

~~Sultana, J. & Gauci, C. 1982. A New Guide to the Birds of Malta. The Ornithological Society, Valletta, Malta.~~

~~Sultana, J., Gauci, C. & Beaman M. 1975. A Guide to the Birds of Malta, Malta Ornithological Society, Valletta, Malta.~~

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FIRST BREEDING RECORDS OF THE MOORHEN *GALLINULA CHLOROPUS* IN GOZO

The Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* was first reported breeding in Malta in 1984 (Doublet, J.A. & Portelli, P. First breeding records of the Moorhen in the Maltese Islands, *Il-Merill* 24 : 20, 1986-87).

Breeding in Gozo was suspected to have occurred for the first time in 1987, and was confirmed the following year. A few years previously, at a hillside at Ghajnsielem, Gozo - above Xatt l-Ahmar, a farmer had dug a large depression in the clayey soil, using the spoil to form an embankment on the lower side. This was done to collect rain water, as well as the water originating from a little spring, to be used for irrigation purposes. The surface area of this fresh water pool is about 2,200 sq.m. Vegetation in and around the pool consists mainly of *Typha latifolia*, *Arundo donax* as well as *Rubus uimifolius* and some specimens of *Ceratonia siliqua*. The pool is by the side of a track leading to Xatt l-Ahmar and is overlooked by buildings, including some holiday flats. The farmer keeps about 20 domestic ducks in this pool. In spite of a lot of disturbance, up to 10 adult Moorhens have been present during the past two years. No search for nests was carried out but several downy young have been noted being fed by adult birds on different days in 1988.

In 1987 up to 10 adult Moorhens were seen on four visits from January to April; 2 adults and 3 juveniles were present on 29 June, 5 adults and 3 juveniles were seen on 26 July and 6 adults and 2 juveniles on 1 August.

In 1988 the site was visited on 1 April when 9 adult birds were counted. On 7 May apart from 8 adult birds, 4 downy young were seen in the *Typha*, and 12 days later a further 3 downy young were seen being fed by an adult. On 21 May 19 birds were counted - 8 adults and 11 young of four different ages. In June, 6 adult birds and 4 juveniles (2 fully grown and 2 about two weeks old) were seen on 25th. On 6 July an adult bird was seen carrying food while 5 fully grown young were present. On 30 July 14 birds were counted - 6 adult birds, 6 full grown young and 2 about fifteen days old. Five days later (3 August) 22 birds were present - 8 adults, 12 fully grown juveniles and 2 young about 20 days old. On 28 August 6 adult birds, 6 fully grown juveniles and 3 young 4-5 weeks old were present.

It seems likely that at least three or four pairs have bred in the area in 1988. Adults were frequently seen chasing each other or other juveniles and uttering alarm calls. Both adults and fully grown juveniles were also frequently seen joining the domestic ducks feeding on food provided by the farmer.

Other species noted breeding in the area are Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*, Fan-tailed Warbler *Cisticola juncidis* and Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala*.

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