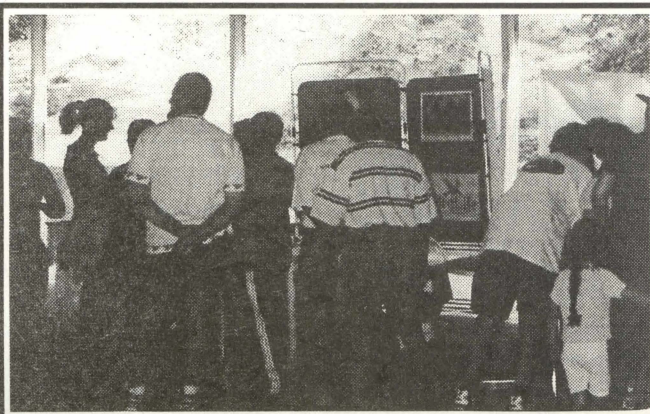


First ever BirdFest held at Buskett

On Sunday, 7th October, BirdLife Malta organised the first ever BirdFest at the Buskett woodland gardens. This day-long event consisted of various stands explaining the different aspects of bird and nature conservation in Malta. There were several activities including games for children and a very popular "guided birdwatching" session where experienced BirdLife volunteers introduced members of the general public to the practice and hobby of birdwatching.

We were particularly fortunate on that day as a relatively large number of marsh harriers and ospreys could be observed circling the site throughout the afternoon. Although raptors are not that uncommon during the autumn migration, a lot of people admitted that they had never seen such birds and would never have even noticed them were it not for the presence of our bird-watchers who pointed them out.



The event was received well by the numerous families and groups of picnickers who visited Buskett; the volunteers manning the stands were kept busy all day talking to the public, answering questions and generally explaining the work carried out by BirdLife Malta.

It is now hoped that the Buskett BirdFest will become an annual recurrence celebrating the autumn migration of birds of prey and bringing more and more people in contact with birdwatching.

Launching of the Dinja Wahda Award Scheme

On Tuesday, 18th October, BirdLife Malta launched its Dinja Wahda (One World) Award Scheme for schools with a meeting at a leading hotel in St. Andrews.

The meeting was very well-attended with over 150 heads and teachers from both government and private schools. They were addressed by a panel of speakers including the BirdLife Malta president Antoine Vella, the Director General of Education Mr Charles Mizzi and Dr Francis Zammit Dimech, Minister for the Environment. The meeting was chaired by Ms Angele Pulis who is the Chairperson of the Education Committee of BirdLife Malta.

The school representatives showed interest in the Dinja Wahda scheme and a large number of schools are now expected to participate in this initiative. More information can be obtained from the project co-ordinator, Ms Sandra Mifsud. She can be contacted at the BirdLife offices on Tuesday and Thursday mornings but will also be personally visiting the schools themselves.

HSBC 

Sunkist

 FUJIFILM



This Swiss bird protection society is the main sponsor of the most ambitious educational project we have yet launched

The organisation of the Dinja Wahda Award Scheme was only possible thanks to the generous help of Nos Oiseaux, the Swiss bird protection society which is providing most of the necessary funds. Other sponsors include the local commercial companies HSBC, Sunkist and Fuji. We thank all these societies and firms.

Meeting with National Tourism Authority

BirdLife Malta recently met a delegation of the Malta Tourism Authority and discussed how the Maltese natural environment can be better protected in order to become an asset for the important tourist economic sector. BirdLife has long been trying to persuade politicians and professional people engaged in the tourist industry that the natural environment can be utilised to attract more tourists to our country.

The number of tourists who are conscious of environmental issues is growing and such people usually seek a holiday in places where the natural heritage is respected and cherished. Tourism can certainly help in promoting a better management of our natural resources.



Watch out for garden birds

Robins, redstarts and Sardinian warblers are but three of the species that can be observed in town gardens throughout this season. In Malta we do not have a category of birds that could be classified as "garden birds" in the British tradition.

We do have however a certain number of birds that could adapt very well to our urban environment if only people knew how to look after them. Bird-tables and (especially in summer) bird-baths are obvious ways by which we can entice wild birds to visit our gardens. Certain plants are also useful – some of them produce berries that are eaten by birds while others attract insects which, in turn, bring flycatchers and other insectivorous birds.

Media Campaign

Last September our conservation committee worked on a television advert aimed at creating public awareness on the shooting of birds of prey during migration. The advert appeared on PBS, NET and Super One channels repeatedly over three weeks.

