre is expected to start functioning by next year.

**ETI**  
The Expert Center for Taxonomic Identification

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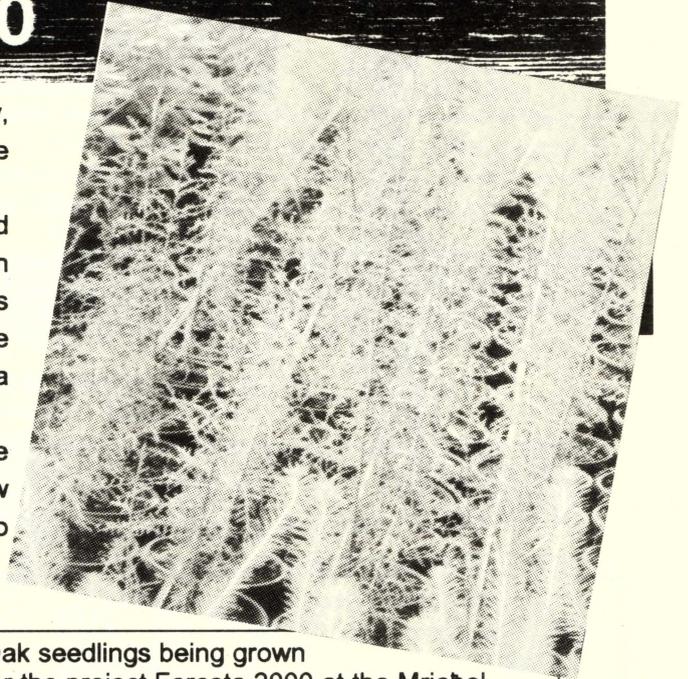
...discover it

# Foresta 2000

Ever thought of giving nature a present? Right now, BirdLife is preparing to give a big present to nature for the year 2000 - a forest!

Thousands of years ago, our Islands were covered in oak forest. Unfortunately human influence has, through the centuries, reduced the countryside to a treeless landscape. That is why BirdLife has decided to take the initiative to green up the place: we're still looking for a suitable area for the forest.

Meanwhile about 250 oak tree seedlings have started the project as is-Simar nursery. This year, a few schools were involved in the seeding. Next year we go big, including our members!



Oak seedlings being grown for the project Foresta 2000 at the Mriehel Secondary School (photo: D.Falzon)

## We are not giving up

The struggle to recover the ground lost through the 1997 changes in the Hunting Regulations is still going on, notwithstanding the official obstacles placed in our path. Our appeal to the Courts to stop the slaughter of birds was refused and, to add injury to insult, we were fined LM40 for our efforts.

The situation today is that we have asked that an Authority of Review be set up to examine the new Regulations. Although the law states that the Government has to set up the Authority within 30 days of such a request, more than two months have passed at the time of writing and our application has been ignored. Our various reminders have finally been answered by the Prime Minister who has promised that the Authority will be set up shortly.

We'll wait and see . . . . .

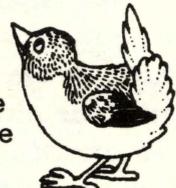
### BirdLife Council member

In the last issue of BirdTalk we listed the members of the new Council but inadvertently left out Raymond Galea, a keen and experienced bird watcher and expert photographer, who returns to the Council after an interval of a couple of years. Welcome back on board Ray.

## SWEAT IT OUT THIS SUMMER

Voluntary work is always very welcome on reserves, and there's plenty for everyone at Is-Simar and Ghadira. Helping out with reed-cutting, digging a pond or watering saplings are but some of the varied jobs needed to be done.

During the Summer months both reserves will be open to volunteers every Saturday. Ghadira reserve opens between 07.30 and 12.00 while Is-Simar reserve opens between 13.00 and 20.00 hrs. Entrance to the Simar reserve will be through the gate in front of the second birdwatching hide, while that at Ghadira will be through the main gate.



If you can spare a few hours at weekends just call at the Reserves.



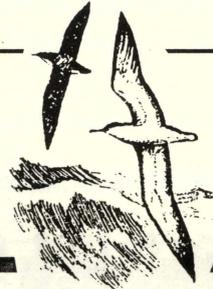
# Shearwater watching

Most of us are accustomed to seeing birds during the day. However some birds - such as the Cory's Shearwater - are active at night. About 8000 pairs are estimated to breed along the southern cliffs particularly at Hal Far and Ta' Ċenċ; as they approach their nesting colony under cover of darkness they wail their eerie call.

Due to their nocturnal habits and inaccessible breeding sites, the shearwaters have survived the onslaught of hunters but they face other perils, including disturbance from development, fishing activity and sea pollution.

An evening with the shearwaters will be held in late July. Members present will be assisted by volunteers to spot these birds through telescopes. If you have a pair of binoculars, however, do bring them along and it is also advisable to carry some insect repellent and a light jacket. Since this activity will take place close to sea cliffs, it is advisable not to bring small children along with you.

