

## NOTES

1.

### *Purple Sandpiper Calidris maritima*

#### A New Species To The List Of The Birds Of Malta

We were requested to examine a specimen, claimed to be a Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*, by Mr. J. Pulis, a stuffed-bird collector. The specimen which was taken on 5th December 1976 from Gzira Pt. Limits of Wied il-Ghajn, turned out to be so, this being the first record for the Maltese Islands.

The Purple Sandpiper is known largely as a passage migrant and as a winter visitor in Europe. It is found right around the Arctic coast breeding in most of the countries which offer the tundra type of country which it prefers. In Europe it breeds mainly in the northern part of Scandinavia, while it winters south to the Atlantic coast of France; very occasionally as far south as Morocco. (Information derived from Voous' Atlas of European Birds and from Vaurie's *The Birds of the Palearctic Fauna*).

The specimen was very dark on the back, slightly darker on the crown. The back had an overall purplish kind of sheen. The breast was less dark with a sooty brown colour while the chin had a lighter colour. The belly was white. The inner part of the bill had a slightly orange hue while the legs were yellow ochre. The four outer tail feathers were very pale grey with a white edge while the four central tail feathers were dark and longer.

Mr. J. Pulis informed us that the bird appeared extremely tame, a characteristic behaviour of this species in winter quarters.

The measurements (in mm.) of the specimen were as follows: Wing 122; Tail 58; Tarsus 21; and the Bill 29.

Joe Sultana & Charles Gauci

## 2. Unusual Nests of the Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata*

The Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata* is one of the few resident species in the Maltese Islands, occurring mainly in open countryside. The nest is usually situated within a foot of the ground in low scrub (Sultana & Gauci - *The Breeding Birds of Malta - Malta Year Book 1970*). However 4 nests found during the last four years at Santa Lucia/Hal Saffieni area were much higher. One was found on 23rd May 1974 at Santa Lucia in a cypress tree at a height of about 137 cm above the ground. It contained 5 young which left the nest in June. The second nest was found in May 1975 in the same area but in a different cypress tree. This was only about 81 cm above the ground, but still relatively high for a Spectacled Warbler's nest. The third nest was found on 19th May 1976, again in the same area and in the same tree of the previous nest. It was built at a remarkable height of about 183 cm. The last nest was found at Hal Saffieni on 10th April 1977, at a height of about 163 cm in an introduced tree *Agave americana*.

Apart from the fact that the three nests found at Santa Lucia were all built in the same area (two in the same tree), it is interesting to note that they were all found in May. This suggests that adequate vegetation in which to build nests may not have been available in that area during that time and so the birds had to use trees as nesting sites.

Richard Cuchia Zammit