

## **Malta Rarities and Records Committee**

### **3rd Report**

#### **Preamble**

This is the third report of the Malta Rarities and Records Committee (MRRC) covering the years 2016, 2017 and first six weeks of 2018. The previous reports appeared in *Il-Merill* (2010) and *Il-Merill* (2017). This report reviews three committee meetings which were held at the National Museum of Natural History on 21.02.2017, 15.02.2018, and 31.07.2018. Discussions and decisions on some of the submitted records were also carried out online between committee members when appropriate.

The members serving on the Committee were: Raymond Galea (Chairman), Edward Bonavia (Secretary), John J. Borg (representing the National Museum of Natural History), and Martin Austad (2018), Ian Balzan, Denis Cachia, Caldon Mercieca and Joe Sultana (2017) as members. The Committee sought the advice of international experts before taking a decision on some of the records.

#### **Regulations**

The regulations which appeared in the first report together with the update in the second report were retained.

#### **Nomenclature adopted for the official Malta Bird List**

In the MRRC meeting of 15.02.18, it was decided to adopt the HBW/BirdLife World bird list as from 01.01.18 since the MRRC is part of BirdLife Malta and the following institutions are also using this list: EU, AEW, CMS, and IUCN.

#### **Species requiring a description by the Malta Rarities and Records Committee**

Ideally all records of very scarce species should be submitted to the MRRC with a field description and, when available, with a photograph. Species, which have been recorded less than 20 times (including new species) in the Maltese Islands, require a description. However there are some species listed below that, in spite of being recorded more than 20 times, still require a description

to be officially accepted as these are very difficult to identify in the field. The MRRC may also ask for a description of other species when it deems necessary.

The following is the updated list of species that require a description:

White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala*

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis*

Bean Goose *Anser fabalis*

Greater White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons*

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Smew *Mergellus albellus*

Goosander *Mergus merganser*

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

Marbled Teal *Marmaronetta angustirostris*

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina*

Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*

Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*

Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*

Black-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles orientalis*

Pin-tailed Sandgrouse *Pterocles alchata*

Red-necked Nightjar *Caprimulgus ruficollis*

Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius*

White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus*

White-rumped Swift *Apus caffer*

Little Swift *Apus affinis*

Baillon's Crake *Zapornia pusilla*

Striped Crake *Aenigmatolimnas marginalis*

Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*

Allen's Gallinule *Porphyrio alleni*

Red-knobbed Coot *Fulica cristata*

Demoiselle Crane *Grus virgo*

Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax*

Great Bustard *Otis tarda*

African Houbara *Chlamydotis undulata*

Red-throated Loon *Gavia stellate*

Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*

Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus*

Western Reef-egret *Egretta gularis*

Great White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*

Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*

European Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis*

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*

Greater Sandplover *Anarhynchus leschenaultii*

Caspian Plover *Anarhynchus asiaticus*

Spur-winged Lapwing *Vanellus spinosus*  
Sociable Lapwing *Vanellus gregarius*  
White-tailed Lapwing *Vanellus leucurus*  
Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda*  
Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris*  
Red Knot *Calidris canutus*  
Broad-billed Sandpiper *Calidris falcinellus*  
Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*  
Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Calidris subruficollis*  
Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*  
Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*  
Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*  
Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*  
Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*  
Pallas's Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*  
European Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*  
Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans*  
Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*  
Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*  
Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*  
Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*  
Long-tailed Jaeger *Stercorarius longicaudus*  
Arctic Jaeger *Stercorarius parasiticus*

Atlantic Puffin *Fratercula arctica*

Razorbill *Alca torda*

Little Auk *Alle alle*

Common Murre *Uria aalge*

Little Owl *Athene noctua*

Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus*

Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*

Eastern Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca*

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

Levant Sparrowhawk *Accipiter brevipes*

White-tailed Sea-eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*

Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus*

American Kestrel *Falco sparverius*

Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor*

Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus*

Peregrine Falcon *ssp. Falco peregrinus pelegrinoides* (Barbary Falcon)

