

~~with remains of birds and crustaceans. This is a large family, the members of which are commonly called nocturnal ground beetles, or darkling beetles, names which reflect their habits and general coloration.~~

~~Other material: three small pieces of nylon thread as used by the local fishermen.~~

~~In a colony in Sardinia, marine organisms, predominantly fish, were taken, followed by beetles, plant matter (Olives), and human waste, in that order (Witt 1974). These were found in fifteen pellets collected at the same period as those from Filfla. Herring Gulls are noted scavengers with almost anything forming part of their diet (Cramp & Simmons 1982).~~

~~Identification Guide to European Passerines by Lars Svenson (1984) was consulted for the identification of bird remains, while the Flora and Fauna of the Mediterranean Sea by A.C. Campbell (1982) was consulted for the identification of marine organisms.~~

~~The authors would like to thank Mr. Louis Cassar for the identification of insect remains.~~

#### References

- ~~Cramp, S. & Simmons, K.E.L. (eds.), 1982. The Birds of the Western Palearctic, Vol. 3. Oxford University Press: Oxford.~~  
~~Lanfranco, G.G. 1965. A Complete Guide to the Fishes of Malta. Valletta.~~  
~~Sultana, J. & Gauci, C. 1970. Bird Studies on Filfla. The Ornithological Society: Valletta.~~  
~~Sultana, J. & Gauci, C. 1982. A New Guide to the Birds of Malta. The Ornithological Society: Valletta.~~  
~~Witt, H. 1974. Zur Nahrungsökologie der Mittelmeersilbermöwe *Larus argentatus michahellis* an einem Brutplatz auf Sardinien. *Vogelwelt* 95: 148-150.~~

~~John Borg & Richard Cachia Zammit~~

~~J.B. - Block G2 Flat 5 Housing Estate, Ta'Xbiex, Malta.~~

~~R.C.Z. - 20 Oleander Ave. Sta. Lucia, Malta.~~

## FIRST BREEDING RECORDS OF THE MOORHEN IN THE MALTESE ISLANDS

The Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* is a fairly common passage migrant from March to May and from late August to November (Sultana, J. & Gauci, C. A New Guide to the Birds of Malta, 1982). Adult and immature birds have been occasionally noted at Girgenti Valley in the summer months (V. Cilia, pers. comm.). Since 1982, as many as twenty have been wintering at the newly established Ghadira Nature Reserve and occasional birds have also been seen in summer (C. Gauci, pers. comm.). In 1984, a nest was found in a flooded quarry. Since then three more nests have been found - two in 1985 and one in 1986.

In May 1984, the undersigned were informed by a hunter that he knew of a Moorhen nest in a flooded quarry in the south-eastern part of Malta. The site was visited on 18th May. Four nestlings, about one day old, were observed. An empty nest was later found. This nest was located on an isolated boulder surrounded by water under an overhanging Glaucous Tobacco Shrub *Nicotina glauca*.

On 1st April 1985 a nest containing nine eggs was found in another flooded quarry. The nest was under a shrub of the same species as that under which the 1984 nest had been found. It was lying on a muddy slope, a few centimetres from the water's edge. The nest was visited again on 21st April. One chick was seen swimming near it. On the following day the nest was revisited; it contained four unhatched eggs.

Another nest containing no eggs was found in another flooded quarry on 14th April 1985. On being visited again on 5th May, the nest was found to contain 5 eggs. On 23rd May, an adult bird was disturbed while incubating 7 eggs. This nest was found attached between stems of the Giant Reed *Arundo donax*, a few centimetres above the water surface. On 29th May, seven chicks were seen swimming near the nest.

On 12th June 1986 four birds, about fifteen days old, were seen, accompanied by an adult, swimming in the quarry where the 1984 nest had been found. An empty nest was found lying on muddy ground.

Joe A. Doublet & Paul Portelli

J.D. - 60, Manwel Dimech Street, Sliema, Malta.

P.P. - 23, Paceville Avenue, Paceville, Malta.