

Editorial Board: Ian Mifsud, Antoine Vella

## BirdLife Malta meets Prime Minister

On the 15th of January a delegation from BirdLife Malta met the Prime Minister at the Auberge de Castille. The Minister for Internal Affairs and the Parliamentary Secretary for Justice and Local Councils were also present. The meeting was held in a cordial atmosphere and BirdLife described its principles and activities to the members of the government. The Prime Minister was presented with a selection of publications of the Society and he also accepted our invitation to visit the Ghadira nature reserve later this year.



The problems relating to the conservation of the natural environment and the lack of enforcement of the hunting regulations were also discussed. The Prime Minister reiterated his government's political will to uphold the rule of law and take all the necessary steps to safeguard the natural heritage of our country. On its part, BirdLife Malta solicited a more effective Police presence in the field, especially during the spring and autumn bird migrations; the serious chronic problem of hunting abuses at sea was also brought up. We are obviously expecting the political will mentioned by the Prime Minister to be translated into definite and vigorous action when the time comes.

The Prime Minister stated also that he was in favour of our major projects, particularly the One World competition and the Foresta 2000 and promised his government's support for the success of these ventures.

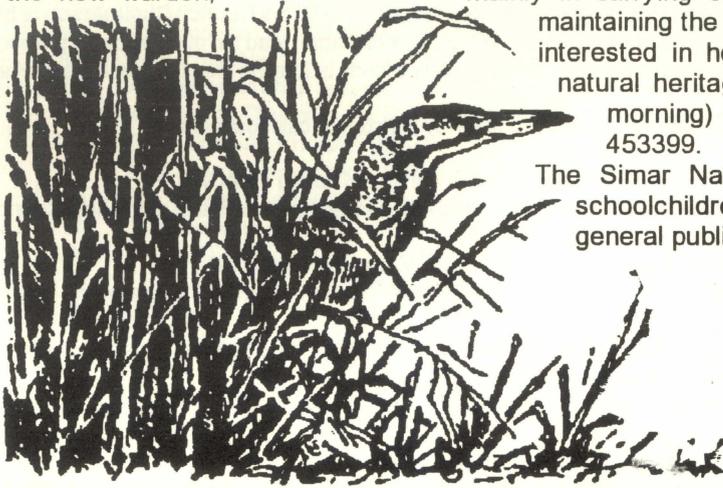
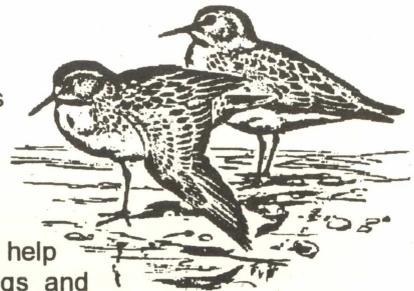
## New Warden for Simar

The Environmental Protection Department has appointed Mr John J. Borg as the new warden for the Simar nature reserve. Mr Borg is a keen ornithologist and has several years experience in studying Maltese birds, specialising in resident sea-birds. His job will be to manage the reserve and supervise its day to day running.

Meanwhile, members of BirdLife Malta are being urged to volunteer to help the new warden,

mainly in carrying out new plantings and maintaining the wetland habitat. Those who like gardening and are interested in helping us preserve an important part of Malta's natural heritage may contact the BirdLife Malta office (in the morning) for further details or phone Mr Borg directly on 453399.

The Simar Nature Reserve will welcome its first groups of schoolchildren next March and will later be opened to the general public.



### BirdLife Malta statute

On pages 2 and 3 of this issue we are publishing the updated version of the BirdLife Malta statute. It has been amended a few times in the last years and, in view of the forthcoming Annual General Meeting, every member of the Society should have an updated copy.

The following proposed amendments to the BirdLife statute are largely an exercise in streamlining. The idea is to simplify the jargon, correct grammar and remove repetition and inconsistencies. Of these there were so many that it was decided to reproduce the entire statute as proposed and approved by Council. The parts that Council would like to amend have been printed in bold. Sections within square brackets are sections proposed to be deleted. The numbers in the margin at extreme left are the section numbers as they presently exist; the simplified system on their right are as proposed. All these proposed amendments will be put forward for approval at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting.

