

## First breeding record of Rufous Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*

The Rufous Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* is a common passage migrant in Malta from mid-March to mid-May, with a few birds until late May and from mid-August to mid-October. Occasional single birds have also been recorded in June at Buskett (Sultana & Gauci 1982). There are no documented breeding records of the Rufous Nightingale in Malta. Ardoino (1928) and Despott (1932) stated that it bred but did not mention any breeding records.

On the morning of 28 May 1995 a male bird was in full song at Wied il-Luq, Buskett - a valley with a narrow strip of deciduous woodland with a thick undergrowth. The song was repeated several times and on one occasion the bird was seen chasing away a Robin *Erithacus rubecula*. The area was visited again in the morning of 4 June. The singing male was still present, while another bird, presumably a female, was observed carrying dry nest material towards the nearby undergrowth. After searching the area a nearly completed nest was discovered. Two days later the nest was still empty and the male was again heard singing in the vicinity. On visiting the site again on the morning of 11 June, the female was noted incubating 4 eggs. Unfortunately the next day the nest was empty. The eggs must have been predated upon by Brown Rats *Rattus norvegicus*, which infest the area.

On 25 June a second nest was found some 17m away from the first one. It contained broken egg shells of at least three eggs. Loose tail feathers of the female were also noted in and around the nest, suggesting that a predator, most likely a Brown Rat, must have attacked the female while incubating. The male was still present and singing on 3 July but there was no sign of the female.

The area where the nests were found is dominated by large trees, mainly White Poplar *Populus alba*, Elm *Elmus* sp. and Italian Cypress *Cupressus sempervirens*, with thick undergrowth of Bramble *Rubus ulmifolius*, Common Goosegrass *Galium aparine* and Ivy *Hedera helix*.

The first nest was built in the Bramble and the Common Goosegrass, 0.5m above the ground, the second nest in the Bramble and in the Ivy a little less than 0.5m above the ground. Both nests were rather loosely built of dead leaves and dry grasses with the inside lined with finer dried grasses, forming a neat cup. The eggs were subelliptical, smooth and slightly glossy and of grey-green colour. Both nests were close to a public footpath but very well concealed.

### References

- Ardoino, N. 1928. *Gli Uccelli di Malta elenco sinottico, opera postuma del Cav. Nicola Ardoino-1893*. Empire Press, Malta.  
Despott, G. 1932. Ornitologia delle Isole Maltese. *Riv. Ital. Orn.* (2) 2:119-136.  
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## ~~First breeding record of Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*~~

~~The Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* is a common passage migrant from early March to late May and from late July to early November. It has never been recorded breeding in the Maltese Islands (Sultana & Gauci 1982). It has always been frequently recorded at Ghadira, a small wetland area in the north of the island of Malta, but the maximum stay of individual ringed birds which were retrapped never exceeded 5 days (Gauci 1990). Engineering works with heavy machinery in the area, which started in 1980, and continued for 3 consecutive summers, created a number of small islands in a relatively low extensive pool.~~

~~In 1995 a pair bred for the first time on one of the low islands in the area and 3 eggs were laid. Two of these hatched on 29-30 June and one of the young was still present on 7 August. Both adult birds and the newly fledged young were ringed. A ringed male, presumably one of the birds that bred in 1995, and an unringed female bred successfully in the following 3 years. Two young hatched in 1996 and 3 on 1 August 1997. In 1998 the female was already noted incubating its eggs on 29 April and 4 young hatched on 23 May. Only one fledged. On 3 June~~