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus*

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*

Red-tailed Shrike *Lanius phoenicuroides*

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*

Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus*

Eurasian Jackdaw *Corvus monedula*

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

Common Raven *Corvus corax*

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

Eurasian Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*

Great Tit *Parus major*

Greater Hoopoe-lark *Alaemon alaudipes*

Bar-tailed Lark *Ammomanes cinctura*

Dupont's Lark *Chersophilus duponti*

Lesser Short-toed Lark *Alaudala rufescens*

Black Lark *Melanocorypha yeltoniensis*

Temminck's Lark *Eremophila bilopha*

Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris*

White-winged Lark *Alauda leucoptera*

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*

Booted Warbler *Iduna caligata*

Olivaceous Warbler *Iduna pallida*

Isabelline Warbler *Iduna opaca*

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*

Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*

Blyth's Reed-warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis*

Common Grasshopper-warbler *Locustella naevia*

Pallas's Leaf-warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*

Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus*

Mountain Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus sindianus*

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi*

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*

African Desert Warbler *Sylvia deserti*

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*

Western Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortensis*

Ménétries's Warbler *Sylvia mystacea*

Moltoni's Warbler *Sylvia subalpina*

Rüppell's Warbler *Sylvia rueppelli*

Marmora's Warbler *Sylvia sarda*

Tristram's Warbler *Sylvia deserticola*

Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria*

White-throated Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*

Spotless Starling *Sturnus unicolor*

Rosy Starling *Pastor roseus*

Siberian Thrush *Geokichla sibirica*

Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus*  
Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*  
Siberian Rubythroat *Calliope calliope*  
Orange-flanked Bush-robin *Tarsiger cyanurus*  
European Pied Flycatcher *ssp. Ficedula hypoleuca speculigera* (Atlas Flycatcher)  
Moussier's Redstart *Phoenicurus moussieri*  
Black-throated Wheatear *Oenanthe seebohmi*  
Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*  
Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*  
Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucura*  
White-crowned Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga*  
Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulous*  
Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris*  
Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia*  
White-winged Snowfinch *Montifringilla nivalis*  
Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*  
Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus*  
Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*  
Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrina*  
Eurasian Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*  
Redpoll *Acanthis flammea*  
Lapland Longspur *Calcarius lapponicus*  
Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*



Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala*

Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia*

Cretzschmar's Bunting *Emberiza caesia*

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos*

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*

Chestnut Bunting *Emberiza rutila*

White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis*

Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus*

Category D species (i.e. species that there is reasonable doubt that they have ever occurred in a natural state) do not form part of the Malta list and therefore are not found in the above list.

### **Accepted Records**

The following records have been discussed either during meetings of the MRRC or by discussions online. A few of these accepted records appeared in social media and were also discussed by the MRRC. Six species are new to the Malta Bird List. All records include the name of the observers.

**Little Swift** *Apus affinis*: 1 on 18.05.2016 at Victoria Cittadella Gozo (John J. Borg).

**European Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus*: 1 2nd winter on 18.12.2017 and 29-30.12.2017 at Salina (Stefano Miceli, Alex Casha, Raymond Galea, Mario V. Gauci).

**Caspian Gull** *Larus cachinnans*: 1 1st winter on 30.12.2017 (photographs and information obtained from a public Facebook group) (**1st record for Malta**); 1 1st winter on 03.01.2018 at Tas-Safra (Luke Vella); 1 1st winter in mid-Jan 2018 (photographs and information obtained from a public Facebook group); 2 on 27.01.2018 at Salina (Aron Tanti, Stefano Miceli); 1 2nd winter

on 10.02.2018 (photographs and information obtained from a public Facebook group); 1 2nd winter on 14.02.2018 at Salina (Edward Bonavia). See short note on Caspian Gulls in Malta in this report.

**Lesser Crested Tern** *Thalasseus bengalensis*: 1 on 20.08.2017 at Tas-Safra (Stefano Miceli, Chris Carbone).

**Long-tailed Jaeger (Skua)** *Stercorarius longicaudus*: 1 15 miles off Xlendi Gozo on 18.05 or 19.05.2017 (photographs and information obtained from a public Facebook group).

**Arctic Jaeger (Skua)** *Stercorarius parasiticus*: 1 adult dark phase at Ċirkewwa on 19.03.2016 (Edward Bonavia, Charles Coleiro).

**Black-winged Kite** *Elanus caeruleus*: 1 on 14.04.2017 at l/o Buskett (Alexander Heyd, Fabian Karwinkel) **(1st record for Malta)**.

