



Power to the Killers



1980

First steps in the right direction. Close season introduced, various areas put out of bounds for hunting, birds of prey and breeding species largely protected. However, various loopholes render enforcement very difficult

1993

Major improvement, with the well-being of birds given priority. Close season extended, trapping (but not killing) banned in spring, list of species and protected areas extended. Most loopholes eliminated. Setting up of ALE helps situation.

1996

First rifts. Trapping in spring re-opened, some protected species put back on the hunting list.

1997

Shameful throwback to pre-1980 days. Open seasons extended on all fronts, close season reduced to a mere 10 days per year! More species for trappers to net. Loopholes re-installed with a vengeance.

So far... so bad!

30 January 1994

MLP deputy George Vella signs give-away agreement with hunters.

4 November 1996

BirdLife requests meeting with new environment minister George Vella. A three-month wait follows!

4 February 1997

BirdLife finally meets minister Vella to express disapproval of the 1994 agreement. Minister very fiery, talks of past promises, welcomes protests and hunger strikes!

7 February 1997

BirdLife writes protest letter to prime minister.

11 February 1997

BirdLife seeks support from the Ombudsman.

13 February 1997

Prime minister writes back, adopting much the same tone as minister Vella. The show must go on!

14 February 1997

The bomb explodes. Minister Vella meets hunters and police

authorities, gives green light for virtual year-round hunting holiday. Happy Valentine's Day, dear birds!

14 February 1997 (late at night)

BirdLife goes to court to try and stall the implementation of amendments. Court accepts to consider temporary ban on implementation.

17 February 1997

BirdLife in court. Legal battle between Counsel to BirdLife and Attorney General. Court finally rejects BirdLife's contention, saying we should have lodged our complaint *before* the amendments were published!

For the record

When BirdLife reps met minister Vella on 4 February, he challenged them to give him proof that hunting causes environmental damage.

Days later, he announced a rise in hunting licences. It's only right, he said, that one pays for - hold your breath - environmental damage!

Members' Day

This year's Members' Day will be held on a Sunday morning. Members are especially encouraged to attend this event, as it will also host the Society's 35th Annual General Meeting (AGM). Here is the day's programme

- 09.00 - 09.10 **Introduction** by John Grech
- 09.10 - 09.30 **Għar Dalam: Its Natural History** by John Borg
- 09.30 - 09.50 **Bird Protection Legislation: Present and Future** by Antoine Vella
- 09.50 - 10.10 **Flashback: The Making of BirdLife** by Joe Sultana
- 10.10 - 10.30 **Maltese Nature** by Denis Cachia
- 10.30 - 11.00 **Coffee Break**
- 11.00 - 12.00 **AGM**

AGM and Members' Day

Agenda

- President's Address
- Minutes of the 34th AGM
- Executive Committee's Report
- Financial Report for 1996
- Statute Amendments
- Appointment of New Council
- Other Matters

Applicants

The following members have applied for the new Council - **Anita Aloisio, Denis Cachia, Richard Cachia Zammit, Alex Casha, Norman Chetcuti, Raymond Galea, John Grech, Paul Pace, Antoine Vella**.

BirdLife would like to thank outgoing Council members Oliver Cardona, Mark Falzon, Victor Fioott and Charles Gauci, all of whom will not be standing for election this year.

Statute

With a better running of BirdLife in mind, the following changes to the statute are being proposed by Council for approval by the AGM.

- Council election should be called every other year, instead of every year. Council believes that a longer term of office will consolidate a member's contribution to BirdLife.
- There should be no limit to the number of times that a member may be elected to serve on Council. As the statute stands, a member can serve a maximum of 5 years in a run.
- The post of Chairperson of the Council is to be included in the list of Council members.

FOR SALE or RENT

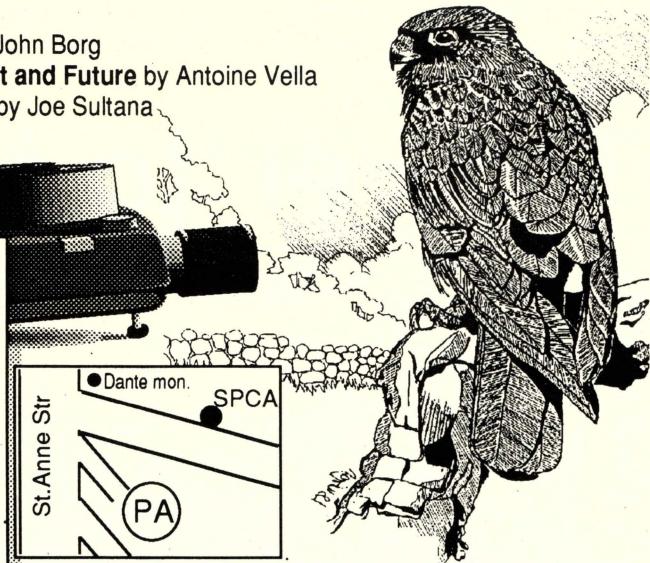
2 Flats (St. Lucia Str Valletta)

Each with 5 rooms, bathroom and kitchen. Private roof. For sale separately or together. Flats are adjacent and can be easily converted into single large apartment.