## STATUTE OF BIRDLIFE MALTA

### Note

Unless otherwise specified, the words: **Society** shall intend BirdLife Malta; **adult** shall intend a person of 18 years and over; **year** shall intend the period between two consecutive AGMs; **he, him** and **his** shall intend both sexes.

### Article 1 - NAME

1a 1a The name of the Society **shall be** BirdLife Malta

### Article 2 - MISSION

2a 2a **The mission of the Society shall be the conservation of wild birds and their habitats, and through this to work for biological diversity.**

### Article 3 - MEANS

new 3a 3a **The mission shall be achieved by all appropriate means, particularly education, research, lobbying, the creation of public awareness and direct conservation work.**

3a 3b The Society **shall be** non-partisan, non-sectarian and non-profit making.

3b 3c **The Society** may establish **relations and affiliate with any national and international** association/s with similar aims, provided that the Society's identity is preserved, its aims continue to be pursued, and autonomy of its field research respected.

### Article 4 - MEMBERSHIP

4a 4a **Anyone** may become a member of the Society subject to payment, in advance, of a subscription fee of a specified amount that Council shall determine **[and which amount can be altered from time to time as Council shall deem necessary].**

4a1 4b Council **may** reject applications for any **[type of]** membership without the **need to give** reason.

4b 4c **Council shall establish any category of membership as it sees fit.**

4c 4d Membership **shall cease** by:

4c1 4d1 Withdrawal: A member who does not renew his membership within a period as stipulated by Council **shall be** deemed to have withdrawn his membership **[from the Society].**

4c2 4d2 Dismissal: Council **may** expel or suspend **from membership** any person **whose activity is** considered **by Council to be** inimical to the Society's aims and/or well-being. Any such member **[/s against whom it is intended to take such action for expulsion or suspension,]** shall be informed in writing of the **reason/s why** Council intends **to take** action against him. **He** shall **also** be given a reasonable time **[within which]** to submit in writing to Council a statement in **his own** defence. Any member **dismissed** from the Society shall not be entitled to any refund of **his** subscription fee in respect of **[any period of suspension, or from the date of his/her]** **his dismissal** from the Society. **Any such member shall automatically lose any post he may occupy within the Society.**

4c3 4d3 Termination: Membership **shall automatically terminate** on the decease of the individual.

### Article 5 - GENERAL MEETING

5a1 5a A meeting of the Society's general membership shall be called at least annually by the **Honorary** Secretary or **his** deputy at the request of Council. **This meeting shall meet** to elect Council **and President** every two years, to make recommendations, **to** take decisions **and/or to** adopt resolutions as deemed necessary.

5a1a 5b The **Honorary** Secretary shall ensure that the notice for the calling of a general meeting, whether annual or extraordinary, shall be sent to all the Society's **adult** members residing in Malta at least **10** clear days before the meeting is held.

5b1 5c A quorum for a general meeting shall consist of the number of members present.

5a2 5d **Five percent of the current adult** members can cause an Extraordinary General Meeting to be convened.

5b2a 5e When an Extraordinary General Meeting is called according to section 5d, two thirds of those requesting the meeting shall form a quorum.

5c 5f A simple majority **vote** shall arrive at all decisions, secretly if desired. Elections shall be held **by secret ballot.**

5c1 5g All members shall have the right to attend and speak at general meetings, but only **adult** members **shall** have the right to vote **[at general meetings]**. Group members shall have 1 vote.

5d 5h The President or **his** deputy **shall** chair general meetings. At the Annual General Meeting (**AGM**) the **Council Chairperson** or **his** deputy **shall** read a report of the Society's activities for the previous year. The **Honorary** Secretary **shall** read the minutes of the previous general meeting, **and** the **Honorary** Treasurer **shall** render a detailed position of the Society's funds before the meeting proceeds to other matters on the agenda.

5e 5i During the AGM, the members shall appoint the Society's financial committee for the current calendar year.

### Article 6 - COUNCIL

6a 6a The Society shall be run by a Council, **9** members of which **shall be** elected **or** confirmed during an **AGM**.