These adverts were part of a strategy for the migration season aimed at better enforcement of bird protection laws. Other actions in this campaign included regular press releases, meetings with government and police authorities and keeping records of shot birds.

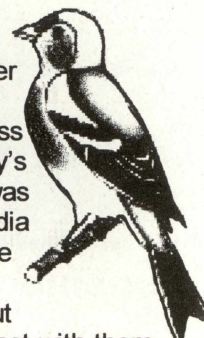
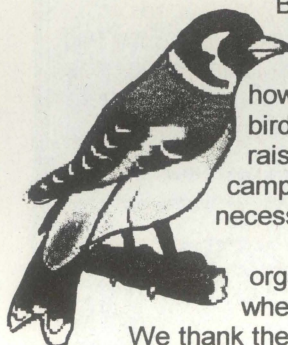
Donation to BirdLife Malta

BirdLife Malta was the chosen charity at the Gay Birders' Club get-together held at Norfolk last October.

Members donated bird-books to sell, there was also a sweepstake to guess how many species of birds the group would observe during the day's birdwatching session. There was also a very successful raffle. In total £320 was raised and this was donated to BirdLife Malta; it will go towards the media campaign that we are presently conducting to nudge public conscience about the necessity to protect birds in Malta.

The Gay Birders' Club is an international group based in Britain but organising many events throughout the world. BirdLife Malta established contact with them when we sent Norman and Audrey Chetcuti to set up a stand at the British Birdfair this year.

We thank the Gay Birders Club for their generosity. More information about them may be obtained by visiting their website at: <http://dSPACE.dial.pipex.com/gay.birders/index.shtml>



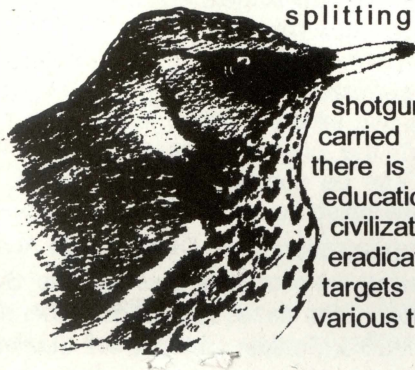
New Treasurer

BirdLife Malta Council has elected Mr Norman Chetcuti as the society's new treasurer. He takes over from the previous treasurer Ms Anita Aloisio who had to give up her post because of other commitments.

On behalf of the Council and members, we thank Anita for her work and wish Norman all the best in his new post.

Shooting thrushes

As we are sure our readers living in Malta will have noticed, the ear-splitting bangs of the summer festas have been replaced by the duller and more sinister thuds of hunters' shotguns. Unfortunately shooting can be carried out legally throughout winter so there is little to be done except hope that education and the slowly creeping civilization of our country will in time eradicate the distasteful pastime. The main targets at this time of the year are the various thrush species that pass over Malta.



International Recognition for BirdLife Malta member

With 2.15 million members and over 3000 staff, BirdLife International is one of the largest global conservation networks. At the recent world conference held in Kuala Lumpur, the Maltese representative, Mr Joe Sultana was one of the four recipients of the Member of Honour award from Queen Noor.

Mr Sultana, who is one of the founders of BirdLife Malta received the award for his sterling work in ornithology and bird conservation. He has worked with BirdLife international since 1967 and from 1980 has served on the European committee as a member and chairman. The award received by Joe is an honour not only for himself but for our country as well – through his work he has brought recognition to Malta as a country that does not make the international headlines only in the negative sense

BirdLife Malta had two representatives at the Malaysian conference: Mr Joe Sultana was accompanied by Ms Liz Curmi, the hard-working marketing co-ordinator of the society.



Joe Sultana receiving the 'Member of Honour' award from Queen Noor



Liz Curmi talking to Mr John Bishop, RSPB Council member at the BirdLife Malta stand during the world conference

RSPB employee in Malta

In the past weeks, BirdLife Malta has been lucky to obtain the help of an RSPB employee who came on a working visit to Malta. Ms Nathalie Pillow who is of Maltese origin works in the word-processing department of the RSPB and recently spent two weeks helping out in our offices. She installed and upgraded the software used for our databases, lent a helping hand at Buskett BirdFest and generally made herself useful.

Nathalie has gone back to the UK but we know she'll be reading this so we thank her for the great work she carried out while in Malta and send her our regards.

From Humming Birds to Puffins

Birding from the lush rainforests of Costa Rica to the weather-beaten coasts of the Shetland Islands.

