

# Bird's Eye view



issue 38 • jun 2012

  
**BirdLife**  
MALTA

**50**  
YEARS  
1962 - 2012



## swallow story

Let me share with you the story of the swallows that bred at Ħal Far.

In 2008, there was no spring hunting season. Two pairs of barn swallows were seen breeding for the first time at Ħal Far.

In 2009, there was no spring hunting season. Two to three pairs were again seen breeding.

In 2010, a short spring hunting season was opened but the hunters' federation (FKNK) boycotted the season. A farmer at Ħal Far proudly showed a birdwatcher the nest that one of the breeding pairs of swallows had made.

In 2011, swallows were seen preparing to nest in the same area. A hunting season was opened for 15 days at this delicate time. The swallows disappeared and only one pair made it to fledge their young.

In 2012, a pair of swallows was seen visiting the same stable where they had nested the year before. A 16-day spring hunting season was again opened. The swallows were not seen again.

It doesn't take rocket science to get to the bottom line: spring and hunting do not go together. It is a fact that opening a season for two species in spring opens a wide window for the illegal killing of anything that flies. It is also a fact that if you kill

birds when nature calls them to breed, you are decimating their numbers. This is why the EU Birds Directive prohibits hunting in spring, and this is why BirdLife will again report our findings to the EU, to challenge Malta's decision to open a hunting season this year (see pp 4-5).

How embarrassing! While the authorities here continue to give hunters their blessing to kill turtle doves and quail, other European countries concurrently carry out breeding programmes to boost declining bird populations. Witness the wide range of strategies throughout Europe to address the drop in stork numbers; the intensive 24-hour surveillance to protect osprey nests in the UK and Germany; the action plan across 16 Member States to halt the decline of the Lesser Kestrel; the list goes on.

Clearly, Malta has a long way to go before it can live up to its European status.

With your continued support BirdLife can bring the Ħal Far swallows back.

**Desirée Falzon**  
Editor

Bird's Eye View • 22 June 2012 • Issue 38

Editor **Desirée Falzon**  
Associate Editor **Victor Falzon**  
Publisher **BirdLife Malta**  
Printer **Printit Ltd**

Contributors to this issue **Laura Bambini, Nicholas Barbara, Paul Lago Barreiro, Richard Cachia Zammit, Theresa Cremona, Sonia Dhanda, Desirée Falzon, Victor Falzon, Mark Gauci, Amy Hardingham, Rupert Masefield.**  
Photography by **Ian Balzan, Laura Bambini, Mark Cassar, Joe Cockram, Sonia Dhanda, Victor Falzon, Raymond Galea, Cally Higginbottom, Kathleen Mamo, Ben Metzger, Ben Niemeijer, Danny Schmeits, David Spiteri, Mark Sultana, Aron Tanti.**  
Design and production **Victor Falzon**

© 2012 BirdLife Malta. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission from the publisher is prohibited. All information reported in this publication is correct at time of going to press.

Printed on Total Chlorine Free paper

## contents

	page
comment	2
news	3
art, science and high emotion	4-5
EURO 2012	6-7
eyes on the sea	8
playing for nature	9
vol.vox	10
breeders' return	10
out and about	11
50th anniversary dinner	12



The Barn Owl would breed regularly were it not for persecution by hunters (photo by Ian Balzan)



**BirdLife Malta** was set up in January 1962 as the Malta Ornithological Society (MOS). It is the oldest and largest environment movement in Malta, with over 3000 members.

**BirdLife Malta's** mission is the protection of wild birds, their habitat and biodiversity. To this end, the organisation has over the years used approaches including street protests, educational campaigns and habitat restoration projects.

**BirdLife Malta** spearheaded the creation of the wetland nature reserves at Ghadira and Is-Simar - which it manages today - as well as Foresta 2000, a woodland restoration project on Marfa Ridge.

**BirdLife Malta** publishes various educational material such as books, posters and leaflets for use by schools and other institutions. It is also active in the media, as part of its effort to raise public awareness. The organisation issues regular magazines/newsletters for its membership.

**BirdLife Malta** studies migratory and breeding birds to expand scientific knowledge and to further establish the ornithological value of the Maltese Islands. It also studies threats to birds and ways to mitigate these problems. As part of its research, the organisation runs the BirdLife Malta Ringing Scheme.

**BirdLife Malta** is a Partner of BirdLife International, a worldwide partnership of bird and nature protection organisations, with over 10 million members and supporters in more than 100 countries and territories.