**Red Kite** *Milvus milvus*: 1 on 24.09.2016 at Buskett (Edward Bonavia, Nicholas Galea, Raymond Galea *et al.*).

**Griffon Vulture** *Gyps fulvus*: 1 on 03.06.2016 at Freeport **(ship-assisted)** (Nicholas Barbara, Edward Bonavia, Denis Cachia).

**Levant Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter brevipes*: 1 juv on 27.09.2016 at Buskett (Edward Bonavia, Raymond Galea, Charles Coleiro) **(1st record for Malta)** and most probably the same bird on 01.10.2016 at same place (Raymond Testa).

**Brown Shrike** *Lanius cristatus*: 1 from 02.11 to 19.11.2017 at Il-Magħluq Marsaxlokk (Benny Scerri, Edward Bonavia, Nicholas Galea, Raymond Galea, Martin Austad, Adin Vella, Aron Tanti, John Attard Montalto, James Aquilina, Stephen Cilia *et al.*) **(1st record for Malta)**.

**Great Grey Shrike** *Lanius excubitor elegans*: 1 on 09-10.03.2016 at Ta' Ċenc (Benjamin Metzger, Edward Jenkins, Edward Bonavia).

**Rook** *Corvus frugilegus*: 1 on 11.04.2017 at Luqa Airport (James Aquilina).

**Carrion (Hooded) Crow** *Corvus corone cornix*: 1 on 19–20.05.2016 at Kalkara & Hal Far (photographs and information obtained from a public Facebook group); 1 on 24.04.2017 at Comino (Victor Cilia) and Foresta 2000 (Raymond Vella) flying south; 1 probably same bird at Floriana

from 24–27.04.2017 (Adin Vella, Edward Bonavia, Raymond Galea); 1 possibly same bird at Għadira flying north on 14.05.2017 (David Attard).

**Eurasian Blue Tit** *Cyanistes caeruleus*: 1 ringed at Simar on 15.01.2018 (Charles Coleiro).

**Isabelline Warbler** *Hippolais opaca*: 1 ringed on 30.04.2016 and re-trapped on 04.05.2016 at Għadira (David Attard, Charles Gauci, Edward Bonavia).

**Melodious Warbler** *Hippolais polyglotta*: 1 ringed at Comino on 01.05.2017 (Raymond Galea, Nicholas Galea, Martin Austad, Timmy Micallef *et al.*).

**Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola*: 1 ringed at Comino on 04.09.2016 (Roger Short).

**Common Grasshopper-warbler** *Locustella naevia*: 1 ringed on 05.09.2016 at Comino (Roger Short).

**Pallas's Leaf-warbler** *Phylloscopus proregulus*: 1 ringed at Għadira on 05.11.2016 (Raymond Galea, Charles Gauci *et al.*).

**Dusky Warbler** *Phylloscopus fuscatus*: 1 ringed at Simar on 17.11.2016 (Charles Coleiro, Edward Bonavia, Raymond Galea); 1 ringed at Mgarr Ix-Xini on 26.10.2017 (Adin Vella).

**African Desert Warbler** *Sylvia deserti*: 1 on 11.04.2016 at Xagħra l-Hamra (Robert Margolis).

**Moltoni's Warbler** *Sylvia subalpina*: 1 ringed at Comino on 26.04.2013 (Raymond Galea) (**1st record for Malta**); 1 ringed on 21.05.2016 at Għadira (Raymond Galea).

**Rüppell's Warbler** *Sylvia rueppelli*: 1 female at Xagħra l-Hamra on 22.03.2017 (photographs and information obtained from a public Facebook group); 1 male at Xagħra l-Hamra on 23.03.2017 (photographs and information obtained from a public Facebook group).

**Marmora's Warbler** *Sylvia sarda*: 1 ringed on 21.10.2016 at Comino (Martin Austad); 1 from 29.01.2017 to 05.02.2017 at Dwejra (Gozo) (Martin Austad, Adin Vella, Edward Bonavia, Raymond Galea, Nicholas Galea).

**Moussier's Redstart** *Phoenicurus moussieri*: 1 female from 01–12.01.2017 at Sanap Cliffs, Gozo (Adin Vella, Raymond Galea, Nicholas Galea, Edward Bonavia, Gilbert Haber *et al.*); 1 female ringed on 04.11.2017 at Mgarr Ix-Xini (Adin Vella).

