

was estimated at 1600 – 2080 pairs, with the largest colony of 1500–1800 pairs on Gezirat Garah (Hamza *et al* 2008). The birds which nest in the Gulf of Sirte migrate and pass along the coast of Tunisia on their way to and from their winter quarters on the West African coast (Cramp 1985) and there is a single breeding record in Tunisia in May 1983 (Isenmann *et al.* 2005). There are eight records from Sicily from 1933 to 1998; once in March, July and August respectively, twice in May and three times in June (Corso 2005).

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First record of the Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus* in the Maltese Islands

In 2002, while undertaking a re-examination of the National Museum of Natural History collections it was noted that there were two Pygmy Cormorants; one was on display and another in the reference collection. The one on display was an imported specimen (from Holland Zoo, reference number Orn.2500) but the one in the reference collection, an adult in non-breeding plumage was labelled as taken at Ġnejna (North-west Malta) in October 1983 bearing catalogue number 1298 (new reference number = Orn.0316). In addition a third specimen (reference number Orn.2653) was added to the museum's collection in 2008. However it was a confiscated bird that had almost certainly been imported along with other specimens from eastern Europe (which were all included in the confiscated collection) and cannot therefore be considered to have been taken in Malta.

Biometrics of Orn.0316: Bill 30.5mm; tarsus 37mm; tail 13.5mm; wing length 220mm.

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In 1959, De Lucca and De Lucca reported that two Pygmy Cormorants, one of which was shot and preserved, were found in a pond at Buskett in the winter of 1935. The specimen was later acquired by NMNH along with the rest of the De Lucca collection in 1969. This specimen however turned out to be a juvenile Shag *P. aristotelis* (Sultana *et al.* 1975).

The Pygmy Cormorant breeds in south-east Europe (east from Italy), Russia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, and winters primarily in Albania, Greece, the Balkan states, Turkey, Cyprus, Iraq, Iran, Azerbaijan and also Israel, Bulgaria, Romania and Syria (BirdLife International 2009). Brichetti and Fracasso (2003) give the wintering population in Italy at

400-600 individuals, with a marked increase starting in the late 1990s. There are six sightings in Sicily (Brichetti & Fracasso 2003). This record was submitted and accepted by the National Rarities Committee on 10th December 2007.

Reference:

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