**BirdLife Malta** is a charity and depends on subscriptions and donations.

### BirdLife Malta Council

President **Joseph M Mangion**  
General Secretary **Desirée Falzon**  
Members  
**Stefan Azzopardi**  
**John J Borg**  
**Matthew Borg Cardona**  
**Carl Camilleri**  
**Alfred Cremona**  
**Raymond Galea**  
**Manuel Mallia**  
**Nadja Tschovikov**  
**Justin Vassallo**

Honorary President **Joe Attard Tabone**

mailing address  
**BirdLife Malta**  
**57/28 Triq Abate Rigord**  
**Ta' Xbiex XBX 1120, Malta**  
tel +356 21347644/5  
email [info@birdlifemalta.org](mailto:info@birdlifemalta.org)  
website [www.birdlifemalta.org](http://www.birdlifemalta.org)

Reg. Vol. Org. VO/0052

Mark Cassar



Group photo of some of the children who took part in *Dear Minister* 2012, with Environment Minister Dr Mario de Marco.

## children's hearing

On 23 May 2012, BirdLife Malta organised its annual children's hearing, *Dear Minister*, at the Auberge d'Italie. Children from 14 schools read letters they had written to the Minister of Environment Dr Mario de Marco concerning a range of environmental issues, including marine pollution, waste management, protection of wild animals and countryside management. The Minister praised both the children and the schools which had encouraged participation in the project. He said that the topics selected were of great importance to the Maltese Islands. *Dear Minister* makes children aware that voicing one's concern about environmental matters is an important part of beginning to solve the problems facing nature. Dinja Waħda is Bank of Valletta's and BirdLife Malta's environmental education programme for primary schools, carried out in collaboration with the Directorate for Quality Standards in Education.



Danny Schmeits



The 'teenage' gull shortly after its release.

## gull with a history

On 14 May 2012, a female yellow-legged gull was retrieved alive from Marsalforn, Gozo. Emaciated but in full breeding plumage, the gull also had a BirdLife Malta ring on its leg, which led to the discovery that it had been ringed on Filfla as a chick on 22 May 1998: a full 14 years ago! After treatment from the vet, the gull was released back into the wild, and hopefully returned to her chicks. The yellow-legged gull is Malta's largest breeding bird, with a thriving colony on Filfla. BirdLife Malta has for several decades been monitoring and studying the Filfla colony, and carries out annual visits to the island in order to ring the chicks.

Victor Faizon



MBROC funded the building of the hide at Ghadira in the 1980s. Every year, this little green room gives thousands of people - not least schoolchildren - the joy and inspiration of watching birds in the wild.

## mbroc support

In the 1960s a group of British birdlovers, headed by Elisabeth Coxon, recognised the problems facing a fledgling MOS (BirdLife Malta's old name), so they set up the Malta Bird Reserves Overseas Committee (MBROC) to give some much-needed support. Down the years, they supported MOS financially and professionally, helping set up a ringing scheme, training ringers, and raising funds in the UK for MOS projects, including the building of the first birdwatching hide in Malta. Almost half a century later, MBROC has now made its last donation of £st2405 (€2972) as the Committee draws to a close. The seeds that MBROC sowed so many years ago continue to bear fruit today as BirdLife Malta continues to run conservation and research projects. BirdLife is indebted to the trust and support that the group has shown. A heartfelt thank you goes especially to Hannah and John Middleton who for many years managed the Committee.



Aron Tanti



(left) A male blackcap, and (right) the Buskett nest with the two very young fledglings.

## new breeding bird

While birdwatching at Buskett on 7 June 2012, Raymond and Nicholas Galea discovered a pair of blackcaps nesting in a large climbing ivy. Further observation revealed two recently-hatched chicks in the nest, and both adults were seen feeding the brood regularly. This was the first breeding record of this species in Malta, which so far has only been known as a common passage and wintering bird. The blackcap (M: kapinera) *Sylvia atricapilla* is a largely woodland species, and wooded areas like Buskett are ideal places where to watch and listen for these birds, especially in winter.

# art, science and high emotion

## SPRING MIGRATION MALTA 2012

rupert masefeld

Bird lovers in Malta this spring were treated to great views as more than 77 species of birds paid a flying visit to the islands on their way north to their breeding grounds on mainland Europe. From majestic honey-buzzards and purple herons, to flocks of colourful bee-eaters and aerobatic swifts, our skies were alive with feathered traffic.

