

~~PINE BUNTING — AN ADDITION TO THE LIST OF THE BIRDS OF MALTA.~~

~~In the span of one week, two first-year male Pine Buntings *Emberiza leucocephala*, a species which had not been previously recorded in Malta, occurred in autumn 1982; the first at Mizleb on 31st October and the other at Bahrija on 5th November. They were taken by a shooter and a trapper respectively.~~

~~The writers were requested to identify the specimens. Both birds had white crown feathers which were partly concealed by dark brown central streaks. The cheeks were white surrounded by a chestnut mask. The chin and throat feathers were chestnut-brown with white tips. The underparts were white with the breast and flanks streaked brown. The upperparts, including the wings, were chestnut streaked black and dark brown. The chestnut rump feathers were tipped white. The tail was dark brown with the outer tail feathers having a white V pattern on the inner web. Their wing-lengths were 89 mm and 95 mm respectively.~~

~~The Pine Bunting has an eastern and central Asiatic range, which in central and western Siberia overlaps with the eastern breeding range of the Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*. Where they overlap hybridization between these two species occurs. While the Yellowhammer is mainly sedentary, the east Asiatic Pine Bunting is a migrant, wintering from Iran to China (Voous, K.H. Atlas of European Birds — 1960).~~

~~The Maltese name chosen is Durrarja-Rasha Bajda.~~

~~Raymond Testa, Natalino Fenech & Raymond Galea~~

~~R.T. — Blk. B, Flat 4, Corradino Rd., Paola, Malta.~~

~~N.F. — 35 Main St., Attard, Malta.~~

~~R.G. — Sunview; Pope Urbanus VIII St., D'Kara, Malta.~~

~~THE PECTORAL SANDPIPER — NEW RECORD TO MALTA.~~

~~The Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* is an accidental visitor from North America to Europe and N.W. Africa. In recent years it has been recorded annually in the Azores, Ireland and Britain (Cramp, S. & Simmons, K.E.L. (eds) (1981) The Birds of the Western Palearctic Vol. III).~~

~~In Malta it made its first appearance on 1st May 1982 when one was sighted in the vicinity of Marsaxlokk Bay. The bird was quite tame. When it was approached closely it looked like an overgrown Dunlin *Calpina* in winter plumage and in flight it was reminiscent of a Reeve *Philomachus pugnax*. The bird, a male, was shot on the following morning when it was still in the same area.~~

~~On close examination the specimen had a white chin and a heavily mottled breast which terminates abruptly to leave a pure white belly. The under tail coverts were also white and it had some fine streaking on the flanks. A faint eye-stripe is noticeable on the slightly mottled whitish face. The crown was mottled blackish-brown but the almost similar back was a little more brownish. The wings were dark with brownish coverts and the centre of the rump black with white on both sides. The sharply pointed tail had blackish-brown central feathers with the rest being dark grey.~~

~~Measurements: Wing 134 mm; bill (to feathering) 29 mm; and tarsus 33 mm. The Maltese name chosen is Begazzina-Amerikana.~~

~~Although the bird was first sighted in the afternoon one must assume that it had arrived in the morning when we had an exceptional migration of waders, turtle doves and falcons, especially Kestrels. The day had dawned with a moderate NNE wind with an overcast sky.~~

~~Alfred Vassallo~~

~~A.V. — Fredor, Giuseppina Curmi St., Zejtun, Malta.~~

~~MARSH HARRIERS ROOSTING IN TREES.~~

~~The Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*, like other *Circus* spp., always spends the night on the ground, often roosting communally (Cramp, S. & Simmons, K.E.L. (eds) (1979) The Birds of the Western Palearctic Vol. II).~~

While watching migrating birds of prey on the afternoon of the 27th September 1981 the wind (force 3-4) veered from south east to south west. The general prevailing conditions that day were misty with low clouds. A total of 29 Marsh Harriers was observed on the move after 1730 hrs.

At 1800 hrs an adult male, out of a flock of ten, circled down above the wood and when a few metres away flapped to an Aleppo Pine where it settled to roost. The rest of the flock moved away, probably due to disturbance from gun-shots in other parts of the Buskett area. About ten minutes later another 9 Marsh Harriers appeared and another individual descended in a similar manner as the previous bird to roost in a different Aleppo Pine grove. The other birds kept circling above the grove but were not always visible due to the poor light conditions. Whether or not the rest of the flock descended to roost in the trees could not be ascertained.

Saviour Balzan & Natalino Fenech

S.B. - Villa Strakham, Scythe St., Misrah Kola, Attard, Malta.

N.F. - 35, Main St., Attard, Malta.

~~CORY'S SHEARWATER FEEDING ON DOGFISH'S LIVER.~~

~~While out at sea with some fishermen on 7th March 1981 we caught a large Great Spotted Dogfish *Scyliorhinus stellaris*. We decided to cook the fish and after cleaning it we threw the liver overboard. There were no shearwaters in sight at that particular moment but very shortly about a dozen Cory's Shearwaters *Calonectris diomedea* were spotted flying in line towards us flapping their wings continuously. The first to arrive swallowed the first piece of liver, which must have been at least 20 cm in length, and in no time at all the remaining pieces were all taken by some of the other birds. By this time other Cory's Shearwaters were flying towards the area from every direction. It is surprising how quickly the oily liver was detected, either by smell or by sight.~~

~~The north Atlantic race *borealis* is said to scavenge offal, particularly oily substances from fishing vessels (Cramp, S. & Simmons, K.E.L. (eds) (1977) The Birds of the West-ern Palearctic Vol 1).~~

~~The writer was informed by the same fishermen that they never witnessed shearwaters taking fishing bait which consisted of dead fish. Occasionally the writer has seen Cory's Shearwaters unsuccessfully chasing flying fish *Cypselurus heterurus* while they fly out of the water.~~

Alfred Vassallo

A.V. - Fredor, Giuseppina Curmi St., Zejtun, Malta.

Ed. Note: A fisherman has informed us that both the Cory's Shearwater, as well as the Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* regularly take fish offal.

~~FAN-TAILED WARBLER PATROL CALLS.~~

~~While bird-watching in Sicily at the Ganzirri (Messina) on the 7th May, 1983, at the Simeto and on the outskirts of Catania on the 9th May, 1983, it was noted that the patrol calls of the Fan-tailed Warbler *Cisticola juncidis* were much more frequent and of a lower pitch than those of the Fan-tailed Warbler found in Malta. However, no difference was noted in the alarm calls of the birds. On all occasions the birds were observed quite closely.~~

~~It would be interesting if more comparative studies are made on this subject.~~

Alfred E. Baldacchino & Natalino Fenech

A.E.B. - Kestrel in Melita House, Notary Barb St., Attard, Malta.

N.F. - 35, Main St., Attard, Malta.