6a1 6b **A Council Chairperson**, an **Honorary** Secretary, and an **Honorary** Treasurer **shall** be elected by secret ballot **at the first Council meeting following elections.**

delete [6a2 **For the purposes of this statute, a "year" means the period between one AGM and the next AGM.]**

delete [b **Any member co-opted on Council shall be deemed to have become a Council member at the AGM preceding his/her appointment by Council.]**

delete [c **Any Council member who resigns or retires otherwise than at the end of a year shall be deemed, for the purpose of elections, nevertheless to have been a Council member continuously until the end of that year.]**

6a3 6c A Council member who fails to attend **3** consecutive Council meetings **without valid** reason shall **lose his post on Council.**

6b 6d Formation

6b2 6d1 At least **4** months before the AGM, Council shall appoint an **Electoral Commission (EC)**

6b2a 6d2 The **EC shall** be composed of an electoral commissioner and **2** members, all of whom **shall** not be contesting the **forthcoming**

- election for **Council**.
- 6b2b 6d3 Within a month of its appointment, the **EC** shall issue a call for applications to all **adult members residing in Malta**.
- 6b2c 6d4 The applicants shall be given at least **2 weeks'** time to apply for **Council**.
- 6b2d 6d5 All applications for **Council** shall be seconded by **5 fully paid-up** adult members.
- 6b2e 6d6 After the closing date, the **EC** shall circulate the list of candidates to all **adult members residing in Malta**.
- delete [6b2f **The EC shall circulate the list of candidates to all BirdLife Malta members residing in Malta who are eligible to vote.**]
- 6b2f 6d7 The **EC** shall produce ballot sheets and conduct the election at the **AGM**.
- 6b3 6d8 **If more than 9 candidates apply for Council, the AGM shall elect 9 members from the list of candidates by secret vote. If exactly 9 members apply for election, these shall be automatically elected.**
- new 6d9 **In a separate vote, the AGM shall also elect a President from among the candidates elected to Council.**
- 6b4 6d10 If, in the case of **9 candidates** or less, a member at the **AGM** objects to any candidate elected to Council, the latter's candidature shall be put to the vote by the **AGM**. If the candidate fails a majority vote, his application is declined and another member shall be nominated to fill the **vacancy**.
- 6b5 6d11 **Council may co-opt any number of members to Council to assume a specific function.**
- 6b6 6d12 A vote of no confidence in any Council official will automatically deprive him of his functions. **In such a case**, Council shall appoint another Council member to fill the **vacancy** created.
- 6c 6e Procedure.
- 6c1 6e1 A Council meeting may be called by the President, the **Council Chairperson**, the Honorary Secretary or a quorum of **Council** members.
- 6c2 6e2 The quorum for a Council meeting shall be half of its members plus 1. In the absence of the [**President or the**] Council Chairperson, **1** of the members attending shall be chosen to act as Chairperson for that meeting.
- 6c3 6e3 **Council decisions** shall be taken by a simple majority vote. In the case of an equal vote, the [**President, or in his/her absence**] Chairperson shall have the **casting** vote.
- 6d 6f Eligibility
- 6b1 6f1 Any **adult member** may contest the elections for **Council**.
- 6d1 6f2 No **Council member**, committee member or employee of the Society shall actively take part in the administrative setup of any political party.
- 6d2 6f3 No **Council member**, committee member or employee shall be a hunter, trapper or taxidermist or be associated with such **activity**.
- 6d3 6f4 No **Society employee** shall **simultaneously** be a Council member.
- Article 7 - ADMINISTRATION
- 7c1 7a **Council** shall formulate the policy to regulate the Society's functions in reaching the **Society's mission**.
- 7c2 7b **Council** shall meet at least once every **3 months** to monitor the progress of the Society and to examine the work of its committees.
- 7c3 7c **Council** may employ any **person/s** to implement its policy and manage the Society.
- 7c4 7d **Council** may appoint any committee to run any particular section or matter of the Society. The chairperson of such a committee shall be answerable to **Council**.
- Article 8 - FINANCE
- delete [7a **Funds**]
- 7a1 8a The funds of the Society shall only be used for purposes advantageous to the objects or activity of the Society.
- delete [7b **Accounts**]
- 7b1 8b **Council** shall appoint a Society member versed in accountancy to be the Society's Honorary Treasurer. If not already elected, he shall be co-opted on **Council**.
- 7b2 8c The Honorary Treasurer shall be responsible for keeping proper books of account.
- 7b3 8d **Council** may inspect the Society's **accounts** at any time.
- delete [7b4 **The Honorary Treasurer shall present a financial statement on the financial situation of the Society to the AGM.**]
- 7b5 8e **Council** may acquire any immovable property under any title whatever, **as well as the lease of property or other items [for the purpose of furthering the objects of the Society]**. The Society may also dispose of said property.
- 7b5a 8f **Council** may take on loan, from any commercial bank and/or financial institution, any sum necessary for the acquisition of said immovable property and to hypothecate all the property of the Society in warranty of the repayment of the said loan and interest and observance of the condition of the loan.
- 7b6 8g Deeds of whatever nature engaging the Society and all other documents purporting to bind the Society, including bank documents, cheques, promissory notes, drafts, bills of exchange and other negotiable instruments shall be signed, drawn and accepted, endorsed or otherwise **executed by** any **2** persons appointed by Council and subject to a limit decided by Council.
- Article 9 - STATUTE AMENDMENTS
- 8a 9a Any proposed amendment to this statute shall be communicated to all adult members **residing in Malta** prior to their consideration by the general meeting.
- 8b 9b Amendments shall become effective by a majority vote. Any queries concerning the **interpretation or implication** of this statute shall be decided by **Council** in the first place. If no agreement is reached, a decision at the general meeting shall be **taken**.
- Article 10 - JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS
- 9a 10a In all judicial proceedings, **extra-judicial** proceedings or other similar matters, the Society shall be represented by the President and/or the **Honorary** Secretary, or their appointee approved by **Council**, after prior consultation with a legal adviser.
- 9b 10b The members of the Society shall not be liable personally for any debts of the **Society**.
- Article 11 - DISSOLUTION
- 10a 11a The **Society** shall only be dissolved at an Extraordinary General Meeting after adequate time has been allotted for discussion, and **after** a secret two thirds majority vote of all subscribed **adult** members residing in Malta at that time, is obtained.
- 10b 11b In case of dissolution all funds and other assets shall be passed either to another Society with nature conservation aims, or to an official institution with such aims, as decided at the Extraordinary General Meeting.
- 10c 11c In case of dissolution, important documents relating to **the history** of the Society shall be deposited at the National Public Library.