### spring watch 2012

The spectacle of this year's spring migration was, however, marred again with the shooting and trapping of protected birds, as for the third year in a row the government opened a spring hunting season for turtle dove and quail.

BirdLife Malta strongly disagrees with any form of hunting concession in spring. Both turtle dove and quail are in decline across Europe and cannot by any logic be considered as fair and sustainable quarry.

Moreover, allowing hunting in spring always provides ideal cover for poachers

who want to target other species, which invariably results in many protected species being maimed or shot down. This reality is evident from the increased number of shot protected birds received by BirdLife during the spring hunting seasons in 2011 and 2012.

Only the vigilance of BirdLife's annual camps keeps the scale of killing from being much higher than it already is.

From 15th to 30th April, 56 volunteers from across Europe joined Maltese volunteers and BirdLife Malta staff for this year's Spring Watch camp. The camp is

A magnificent hobby makes a low pass over the Spring Watch team stationed at Gharghur. Luckily this bird was not shot.

a key part of our ongoing work to improve understanding of bird migration in Malta, but it is also an effective way of improving protection for migrating birds.

The daily routine involved getting up before dawn and setting out in teams to keep vigilance at known roosting spots. The presence of the Spring Watch teams deter many hunters from killing the birds as soon as these begin to stir; in the evening, the teams return to these sites to watch over fresh migrants coming in to roost.

On several occasions, the teams were able to watch with pride and relief marsh harriers and Montagu's harriers leave their roost unhindered, to continue their long flight to Europe.

### the next step

This month (June) BirdLife Malta will be submitting to the European Commission a report on this year's spring hunting derogation and will again argue for a ban on the hunting in spring of turtle dove and quail in Malta, in the light of the continuing failure of the Maltese government to meet the conditions of the derogation required by the Birds Directive.



**In tight formation.** Sporting the Spring Watch 2012 T-shirt, participants of this year's camp take a break at Salina to pose for a group picture.

Sonia Dharanda



## this spring in figures...

- 16** days (12-30 April 2012) of open spring hunting season.
- 6500+** hunters licensed to shoot.
- 77** species of migratory birds seen by Spring Watch teams.
- 748** hunting illegalities observed by Spring Watch teams.
- 528** incidents of hunting outside permitted hours.
- 52** incidents involving the use of illegally modified shotguns.
- 25** incidents involved the use of electronic lures, almost all for quail.
- 50** protected birds seen in flight with injuries consistent with shooting.
- 13** shot protected birds recovered by BirdLife Malta.
- 71** persons arraigned by police, in connection with bird shooting crime.

## you can help

The continued support of you, our members, is essential to all our efforts to protect migratory birds and the eventual success in our campaign to end illegal hunting and trapping in Malta. We welcome new volunteers on our conservation camps in spring and autumn.

Our next camp is the autumn Raptor Camp, where you too can help out. You do not need to be a bird expert, nor commit to the entire duration of the camp; indeed it is not even necessary to join our camp teams (although you are most welcome at all times). Yet you can still make valuable input as part of our overall monitoring effort.

For more information visit our website at [www.birdlifemalta.org](http://www.birdlifemalta.org)

Rupert Masefield is BirdLife Malta Communications Intern.

## art and science join forces for birds

This year's Spring Watch was given an injection of creativity as more than 20 artists from across Europe joined the camp as volunteers. Putting together an exhibition called **Ghosts of Gone Birds**, the artists aimed to raise awareness of the threats to wild birds and generate public involvement in an effort to prevent further extinction of birds. In the words of Ceri Levy, the project's curator and driving force, this is "art against extinction".

By taking part in Spring Watch 2012 as regular camp volunteers, these artists experienced first hand what is involved in trying to ensure safe passage for birds through Malta. For many it was an emotional rollercoaster to see their first golden oriole or marsh harrier, only to see the same birds taken shortly after to the vet, with broken bones and gaping gunshot wounds. One uplifting experience involved a marsh harrier received by BirdLife which, to everyone's relief, was not injured but only disoriented. The bird was ringed and released on Kemmuna to resume its migration.

You can find out more about *Ghosts of Gone Birds* at [www.ghostsofgonebirds.com](http://www.ghostsofgonebirds.com), including news about the exhibition, the profits from which are being generously donated to support BirdLife Malta's conservation work.



(Top) A bee-eater catches its dinner in mid-air. (Middle) Artist Cally Higginbottom catches a bee-eater's essence in this watercolour wash. (Bottom) This bee-eater was shot down at Delimara and later died of its injuries at the vet's surgery.