**Black-throated (Seeböhm's) Wheatear** *Oenanthe seebohmi*: 1 at Xrobb l-Għagin on 30.03.2016 (Aron Tanti, Edward Bonavia) (**1st record for Malta**).

**White-crowned Wheatear** *Oenanthe leucopyga*: 1 on 25.03.2016 at Xagħra l-Ħamra (Benjamin Metzger, Edward Jenkins, Edward Bonavia, Raymond Vella, Ian Balzan, Charles Coleiro).

**Alpine Accentor** *Prunella collaris*: 1 on 03.11.2016 at Nadur Gozo (photographs and information obtained from a public Facebook group).

**Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodsgoni*: 1 from 07.12.2016 to 21.02.2017 at Ta' Qali (Eman Portelli, Edward Bonavia, David Attard, Raymond Galea, Nicholas Galea, Martin Austad, Adin Vella, Aron Tanti, Denis Cachia *et al.*).

**Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola*: 1 adult summer plumage in May 2017 (photographs and information obtained from a public Facebook group); 1 adult winter plumage on 14.10.2017 at Għadira (Aron Tanti).

**Common Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrina*: 1 2nd cy male on 21.05.2017 at Buskett (Raymond Galea); 1 juv. on 10.10.2017 at Għadira (David Attard); 1 juv. trapped at Kerċem in end October 2017 (reported by Adin Vella).

**Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla*: 1 ringed on 13.10.2016 at Għadira (David Attard, Edward Bonavia); 1 on 20.10.2016 at Nadur Gozo (photographs and information obtained from a public Facebook group); 1 ringed on 10.10.2017 at Għadira (David Attard).

The following record was accepted but will be placed in **Category D**:

**Cape Teal** *Anas capensis*: 1 on 28.01.2018 at Simar (Raymond Galea, Alex Casha, Noel Camilleri).

### **Rejected Records**

The following records have been discussed during meetings of the MRRC and rejected as they were not felt to have had sufficient evidence to be accepted under the criteria of the AERC and the MRRC. In some cases, submissions with the descriptions were sent to experts abroad for their comment before a final decision was taken. The submitters and the reasons for refusals are not included in this report.

**Western Reef-egret** *Egretta gularis*: 1 dark morph on 28.05.2017 at Għajn Tuffieħa.

**Caspian Gull** *Larus cachinnans*: 1 2nd cy at Salina on 02.04.2015; 1 1st winter on 13.12.2016 at Tas-Safra.

**Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus*: 1 on 15.10.2017 at Comino.

**Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni*: 1 heard on 21.10.2016 and on 30.10.2016 at Buskett.

**Yellowhammer** *Emberiza citrinella*: 1 juv/female trapped in south of Malta on 05.11.2017.

### **Caspian Gulls in Malta**

Sammut & Azzopardi (2010) wrote a short paper entitled ‘The Status of Caspian Gull in Malta’ in *British Birds*. In it they mention a number of records for Malta including the first record of this species seen by one of the authors off Qawra on 27.03.2001. Unfortunately these records were either never submitted to the MRRC or rejected and the MRRC is not aware of any photographs that would prove some of these claimed records. Due to this the first accepted records of this species for Malta are those published in this report.

### **Records in the public domain**

As mentioned in the previous rarities report, during this review period, a number of rarities have been in the public domain either in the press, online or in birding journals. Additionally a separate MRRC meeting was held on 31.07.18 to discuss all published 1st records for Malta in Fenech’s two books: *A Complete Guide to the Birds of Malta* published in 2010 and *Birds of the Maltese Islands* published in 2017.

The following records were discussed and **rejected**:

- i) Northern Bobwhite *Colinus virginianus*: 1998–2005 Comino  
There was never a self-sustaining population of this species on Comino so it cannot be placed on the official Malta bird list.
- ii) Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus pictus*: 1998–2005 Comino  
There was never a self-sustaining population of this species on Comino so it cannot be placed on the official Malta bird list.

