

BirdTalk



BIRDLIFE MALTA NEWSLETTER

JULY/AUGUST 1997 - Issue 42

Editorial Board: Ian Mifsud (Editor), Antoine Vella

AT BIG LITTLE BITTERN

Ray Galea



Small in size, the Little Bittern made big news at Is-Simar Nature Reserve. Two pairs of have successfully raised their chicks, one pair even having two broods!

This is the first recorded case of this bird breeding in Malta. BirdLife volunteers first noted a male bird around March; little did they suspect then that the bird would stay on to find a mate and breed. However, its frantic courtship displays in April, followed by frequent movements with mouthfuls of insects gave the game away.

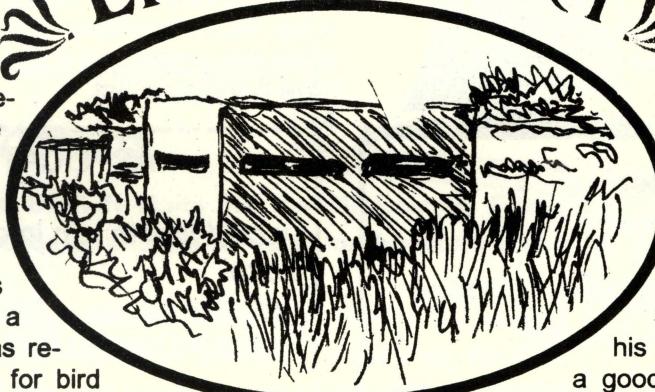
The nest was located among the thick reeds and was discovered by Ray Galea, an experienced bird watcher. Close monitoring of the adult birds revealed that they were busy toiling around a second pair of chicks after the first brood had fledged. To Ray's surprise, a second pair of Little Bitterns was found nesting in late June, while he was surveying the reed-beds for other breeding birds.

Both the Reed and Cetti's Warblers are among the species known to breed in the abundance of reeds at Is-Simar together with the now prolific moorhen. The Ghadira Reserve also

had its speciality this year: a pair of little ringed plovers have nested there. This has been the third year running that this wader has been recorded breeding in Malta; it will hopefully establish itself as a regular breeding bird. In all the above cases, the birds managed to raise their young in the safety of the havens afforded to them by the nature reserves. They are living proof that the Maltese environment does not have to be as impoverished as it is now: our wildlife can flourish if left in peace.

LIVING LEGACY

Nature lovers would appreciate the thought that the countryside will still be alive with birds and flowers even after they have passed away. The Malta Bird Reserves Overseas Committee (MBROC), a BirdLife support group, has recently donated £stg 1000 for bird conservation in our country. This contribution is in remembrance of one of its members, Mr Glyn Davis



The hide at Simar which will bear Mr Glyn Davis's name.

Glyn was a strong supporter of bird conservation in Malta and BirdLife Malta and the MBROC will now dedicate one of the bird-watching hides at the Simar Nature reserve to his memory, a fitting tribute to a good friend. People like Glyn Davis are so important for our cause: it is thanks to their support that conservation is possible.

WANTED: Storage Space

BirdLife is collecting items for a Grand Jumble Sale to be held at Ghadira Nature Reserve in October. We are urgently in need of some storage

space, such as a disused garage.

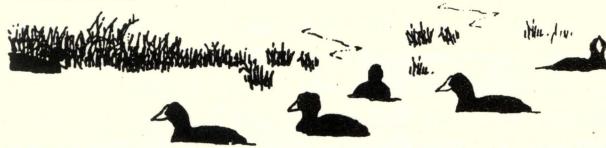
So, if you have some available space where we can store our goods for a couple of months, please contact our office.