Joe Cookram

Cally Higginbottom

Cally Higginbottom

# EURO 2012

Mark Gauci

This spring BirdLife Malta ringers logged migrant birds from no less than 10 European countries. We take a whistle-stop tour of some of the birds that stopped by this spring on their northbound journey to their breeding grounds.



Dennis Garcia

## Barn Swallow

A common spring and autumn migrant and in recent years also a regular breeder in small numbers. During migration large numbers congregate over open water and fields to feast on small flying insects.



Aaron Tanti

## Tree Pipit

A spring and autumn migrant. This is one of the first birds to arrive, their thin *spizz!* calls signalling the advent of spring. Tree pipits often migrate in large flocks, but they do not breed in Malta.



Aaron Tanti

## Great Reed Warbler

A frequent visitor in both spring and autumn. This bird is found mainly in reedbeds where it is often easier to hear than to see. Is-Simar and Ghadira nature reserves provide the ideal habitat for this species.



Aaron Tanti

## Blackcap

A common wintering species, fond of fruit and berries. The birds leave the Maltese Islands in spring, at a time when their numbers are also augmented by passage birds returning from Africa and moving north to their breeding grounds.



Raymond Galea

## Spotted Flycatcher

A common spring migrant whose breeding status in Malta is becoming stronger with the recent increase in number of nesting pairs. This bird's feeding habit is unmistakable, twisting up into the air from a perch to catch an insect on the wing and landing back on the same perch.



## UNITED KINGDOM



Three **Barn Swallows** with UK rings turned up this spring. Two had been ringed in North Yorkshire (31 Aug 2010, 7 Aug 2009) as juveniles; both were recaptured at Ghadira in April.

The third bird, ringed as a chick in the nest on 31 May 2011 at Norfolk, turned up on Kemmuna on 21 Apr 2012.



## SWITZERLAND



A male **Barn Swallow** ringed on 23 Apr 2009 at Ghadira turned up in Schwiez Hetg on 22 Apr 2012. Sadly this bird was found dead after colliding with a window.



## SPAIN

A female **Blackcap** with a Spanish ring turned up at Ghadira on 12 Apr 2012.



The bird had a high fat reserve, a clear indication that it was on the move. More details still to arrive from our Spanish colleagues.

Bird ringing is a method of bird study that involves placing small, lightweight metal rings on wild-caught birds. The rings carry a unique number and the address of the ringing scheme or station. All birds are released a few minutes after capture. Bird ringing is carried out by highly trained people and require a police licence. All scientific bird ringing in Malta is co-ordinated by the BirdLife Malta Ringing Scheme.

## NORWAY

Norway may be far to the north but this does not deter small birds from making a marathon flight from Africa back to their breeding grounds. A **Barn Swallow**, ringed as a juvenile in Borrevannet Norway, was captured at Is-Simar on 21 April 2012. A **Tree Pipit** with a Norwegian ring was captured on 16 April 2012 at the Kemmuna ringing station. This bird must love small islands since it was ringed on 9 Aug 2011 on Molen, a very small island!



## SLOVAKIA

A **Barn Swallow** ringed as a chick in the nest at Prievidza on 1 Aug 2011 was recaptured at Salina on 24 April 2012 on its first-ever return migration north.



## BELGIUM

A **Barn Swallow** with a Belgian ring was one of many that roosted at Is-Simar on the evening of 16 April 2012. We are still awaiting ringing details for this bird.



## HUNGARY

A **Great Reed Warbler** ringed as a juvenile on 13 Jul 2008 in Bacs-Kiskun was captured on 16 April 2012 at Is-Simar. This means that this bird had already made eight migrations in its lifespan!



## SLOVENIA

A **Barn Swallow** with a Slovenian ring was netted at Ghadira on 19 Apr 2012. It had been ringed as a young bird on 2 Aug 2011 at Loper.



## CROATIA

An adult **Barn Swallow** ringed in Krik on 23 Aug 2011 was captured at Ghadira on 26 Apr 2012.



## ITALY

Three **Barn Swallows** with Italian rings turned up this spring: one (captured at Is-Simar on 18 Apr) was ringed as an adult in Verbania on 30 Apr 2009, one (captured at Ghadira on 21 Apr) as a young bird at Pesaro-Urbino on 13 Sep 2011, and the third (captured at Ghadira on 19 Apr) as a chick in the nest in Brescia on 15 Jul 2011. A **Spotted Flycatcher** (still awaiting details) was captured on Kemmuna on 22 Apr 2012.