- iii) Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*: 2 shot at Marsascala on 18.05.07; 7 (6 shot) off Pembroke on 11.12.12; 2 at Qawra on 12.12.12 (1 shot)  
1st record could have easily been escapees due to date and the birds of Pembroke and Qawra are hearsay records with no photographic evidence or description and never officially submitted to the MRRC thus all records of this species are rejected.
- iv) Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*: 1 at Gozo on 20.12.01  
Hearsay record with no photographic evidence or description and never officially submitted to the MRRC thus this record is rejected.
- v) Common Eider *Somateria mollissima*: 1 male at St Elmo Pt. on 19.12.12  
Hearsay record with no photographic evidence or description and never officially submitted to the MRRC thus this record is rejected.
- vi) Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*: 1 imm shot l/o Benghajsa end Oct 2008  
Hearsay record with no photographic evidence or description and never officially submitted to the MRRC thus this record is rejected.
- vii) Oriental Turtle-dove *Streptopelia orientalis*: 1 juv. seen at Hal Far on 08.11.14 and subsequently shot a day later in Gozo on 01.01.16  
As can be seen there is a mix up of dates. Additionally this record/s are hearsay records with no photographic evidence or description and never officially submitted to the MRRC thus this record/s is rejected.
- viii) African Collared-dove *Streptopelia risoria*: Feral species breeding in various areas  
Barbary Doves are the domesticated form of African Collared-dove so not a pure species by itself and therefore cannot be included in the official Malta Bird List.
- ix) Spotted Sandgrouse *Pterocles senegallus*: 1 at Qawra on 26.12.00 probable same bird shot same day in Burmarrad; 1 at Aħrax on 07.04.12  
1st record was rejected by Charles Coleiro (the other observer) and second record is a hearsay record with no photographic evidence or description and never officially submitted to the MRRC thus this record is rejected.
- x) Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus*: 1 male at Aħrax on 11.94; 1 at Marsascala in Oct early 90s; 3 (in collections), no dates and locations, but all local.  
These are all hearsay records with no photographic evidence or description and never officially submitted to the MRRC. Even if these specimens were seen at taxidermists

they could have easily been imported from North America. The chance of getting this species wild as a vagrant from N America to Malta is highly unlikely and even birds that reach UK for example are extremely weak and most die after a few days. Due to this these records cannot be accepted and are thus rejected.

- xi) Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris borealis*: 2 records no details given  
Hearsay records with no photographic evidence or description and never officially submitted to the MRRC thus these records are rejected.
- xii) Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*: 1 taken late summer 1983; 1 taken 04.07.84; 1 taken off Malta in Sep 06; 1 off Sliema on 25.02.15  
Hearsay records with no photographic evidence or description and never officially submitted to the MRRC. Even if found in local collections one cannot be sure that they were caught in Maltese territorial waters. In view of this these records are rejected.
- xiii) Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca*: 1 shot in Gozo Jun 13  
Hearsay records with no photographic evidence or description and never officially submitted to the MRRC. Even if this species was seen in a local collection it could have easily been imported from North America. Thus this record was rejected.
- xiv) Bonaparte's Gull *Chroicocephalus philadelphia*: 1 imm at Pembroke on 11.11.12  
Hearsay record with no photographic evidence or description and never officially submitted to the MRRC thus this record is rejected.
- xv) Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla*: 1 2nd year at Grand Harbour on 01–02.09.07; 1 imm at Grand Harbour on 11.09.10  
Hearsay records with no photographic evidence or description and never officially submitted to the MRRC thus these records are rejected.
- xvi) Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*: 1 ad at Grand Harbour on 31.12.02; 1 ad at Baħar Iċ-Ċaġħaq on 13.12.05; 1 at Rinella/Grand Harbour on 25.01.09 (and again on later dates); 1 3rd/4th year at Grand Harbour on 24.01.10  
All hearsay records with no photographic evidence or description and never officially submitted to the MRRC thus these records are rejected.  
  
1 1st winter on 02.01.2018 posted in a public Facebook group. The Committee decided that the photo could have been taken abroad and not in Malta and thus was rejected.

