

3. White Wagtail Roost at Marsa Industrial Estate

Since its discovery at the Marsa Industrial Estate in the winter 74/75 (*Sultana, Gauci, Beaman - A Guide to the Birds of Malta - 1975*), the relatively new White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* roost was again present during the following two winters (75/76 & 76/77). The number of White Wagtails during the winter of 75/76 was estimated to be 400-500; however, no accurate count was carried out. The following winter an organised count on 8th December 1976 by D. Cachia, R. Cachia Zammit, P. Caruana and E. Cummi resulted in a total of about 1,650. Estimated counts on 21st November 1976 and on 22nd January 1977 were of 900-1000 and 1000 + respectively. Approximately 500 birds were still using the roost in late February. During the count on 8th December the wagtails were first noted coming in at 16.36, gathering first on the factory tops before entering the roost trees.

During the count of White Wagtails roost at the Great Siege Square, Valletta, which was carried out by J. Sultana and C. Gauci on 20th December 1973, the birds were first seen arriving at the roost at 16.40 (*J. Sultana pers. comm.*). Both the Valletta and Marsa counts were carried out during cloudless days. The count of the Valletta roost amounted to 2,500 + (*Sultana, Gauci, Beaman - A Guide to the Birds of Malta - 1975*). As no further counts at this roost were carried out in the following winters it is not known whether the increase in the number of wagtails using the Marsa roost coincided with any significant decrease in the number of birds using the Valletta roost.

Worthy of note is that the Marsa roost hosts other species. All through the year about 800-1,000 Spanish Sparrows use the same area while in winter a few Grey Wagtails and Starlings occasionally were noted using the roost.

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