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## References

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**Editorial Note:** The Records Committee of the British Ornithologists' Union in its fifteenth report in April 1991 has recommended the separation of *P. yekouan* (including the race *mauretanicus*) from *Puffinus puffinus* (Manx Shearwater) which should now be treated as monotypic. It has also recommended that *Puffinus yekouan* be known as Mediterranean Shearwater (*Ibis* 133:438-441). Local ornithologists should be very careful not to be confused as in former times the Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* was known as Mediterranean Shearwater. The separation has been recommended due to recent works (Bourne *et al.*, *Br. Birds* 81: 306-319 and Yesou *et al.*, *Br. Birds* 83: 299-319) which show that there are consistent and recognisable differences in the plumage, breeding range, migration pattern and winter distribution of *P. puffinus* on the one hand and *P. yekouan* (both subspecies *yekouan* and *mauretanicus*) on the other.

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## SPANISH SPARROWS DISMEMBERING FLOWERS

Over several years in late March to May, Spanish Sparrows *Passer hispaniolensis* have been watched dismembering the flowers of Orange trees (*Citrus sinensis*) in a private garden at Fleur de Lys and at San Anton. The sparrow deliberately bites off part of the flower and chews the part in its bill. The bill movements used are similar to those used by sparrows to immobilise a large insect before swallowing it. The flower part, usually a petal or a group of stamens, is held transversely in the bill, which executes many sequential pressing movements on the flower part, as the latter gradually moves through the bill in a transverse plane. The flower parts are not swallowed, and are discarded immediately afterwards. It looks as though the sparrows are pressing the flower parts in order to extract and drink the cell sap which oozes from the pressed petals and stamens. *Ilma żaġġar*, made by pressing orange blossoms, is a traditional Maltese medicinal drink, well known in Maltese domestic culture.

On two occasions in June 1987 and June 1989, Spanish Sparrows were seen treating flowers of Japanese Honeysuckle *Lonicera japonica* in a similar way. It may be that the technique extracts some of the nectar held at the base of the corolla. *L. japonica* flowers in May-June, just after the Citrus trees have stopped flowering, and it may be that some sparrows have extrapolated the technique to extracting nectar from this species.

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