

~~Cramp, S. & Simmons, K.E.L. (Eds.). 1982. The Birds of the Western Palearctic, Vol. 3. Oxford University Press : Oxford.~~
~~Massa, B. & Sultana, J. 1990-91. Status and Conservation of the Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* in the Mediterranean. *Il-Merill* 27: 1-5.~~
~~Sultana, J. & Gauci, C. 1970. Bird Studies on Filfla. Malta Ornithological Society : Valletta.~~
~~Sultana, J. & Gauci, C. 1982. A New Guide to the Birds of Malta. The Ornithological Society : Malta.~~
~~Vassallo, A. 1980. Herring Gulls chasing Grey Herons. *Il-Merill* 21: 25.~~
~~Walmsley, J. 1986. The Status of breeding Storm Petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus* on the Mediterranean coast of France. pp.153-160 in *Medmaravis & Monbailliu, X. (Eds.). Mediterranean Marine Avifauna : Springer Verlag.*~~
~~Warham, J. 1990. The Petrels: Their Ecology and Breeding Systems. Academic Press: London.~~

~~JB - Block C2, Flat 5, Princess Margaret Str., Ta' Xbiex MSD 14, Malta.~~
~~JS - 3, Sciberras Flats, Fleur de Lys Junction, Birkirkara BKR 02, Malta.~~
~~RCZ - 'Ciefa' School Str., Fgura PLA 13, Malta.~~

SHORT NOTES

First breeding records of the Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

The Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* is a very common autumn migrant and winter visitor, arriving in mid-September and staying until mid-March. Sometimes a few appear as early as the beginning of August and as late as the end of April or even May. A few birds have also been recorded in June and July, particularly in recent years, but no breeding was recorded (Sultana & Gauci 1982; Gauci 1986-87; Coleiro 1988, 1989 & 1990-91).

An adult bird in summer plumage was observed singing in a public garden at Floriana on 2 May 1994 at 08.30hrs (pers. obs.), while another adult was noted gathering food at St. Francis Ravelin (Floriana) on 19 May at 16.00hrs (J.Sultana pers. comm.). On 8 June, 5 were seen at the nearby football pitch. Four birds were seen walking with half open, quivering wings, towards another which had landed nearby (S. Scicluna pers. comm.). Unfortunately no notice of the age of the birds was taken.

The area was visited again on 10 June at 17.00hrs, but only one adult was seen, feeding on the ground for several minutes, after which it took off with a worm in its beak. On visiting the area again on 15 June at 16.45hrs, 3 fully fledged juvenile birds were observed for several minutes, feeding on the ground and perching on a wire, always together and calling each other.

The birds must have nested in some building in Floriana or Valletta and they were using the football pitch as one of the feeding areas.

Starlings have also bred and raised young on the island of Comino both in 1993 and 1994, after the local farmer had released some adult birds which he had kept in captivity. In 1993 at least one pair nested successfully and in 1994 two pairs bred and raised young. A group of 11 birds (4 adults and 7 fully fledged young) were present on Comino on 15 May 1994 (pers. obs.).

In nearby Sicily, the Starling was first recorded breeding in 1979 but probably had been breeding since 1974 (Iapichino & Baglieri 1979).

Reference

- Coleiro, C. 1988. Systematic List for 1985-86. *Il-Merill* 25 : 19-40.
Coleiro, C. 1989. Systematic List for 1987-88. *Il-Merill* 26 : 1-26.
Coleiro, C. 1990-91. Systematic List for 1989. *Il-Merill* 27 : 30-46.
Gauci, C. 1986-87. Systematic List for 1983-84. *Il-Merill* 24 : 21-38.
Iapichino, C & Baglieri, S. 1979. Prime nidificazioni di Storno (*Sturnus vulgaris* L.) in Sicilia. *Riv. Ital. Orn.* 49: 236-238.
Sultana, J. & Gauci, C. 1982. A new Guide to the Birds of Malta. The Ornithological Society : Valletta.

Raymond Galea

RG - "Osprey" Ganu Str., Birkirkara BKR 06, Malta.