

Second record of the Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus* in the Maltese Islands

On the 29th November 2003, a Balearic Shearwater was identified while sea-watching at Ghallis. On first impression, the bird looked like a small Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* with similar coloration and markings - brownish upperparts and buffish below giving a relatively small whitish belly patch. The bird's profile was also like a small Cory's Shearwater, ie. rather narrow and longer winged and longer necked compared to Yelkouan Shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan*. Furthermore, it didn't show the compactness of the latter species. The differences were further confirmed when approximately 15 minutes later, two Yelkouan Shearwaters passed at the same distance showing much darker upperparts and cleaner white below.

The Balearic Shearwater had overall browner tones without neat limits between the upperparts and lowerparts, unlike the Yelkouan Shearwaters which were relatively well defined. The bird was observed for at least two minutes and flew north-westerly. There were good light conditions, which consequently gave good scope (Nikon ED Fieldcope with 20-45x zoom lens) views.

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~~First Record of the Purple Swamp-hen *Porphyrio porphyrio* in the Maltese Islands~~

~~On the 1st of April 2010 while scanning the Ghadira Nature Reserve at around 6.15 a.m. a large bird was seen on the north side of the reserve. At first glance it seemed like a very large Moorhen but immediately both of us realized that we were looking at a Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*. The colours were unmistakable, deep purplish blue, white under tail coverts and the red bill, legs and head plate. The bird was about twice the size of a Moorhen, a few of which were close by for size comparison. After walking towards the reservoir at the back it disappeared. About six hours later it reappeared in the reservoir and freshly cut reed leaves were also found on the ground indicating that it had been feeding in the area. This bird feeds mainly on reed leaves and is usually found in large reed beds and extensive marshes.~~

~~It was seen on at least five different days at Ghadira by many bird watchers, both local and foreign, up to the 7th of April. After that it was not recorded for a few days, until it reappeared at Simar Nature Reserve on the 10th of April, where it was seen again on five separate days up until the 21st of April. After this the bird was no longer seen.~~



Denis Cachia

~~Although there were several records of other southern vagrants which showed up during the same period the origin of this wild bird cannot exactly be determined. The probability of it being perhaps of Sicilian origin also cannot be excluded. The species has been reintroduced successfully into Sicily in 2000 (Corso 2005) and has spread into many new areas on its own, including the southern lakes of Pacchino, Gela and Saline di Priolo (Lentile, pers comm.).~~

~~The species, although not a true migrant, will disperse on its own when food decreases or due to drought or overpopulation.~~

~~The species had never been confirmed in Malta. Some very old records were rejected due to the fact that six wild dead specimens were later found to have been imported into Malta in 1869 by a sailor from Siracuse, Sicily. One of these is still to be found at the Natural History Museum (Sultana et~~