This will be the subject of a talk by Mr Joe Sultana on **Wednesday, 15th December** at the BirdLife premises. The talk will start at 6.30 p.m.

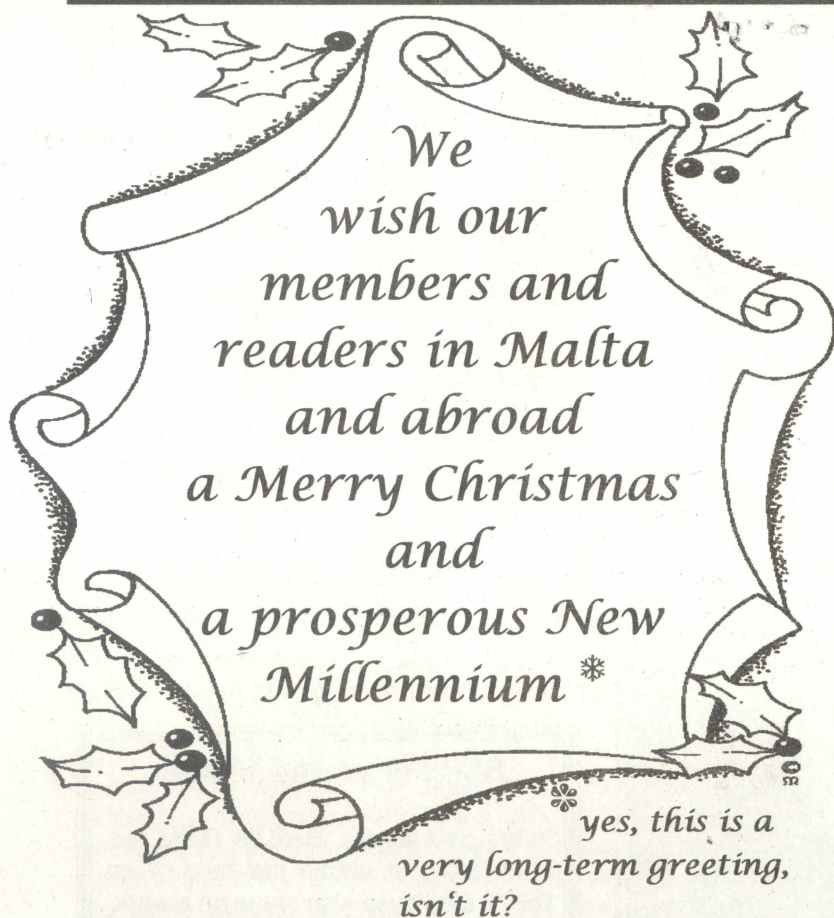


Looking for . . .

. . . any old computer

We all know how quickly computers tend to become 'obsolete'. Most people who buy a new machine find that it is impractical to sell the old one as there is no market for elderly computers.

Well, do not despair. BirdLife Malta is presently looking for one or two such computers for its offices. We don't mind if they are unable to run the newest fanciest programs available: all we need them for is to allow the many volunteers responsible for the various activities to be able to work without stepping on each others' toes and hard disks.



WORLD BIRDWATCH

On the weekend of the 2nd and 3rd October 1999, BirdLife International organised its annual birdwatching event to raise public awareness on bird migration. In 36 countries from all over Europe, more than 122,000 people took part by flocking to over 1000 birdwatching spots and observing a total of about 1.68 million birds.

The focus of the World Birdwatch was the migrating birds travelling south to their wintering grounds. The BirdLife partner societies that were responsible for organising the event in their respective countries, called for effective protection of migratory birds. Such protection has to be provided not only in the European breeding grounds but also in the wintering areas as well as the stop-over sites along the migration routes. Conservation is urgently needed, with over 1000 bird species threatened with global extinction.

In Malta, the World Birdwatch was held as well, with a bird observation activity at Buskett in conjunction with the BirdFest. On the afternoon of the 3rd October, over 180 raptors - including honey buzzards, marsh harriers and hobbies - were recorded.



New stuff at Ghadira shop

As you probably know the Ghadira nature reserve re-opened last October. The small shop at the reserve has recently been stocked with new and attractive items including T-shirts, bird-tables and caps. We invite all our members and readers to visit the reserve and enjoy the spectacle of a rare natural Maltese habitat. One can also obtain saplings of native trees grown from seed in the reserve nursery.

Opening hours:

9.00 am to 12.00 am

2.00 pm to 5.00 pm

Every Saturday and Sunday



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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