Small premises (St. Lucia Str Valletta)

Consisting of 3 rooms, cellar and two WC. 100m from Republic Str.

For further information please call
BirdLife on 230684/250229



Date: 6 April 1997

Place: PA Hall, Floriana (see map)

Time: 9am - 12noon

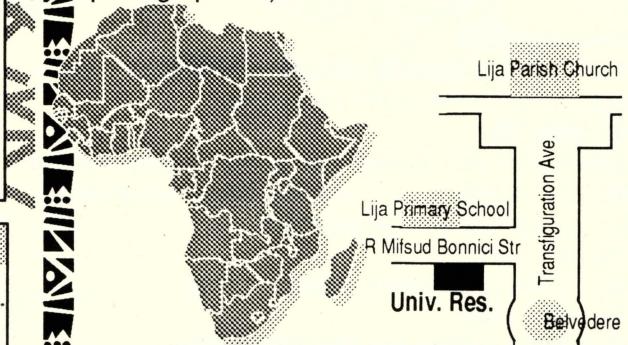
Fee: 50c*

*Members attending AGM only will not be charged a fee.

Out of Africa...

"Birds of Africa"

Mr Raymond Galea, an experienced birdwatcher who has made several birding trips abroad, will be sharing his experiences with members in an illustrated talk about the rich African birdlife, a region synonymous with spectacular wildlife. Not to be missed! (Ray is also one of BirdLife's best bird photographers!)



Date: 13 March 1997

Time: 7pm

Place: University Residence

Hal-Lija

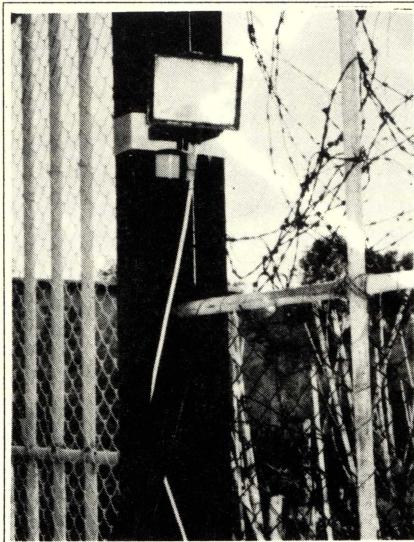
Matters of Great Reserves

Recent highlights from Ghadira...

- a **spoonbill**, making a spectacle of itself!
- two **cormorants**, sunning themselves!
- a pair of **pintails**, showing off!
- a few colourful **wigeons**, fully decked out in breeding plumage!
- plus the usual wintering **grebes** and **coots**!

Two attempts were made recently to break into the reserve. One attempt was foiled by the warden who noticed two shooters cutting the protective fence. The other break-in was made at night.

BirdLife volunteers are equipping the reserve with automatic security lights (right) around the perimeter of the reserve. Such a shame that a nature reserve in Malta must be protected like a secret military plant!



Not Auschwitz!

The Lord God...

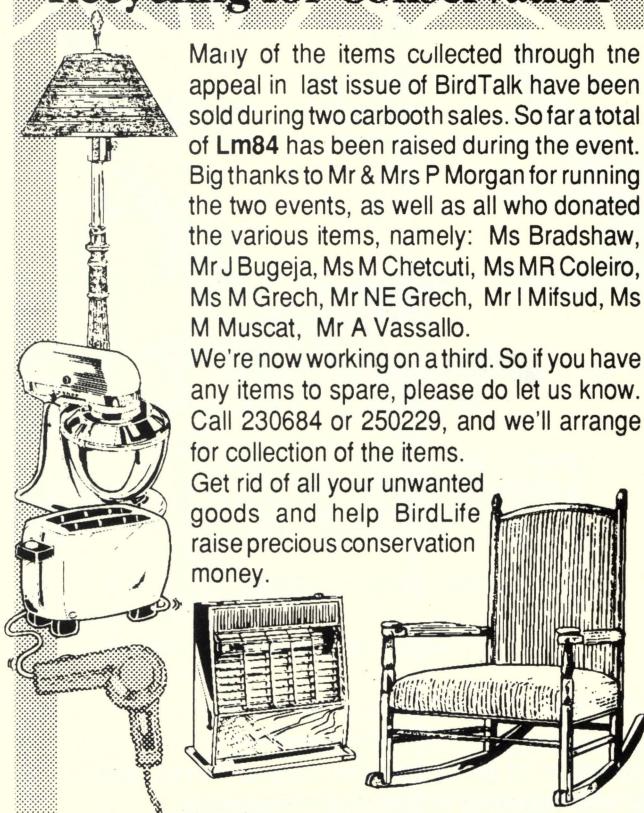
BirdLife and other NGOs met a delegation from the University Catholic Students group MKSU. The groups tackled the church's role in the protection of the environment. BirdLife believes the Church in Malta should use its strong public influence to voice its views on the issue.