- xvii) Royal Tern *Sterna maxima albidorsalis*: 1 taken on 26.07.79  
Hearsay record with no photographic evidence or description and never officially submitted to the MRRC. Even if found in a local collection one cannot be sure that it was caught in Maltese territorial waters. In view of this, this record is rejected.
- xviii) Swallow-tailed Kite *Elanoides forficatus*: 1 shot between Malta and Pantelleria in 1884 as recorded in literature  
One cannot be sure that it was caught in Maltese territorial waters. In view of this, this record is rejected.
- xix) Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga*: 1 imm. shot at Mgarr (M) on 20.10.82; 1 shot at Żonqor Point in Oct 2000  
Hearsay records with no photographic evidence or description and never officially submitted to the MRRC thus these records are rejected.
- xx) Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*: 1 at Ghajn Tuffieħa on 02.04.2016.  
The Committee decided that the photo could have been taken abroad and not in Malta and thus was rejected. Additionally in a public Facebook group a number of people (presumably hunters) commented that it is strange that such a bird was not seen by anyone else, further questioning the authenticity of this record.
- xxi) Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis*: 1 ad. fem. shot at Żabbar on 15.11.12 (in collections); 1 imm. shot at Dwejra (M) on 14.01.13 (in collections); 1 fem. at Dingli Cliffs on 19.11.16  
Hearsay records with no photographic evidence or description and never officially submitted to the MRRC. Even if they are found in local collections as stated they could have easily been imported. In view of this these records are rejected.
- xxii) Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*: 1 taken at Marnisi l/o Marsaxlokk in Oct 1984 (in collections); 1 taken at Ballut, Marsaxlokk on 27.04.1986 (in collections); 1 at Mtarfa in Nov 11  
Hearsay records with no photographic evidence or description and never officially submitted to the MRRC. Even if they are found in local collections as stated they could have easily been imported. In view of this these records are rejected.
- xxiii) Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*: 1 shot at Tas-Silġ on 10.11.75



Hearsay record with no photographic evidence or description and never officially submitted to the MRRC thus this records is rejected.

- xxiv) Eurasian Magpie *Pica pica*: 1 at Madliena on 11.11.10; 1 at Madliena on 09.09.11

Hearsay records with no photographic evidence or description and never officially submitted to the MRRC. Additionally possibility of being escapees cannot be excluded. In view of this these records are rejected.

- xxv) Bimaculated Lark *Melanocorypha bimaculata*: 7 known records on strength of records by some local collections

Hearsay records with no photographic evidence or description and never officially submitted to the MRRC. Even if they are found in local collections as stated they could have easily been imported. In view of this these records are rejected.

- xxvi) Hume's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*: 1 ringed at Salina on 10.11.12

This refers to a Yellow-browed Warbler ringed by MVG and therefore this record is rejected.

- xxvii) Eastern Orphean Warbler *Sylvia crassirostris*: five nests in 1907 (Despott); 1 fem. at Hal Far taken on 31.03.81; 1 male at Mġiebaħ on 31.03.02; 1 male at Dingli Cliffs on 31.05.15

Despott did not include the five nests reported in 1907 in his later works while the other records are hearsay records with no photographic evidence or description and never officially submitted to the MRRC. Even if the 1981 bird is found in a local collection as stated they could have easily been imported. In view of this these records are rejected.

- xxviii) Brahminy Starling *Sturnia pagodarum*: 1 of 3 birds shot at Dingli on 19.03.65 (approx. date)

Since this species is regularly kept in captivity this species is a Category D species and thus does not form part of the official Malta Bird List.

- xxix) White's Thrush *Zoothera aurea*: 1 at Siggiewi on 13.11.84; 1 at Baħar Iċ-Ċagħaq on 10.10.03; 2 at Mizieb in Nov 2003; 1 at San Lawrenz Gozo on 28.10.08; 1 at Pembroke on 22.11.13

Hearsay records with no photographic evidence or description and never officially submitted to the MRRC thus these records are rejected.