Mark Gauci is Head of the BirdLife Malta Ringing Scheme

laura bambini

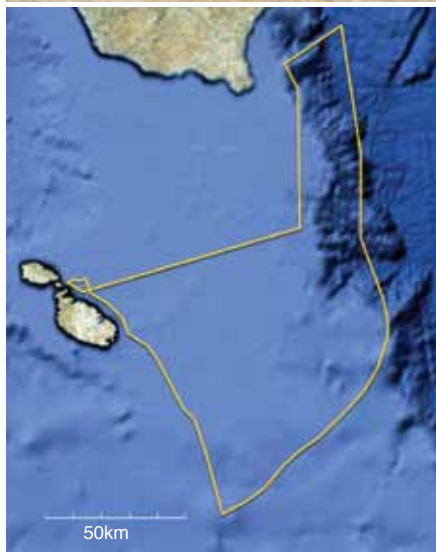
# eyes on the sea



Now in its sixth month, the EU LIFE+ Malta Seabird Project is busy collecting information on the foraging and resting areas of three seabirds breeding in Malta: Cory's shearwater, Yelkouan shearwater and European storm-petrel. By 2016 the project will have identified a number of Marine Important Bird Areas and its findings presented to the government for designation as Special Protected Areas.

## out on a boat

Since March of this year, ornithologists and volunteers on the project team have been doing boat-based observations



**Tagged.** (top) One of the Yelkouan shearwaters fitted with a GPS logger and (bottom) the itinerary of a single foraging trip by one Yelkouan shearwater - a round trip of over 400km!

to collect data on the distribution of the study species' feeding and resting areas at sea. The observers are out on the boat 14 days a month, surveying the sea up to the 25 nautical mile (ca 46km) limit of the Maltese Exclusive Fishing Zone. Apart from other marine wildlife (see box), all three target species have been observed by the team. The boat-based surveys will continue until the end of October.

## tags and loggers

In April and May, the team deployed small GPS loggers on a number of Yelkouan shearwaters. These devices record the birds' movements, and are helping the researchers to identify areas at sea that are important for foraging and resting.

In seabirds, both male and female care for their young, taking turns to incubate the single egg and, later, to feed the chick. The parent in the nest must starve while its partner is out at sea, which is why it benefits the birds if their feeding grounds are as close to the nest as possible. Foraging too far and taking too long to return to the colony may weaken the hungry partner waiting back at the nest.

In June, the researchers also attached GPS loggers onto a number of Cory's shearwaters, the Yelkouan's larger cousins. These powerful birds can ride the air currents close to the sea surface - hence the name 'shearwater' - and can



## sundry seafarers

Apart from the seabirds, the boat-based observers have also been lucky to see other marine life such as loggerhead turtles (above), green turtles, sunfish, swordfish, fin whales, short-beaked common dolphins, striped dolphins, bottlenose dolphins and Risso's dolphins.

cover long distances without spending much energy. In 2009, a juvenile Cory's fitted with a satellite-tracking device revealed that after leaving its nest in Malta, the bird travelled 4500km to the coast of Senegal; the loggers will now pinpoint the Cory's feeding grounds during the breeding season, and reveal areas of sea vital for these birds, the whereabouts of which are still largely a mystery.

At the forefront of Mediterranean seabird research, the EU LIFE+ Malta Seabird Project is revealing new information about the ecology of Malta's seabirds. It is the only way to find out how we can best protect our seabirds into the future.

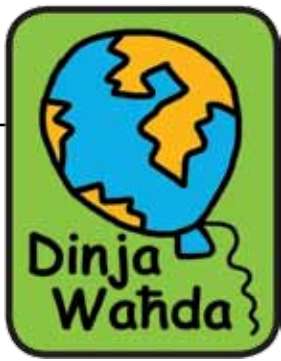
**Laura Bambini** is Project Manager of the EU LIFE+ Malta Seabird Project.




The EU LIFE+ Malta Seabird Project is run by BirdLife Malta, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Environment, the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK) and SPEA (BirdLife in Portugal). For more information about - and volunteering opportunities with - the Malta Seabird Project, visit [www.birdlifemalta.org](http://www.birdlifemalta.org)







# playing for nature

desirée falzon

The Dinja Wahda Action Guide is packed with fun ways our children can learn about the earth and its creatures through games. This issue's pictures take a leaf from the Dinja Wahda album of green games that are being played in schools as we put children in the shoes of nature and get them to play out the triumphs and tragedies nature goes through daily.