Financial Report

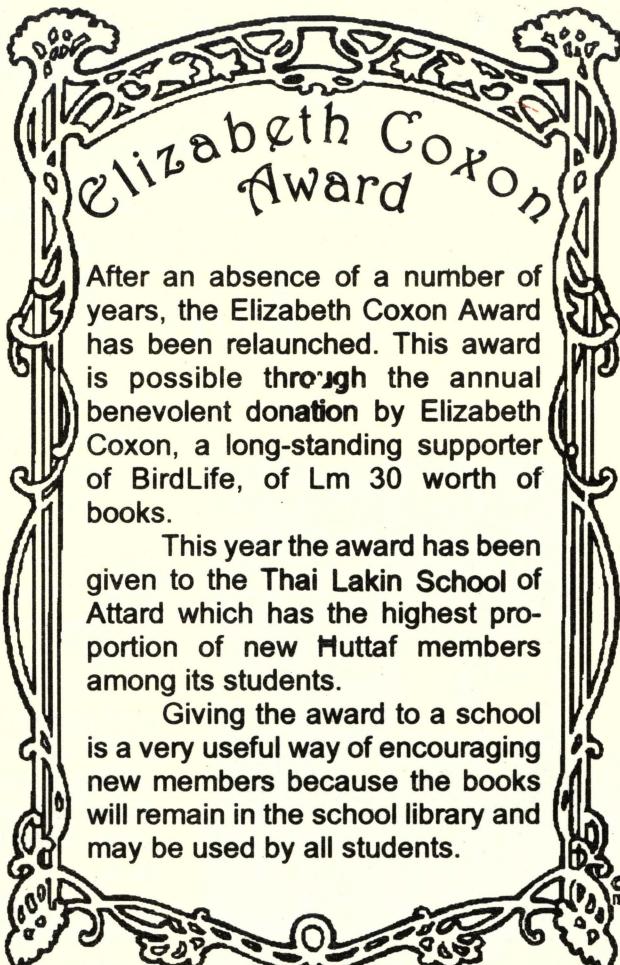
Financial Results for the year ended 31st December 1996

	1996	1995
	Lm	Lm
Income	18,394	14,297
Expenditure	15,830	19,477
Excess of Income over Expenditure	2,564	(5,180)
Financial Income	785	233
Financial Expenditure	(421)	(569)
	2,928	(5,516)
	=====	=====

The Net Asset Value of the society as at 31st December 1996 stood at Lm 38,045 (1995: Lm35,117). These results were achieved after the society undertook a massive cost reduction exercise and the implementation of an extensive programme to boost income from membership and donations.



BirdLife offices will be closed from the 14th to the 24th of August due to our participation in the National Bird Fair in the UK.



DATE: 13th September

TIME: 1.45 pm

MEETING PLACE: jetty close to Waves Disco (ex-Tunny Net) Ghadira

PRICE: Lm3 per person (payment to be made with application).

DEADLINE: Applications to reach BirdLife by 31st August.

Join us for a boat trip round Gozo. This is an opportunity of having a closer view of the varied Gozitan coast: from the majestic sea cliffs of Ta' Ċenċ to the clay slopes around Ramla Bay.

This activity is open to all members and their friends and the trip will take approximately four and a half hours. Gozitan members will have the option of being picked up from Mgarr harbour in Gozo at around 2.30pm. A bar will be available on board. It is advisable to carry some sun cream and a light jacket: the sea breeze can have a chilling effect.

APPLICATION FORM

I would like to join in on the Cruise round Gozo.

I will bring..... persons.

Enclosed please find Lm.....

Name.....

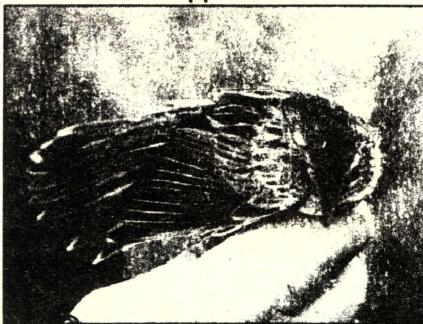
Address.....

Tel.....

SMALL ISLANDS PROJECT

Over the past nine years BirdLife's research working group has taken part in an international ornithological study co-ordinated by the Wildlife Institute of Bologna, Italy. This is the "Piccole Isole Project", carried out on more than 20 Mediterranean islands and other observatories in order to obtain reliable scientific information on the spring migration of small birds over this region.