- xxx) Tickell's Thrush *Turdus unicolor*: 1 male at Tal-Azzard (between Birżebbuġa and Ghaxaq) on 31.10.90  
Hearsay record with no photographic evidence or description and never officially submitted to the MRRC thus this record is rejected.
- xxxii) Naumann's Thrush *Turdus naumanni*: 1 trapped at Buskett on 24.12.56  
Hearsay record with no photographic evidence or description and never officially submitted to the MRRC thus this record is rejected.
- xxxiii) Black-throated Thrush *Turdus atrogularis*: 1 male at Marsascalea on 27.04.14  
Hearsay record with no photographic evidence or description and never officially submitted to the MRRC thus this record is rejected.
- xxxiiii) Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maurus*: 1 male on 23.03.80; 1 fem. at Bidnija from 28.02 until 02.03.04; 1 fem at Salina on 05.03.06; 1 on 05.03 & 16.03.12  
Hearsay records with no photographic evidence or description and never officially submitted to the MRRC thus these records are rejected.
- xxxv) Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*: 2 shot at Hal Far in Nov 2016  
Hearsay record with no photographic evidence or description and never officially submitted to the MRRC thus this record is rejected.
- xxxvi) Twite *Linaria flavirostris*: 1 male at St Elmo Pt on 20.01.13; 1 at St Elmo Pt on 11.01.15  
Hearsay records with no photographic evidence or description and never officially submitted to the MRRC thus these records are rejected.
- xxxvii) Redpoll *Acanthis flammea*: 1 on 12.01.2017 at an undisclosed location.  
The state of the bird in the photo and how the photo was taken seems to indicate a captive bird. Due to this and the relative popularity of this species locally in captivity this record was rejected.
- xxxviii) Red-headed Bunting *Emberiza bruniceps*: 1 trapped at Aħrax early 80s (in collection); 1 male trapped in autumn 1999 or 2000; 1 trapped at Marsascalea on 12.10.04; 1 male at Dingli on 08.09.15  
Hearsay records with no photographic evidence or description and never officially submitted to the MRRC. Even if some are found in local collections as stated they could have easily been imported. In view of this these records are rejected.

- xxxviii) Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*: 1 fem. trapped at Bengħajsa on 19.10.10  
Hearsay records with no photographic evidence or description and never officially submitted to the MRRC thus these records are rejected.

Since the MRRC criteria are based on objective verification and publicly accessible and verifiable evidence, it is important to note that should the MRRC receive more details and information on any of the above rejected records they will be discussed again accordingly.

The following published 1st records for Malta in Fenech's books are still **pending**:

**African Blue Tit** *Cyanistes teneriffae*: 1 caught 1908 (Despott 1917)

**Thick-billed Lark** *Rhanphocoris clotbey*: 1 shot at Ghajn Tuffieħa in October 1980

**Eastern Orphean Warbler** *Sylvia crassirostris*: 1 in 1843 (Schembri); 1 in 1858 (Wright)

**Mongolian Finch** *Bucanetes mongolicus*: 1 1st year male trapped at Miġra l-Ferħa on 15.11.13

The following species published in Fenech's books were placed in **Category D** in past MRRC meetings and thus do not form part of the official Malta Bird List:

- i) Bar-headed Goose
- ii) Egyptian Goose
- iii) Baikal Teal
- iv) Falcated Duck
- v) American Purple Gallinule
- vi) Eurasian Jay
- vii) Superb Starling

The following list of species published in Fenech's books were already **rejected** in the past:

- i) Dwarf Bittern (MRRC meeting)
- ii) Lesser Yellowlegs (MRRC meeting)
- iii) Sabine's Gull (MRRC meeting)
- iv) Eurasian Eagle-owl (Sultana & Gauci 1982)
- v) Hooded Vulture (*History of Ornithology in Malta*, Sultana & Borg 2015)
- vi) Bonelli's Eagle (MRRC meeting)

- vii) Brahminy Kite (Sultana & Gauci 1982)
- viii) Asian Desert Warbler (MRRC meeting)
- ix) Yellow-throated Sparrow (Sultana & Gauci 1982)

The following **two records** were also discussed:

- i) **Blue-winged Teal** *Spatula discors*: 1 fem. shot at Qawra on 19.11.1980 (original record submitted and examined by John J. Borg).

Although this record was accepted in a past MRRC meeting, in Fenech's *Birds of the Maltese Islands* the author states that "after asking the collector who had it and whose name still appears with the specimen, it resulted that the specimen had been imported". Since this bird (which is found in the National Museum of Natural History collections) has a data label attached to it and the data was entered in the accession book of the museum and the catalogue of the collection by Joe Vella Gaffiero, the Committee has no reason to reject this record and thus unless the Committee receives any other evidence showing that this bird was imported (as Fenech states) it should remain in the official Malta bird list.

- ii) **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* breeding at the private bird park at Salina from 2007 onwards.

It was decided that the **Little Egret breeding record** at Salina Bird Park (outside aviary) published in *Il-Merill* 32 (2010) could have been **both wild birds or intentionally released birds** from the owner of the Bird Park who has released a number of Little Egrets, Cattle Egrets, Black-Crowned Night-herons and Common Moorhens amongst other species in the past.

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