It is not encouraging to note that some Church activities actually promote the



taking of life for sport. Offering a shotgun as a lottery prize to raise money for the building of a church is one recent example! One cannot but deplore such jarring incidents, especially when coming from an institution that upholds life as a most sacred gift. BirdLife urges Church authorities to condemn the wanton killing of birds as morally wrong.

Recycling for Conservation



Many of the items collected through the appeal in last issue of BirdTalk have been sold during two carboot sales. So far a total of Lm84 has been raised during the event. Big thanks to Mr & Mrs P Morgan for running the two events, as well as all who donated the various items, namely: Ms Bradshaw, Mr J Bugeja, Ms M Chetcuti, Ms MR Coleiro, Ms M Grech, Mr NE Grech, Mr I Mifsud, Ms M Muscat, Mr A Vassallo.

We're now working on a third. So if you have any items to spare, please do let us know. Call 230684 or 250229, and we'll arrange for collection of the items. Get rid of all your unwanted goods and help BirdLife raise precious conservation money.

WANTED

There are plans for structural alteration to the interpretation centre at Ghadira nature reserve. The refurbished place will include a small outlet selling nature knick-knacks.

BirdLife needs a person to co-ordinate just such a sales point at Ghadira. The person will be required to set up a stock of goods and manage sales at the reserve. The post is being offered against a salary. The ideal candidate should have initiative, be outgoing and have own transport. Please write to: The President, BirdLife PO Box 498 Valletta CMR 01.

WANTED

Volunteers are still needed to help guide visitors at Ghadira nature reserve at weekends, especially Sunday afternoons. One need not be an expert on ecology! More experienced volunteers will give you plenty of help. This will also be a unique opportunity for volunteers to learn more about birds and nature inside the reserve. Please phone BirdLife on 230684/250229 during office hours.

World matters

Hidden Singer

The **cryptic warbler** is a songbird recently discovered in Madagascar. It leads a very secretive life, which is why it has eluded naturalists for so long. A nature expedition observed this bird in its rainforest habitat, remnants of which are still present in Madagascar.

Russian Secret exposed

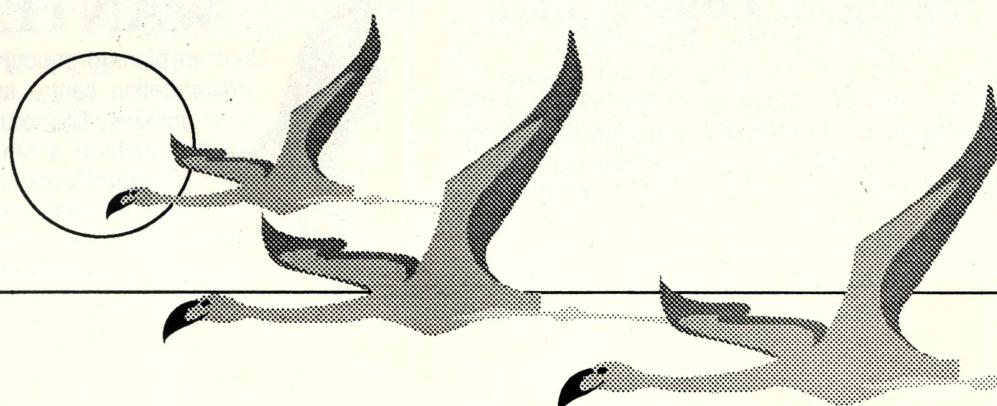
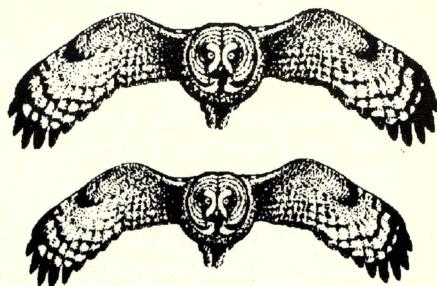
Four **Siberian cranes** were observed wintering in Bharatpur, a wetland haven in northern India. These are the first specimens to return to India since winter 1992/3. One bird carried a ring, which helped trace the bird's origins to the breeding grounds at Kunovat River in Siberia. This confirms that this western population is not (yet) extinct as has been feared.

Book of Plans

A total of 514 bird species regularly occur in Europe. Of these, **24 are threatened with Impending global extinction**, that is, unless something is done very quickly to halt and reverse their decline. These species need tailor-made action, such as research into their habitat needs, strict protection and monitoring of specific nest sites, in extreme cases even the provision of food - some situations are *that* critical. All these measures are outlined for every species in a special Action Plans book published in October 1996 by BirdLife International. The Partnership hopes this publication will move governments to better protect these highly endangered species. Meanwhile, Malta protects migratory birds by extending the hunting season! Good, eh!

Music to Relax

New World is offering a selection of CDs and cassettes covering a selection of instrumental music for relaxation. From the rainforests of the Amazon through the Tibetan highland to the African plains, the New World of relaxation brings home a unique ambience of lovely nature sounds. For further details, browse through the New World catalogue enclosed.



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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