Date: Friday 25<sup>th</sup> July  
Time: 7.00 pm till late  
Meeting place: Car park above Ghar Hasan  
(Birżebbuġa)



**Shearwaters are in Gozo too!**



Calling all our young (16-24 year old) members. Camp out the night for a unique bird-watching adventure on the cliffs of Ta' Ċenċ.

See and hear the 10,000 pairs of nocturnal birds as they return from the open sea to feed their chicks.

This exciting all-night outing is being held between the 5th and 6th July.

Details and bookings from BirdLife office up to 1st July

**Collection Boxes** - Is there anybody out there who runs a shop, front office or any other public premises and would be willing to place a donation box to collect funds for BirdLife?

## Car Booth Sales

First of all a big thank you to Mr and Mrs Morgan who are organizing things for our regular car booth sales (we have already had three) at the Razzett tal Fbiberija. Mr Silvio Scicluna very kindly provides transport. So far we have managed to make LM 136 so these events are obviously very useful. We have, of course, to thank also the generous persons who have donated items for the sales.

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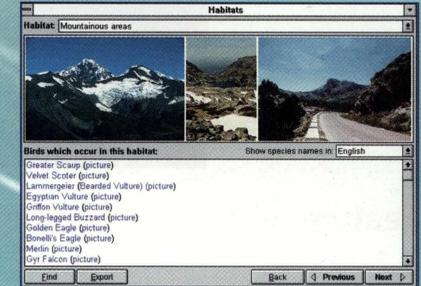
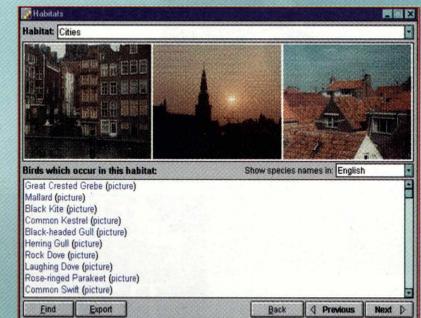
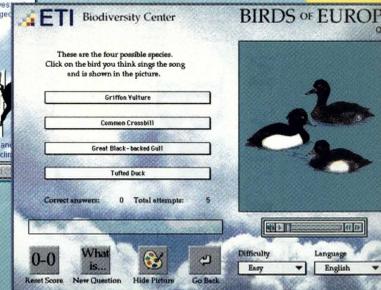
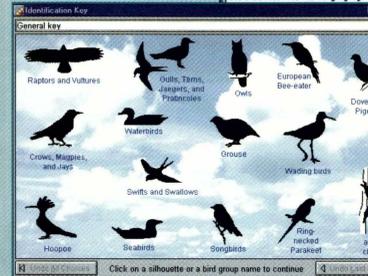
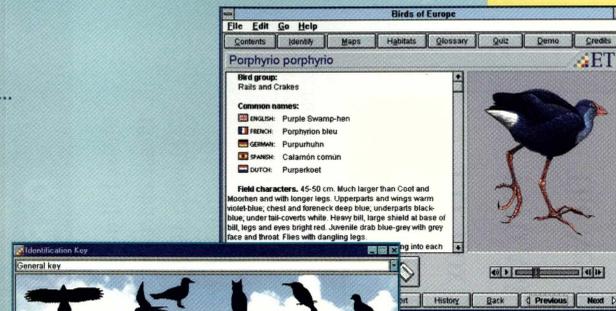
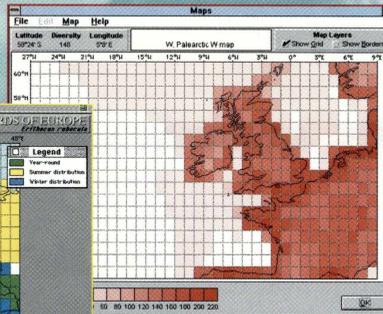
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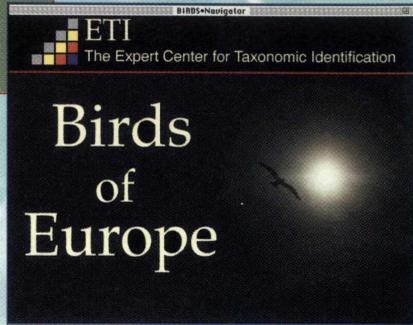
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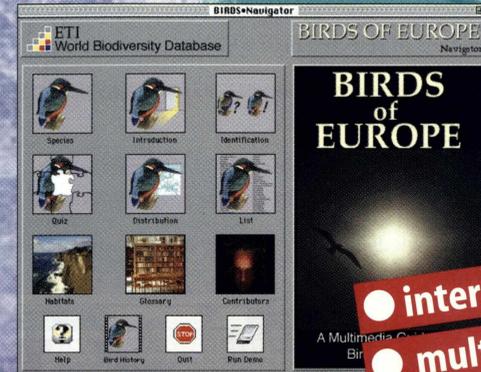
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