# Birding in Venezuela

Ray Galea, a well-known and experienced birder will give an illustrated talk about the birdlife of this exotic South American country on

**Friday 25th February**

at the BirdLife Malta premises. The talk will start at 6.00 pm



## Raptor migrations

As usual the last autumn migrations of raptors were systematically monitored and recorded by a large number of BirdLife birdwatchers at the two main observation points of Buskett and Dwejra.

A total of over 3665 birds were recorded, of which 2000 were marsh harriers and 1200 honey buzzards. Other birds recorded included short-toed eagles, one solitary merlin, kestrels and ten other species of hawks and falcons.

Unfortunately, the raptor migration did not attract only BirdLife members. Scores of hunters were acutely interested in the migrating birds and kept watch, their shotguns hidden but ready. They took a heavy toll as the raptors flew low seeking roosting places for the night.

Thanks to a vigorous media coverage instigated by BirdLife, the police finally took steps to patrol at least Buskett and in this locality, the massacre was practically stopped. No doubt however, other areas where the tree cover was sufficient to entice the birds of prey to roost, large numbers were killed for "sport".

## White Wagtail Roost Count

It is well-known that the large *Ficus nitida* trees in Great Siege Square and the Palace courtyard are the principal roost for white wagtails all over Malta. This year, a roost-count was held to check the numbers of birds using the trees in Valletta to spend the night. The activity was held on the 16th of January and twenty BirdLife Malta members took part.

In all, 2247 wagtails were recorded as they were approaching Valletta from the bastions surrounding the city.

In the last few weeks, BirdLife Malta was instrumental in persuading the Department of Agriculture not to prune the *Ficus* trees in Valletta as this would have deprived wagtails of their roosting grounds.



## New BirdLife Malta President

From the beginning of this year, BirdLife Malta has a new president: Antoine Vella takes over from John Grech as president of the Society.

## Birding Hike

The Birdwatchers Club is organising an outing to Buskett on **Sunday 28th February**.

Buskett is an ideal place to observe wintering birds specially small passerines such as robins, chiffchaffs, dunnocks, starlings, blackcaps, etc

**Meeting Place:** Valletta Bus Terminus next to milk kiosk  
**Time:** 7.00am



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BirdLife Malta is the Society for the protection of birds and the natural environment

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