Grasshopper Warbler



Lesser Whitethroat

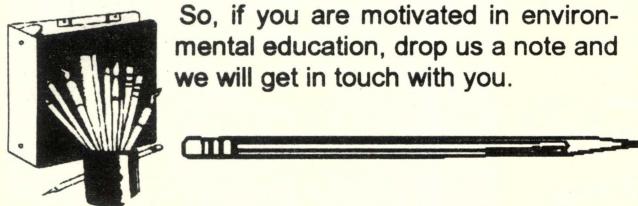
This project entails the regular ringing of the various birds passing each spring over the study area, which, in our case is the Wied I-Ahmar nature reserve in Kemmuna. During this year's 3-week programme, 1206 birds of 36 species were ringed. The highlights included 2 Kestrels, a Grasshopper Warbler and a Lesser Whitethroat. A Pied Flycatcher bearing a ring from Spain was also controlled by Maltese ringers.

WANTED.....

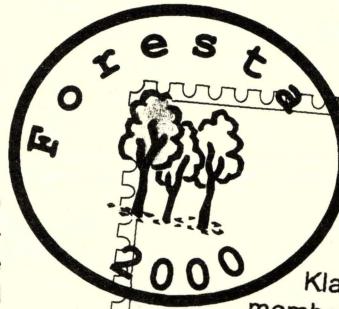
Education Working Group co-ordinator

Conservation through education is BirdLife's top priority. Schemes, including the One World campaign and the teachers' delegates network, have come a long way in creating environmental awareness among the younger generation.

BirdLife is now seeking a volunteer to co-ordinate an education working group. Apart from servicing the delegates network, BirdLife wishes to resume the publication of educational material such as leaflets and info sheets on birds and habitats.



So, if you are motivated in environmental education, drop us a note and we will get in touch with you.



Stamps for Conservation

Klabb Huttaf, the young members' section of BirdLife have been collecting used stamps for the conservation project *Bolli ghall-Ballut* (Stamps for Oaks).

To date Lm31 have been recovered from the sale of used stamps. This money has been spent on pots in which children are growing oak trees from acorns.

Rather than ending up in the waste bin, your stamps and telecards too can be used to raise funds. Send your used stamps and telecards to:

Bolli ghall-Ballut
c/o BirdLife Malta
PO Box 498,
Valletta CMR 01

Meetings and Contacts

During the past two months BirdLife Malta has met Minister for Public Construction Mr Charles Buhagiar and the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries Mr Noel Farrugia.

With Mr Buhagiar (whom incidentally we have to take for his prompt action regarding the sidewalks leading to the Ghadira reserve) BirdLife discussed the setting up of the new national parks while the talks with the Minister for Agriculture touched on various issues including the siting of the *Foresta 2000* project.

We have also met various government committees about which we will give further details in the next issue.

Correction:

In the last issue of *BirdTalk* we inadvertently gave the number of shearwaters nesting at Ta' Cenc as 10000 pairs. This figure should of course have a zero less: the Ta' Cenc colony consists in fact of about 1000 pairs.

BIRDWATCHING WEEKEND

Join BirdLife volunteers for a different type of holiday. Observe the autumn migrations and as the birds travel south for the winter.

The timing of this weekend and its location at Villa Psaigon should ensure that participants will find plenty of birds, especially raptors, to watch.

This activity is open to all members and further information may be obtained from our office. Both male and female leaders will be present

DATES: 19th - 21st September

PLACE: Villa Psaigon, Dingli

Closing date: 10th September

National Parks... any ideas?

Salina Bay, Delimara and Ta' Qali are earmarked for transformation into national parks by the Ministry of Public Construction. On principle BirdLife Malta is all in favour of such a move: all three are attractive enough sites but the first two are particularly important bird areas, so their protection is very welcome.

BirdLife Malta has had a very useful meeting with the Minister of Public Construction about them and we are now in the process of presenting our suggestions and proposals regarding the way that we would like these parks to be developed.

We are also inviting feedback from our members. If you have any ideas we would like to hear them and pass them on to the competent authorities



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

AFTERMATH OF A MASSACRE

This is not the title of a horror film, it is a fair description of a typical real-life situation in our country.

Last year in Gozo, someone — a serial killer in training perhaps — wantonly massacred over 40 breeding Cory's Shearwater adults.

The terrible effects of this tragedy may be better understood this year. John Borg, a BirdLife member who has been studying shearwaters for the last 15 years has now found that 85% of the nests at the site where the massacre took place have remained unoccupied.

BirdTalk is published by
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