## The Wader Game

A game of nature-Ludo takes children through a journey of migration as waders while they face the typical hurdles of these risk-fraught flights and stop over at our nature reserves for an all-important refuelling boost. Dinja Wahda offers two versions of the game: board, or life-size!



## Vanishing Homes



Children play a simulation game where they become animals that live in our garrigue, woodland, streams, and other habitats, and whose lives are threatened by development. They rush around looking for hiding places as a narrator reads out situations that mirror what happens in our countryside.

## Minibeast Magic

Children learn about how vital the creatures that inhabit our soil are, and the amazing ways they adapt to life down there. Children do this by creating their own minibeasts and by playing a relay game, using models and a bank of soil.



Dinja Wahda is BirdLife Malta's environmental education programme for primary schools. It is run together with Bank of Valletta, partner in education, and in collaboration with the Directorate for Education (DQSE).

Desirée Falzon is Education Coordinator of BirdLife Malta

The European Voluntary Scheme (EVS) is a programme that gives young Europeans the opportunity to spend up to a year working as volunteers in local projects across Europe in a number of different sectors, one of which is the environment field. As a non-profit organisation BirdLife Malta is eligible to host EVS volunteers, and this year we have four on our staff. *Bird's Eye View* asked them to tell our members what they do in BirdLife and what has been the highlight of their work so far.



### Sonia Dhanda

I'm the Fundraising and Communications intern with BirdLife Malta. I assist with media publications for the EU Life+ Malta Seabird Project and Dinja Wahda and I help with website updates. In my fundraising role I help to organise and coordinate BirdLife Malta events and promote membership. In August I will be representing BirdLife Malta at the

British Birdwatching Fair in the UK, where I will be giving a talk on the Seabird Project. I really enjoyed participating in the Spring Watch 2012 bird migration camp: meeting all the international volunteers and working alongside local birders. My highlight of the camp was spotting a red-footed falcon - a birding first for me - perched next to some lesser kestrels on a floodlight during one of the morning watches.



### Amy Hardingham

I work as a Conservation Intern with BirdLife Malta. One of my key responsibilities is dealing with the injured birds that we receive, taking them to the vet and cataloguing the details. I assist with trapping surveillance and monitoring and reporting illegalities to the authorities. I also assist with the production of policy document and position papers.

There have been many highlights to my work with BirdLife so far, but if I had to choose one it would be taking a marsh harrier to be ringed and released at the ringing station on Kemma. Many of the injured birds we receive cannot be saved, so it has been incredibly rewarding to have the opportunity to return some of these birds to the wild. The moment they are released is a nail-biting experience as you wait to see if they will fly well, so seeing this majestic bird take off faultlessly, find a thermal and soar off to the north was incredibly rewarding.



### Paulo Lago Barreiro

I am a Conservation Intern at BirdLife Malta. My main task is to carry out investigations of illegal hunting and trapping: maintaining the databases and writing reports for the police. I also help with other BirdLife conservation tasks. My work entails monitoring the spring hunting season, organising the equipment and analysing data about hunting illegalities and bird migration.

As part of the Spring Watch 2012 team I participated in illegal hunting and trapping surveillance work. The most important activity I have done so far has been working for Spring Watch 2012. It was a very exciting experience and I learnt a lot about bird migration and the hunting problem in Malta. I have helped with the fieldwork for the LIFE + Malta Seabird Project, assisting with the boat and land-based seabird observations and going to the cliffs to monitor the colonies. It's a very interesting project which I am continually learning from.



### Rupert Masefield

I'm the Communications Intern at BirdLife Malta. As well as helping the different project coordinators with preparing and issuing press releases and liaising with journalists, I am responsible for collating and editing all the media footage and images and maintaining the website and social media sites. A large part of this work is focused on the campaign against

the illegal hunting and trapping of wild birds. My highlight so far has been meeting other conservationists who are passionate about furthering conservation causes through communications and the media campaigns. I was pleased to have an article published in *The Times of Malta* discussing the importance of protecting Malta's marine life and then was very excited to be able to join the team from the EU Life+ Malta Seabird Project at one of the colonies to help retrieve data loggers from the Yelkouan shearwaters - amazing!

## birds

Mark Sultana



One of this year's little ringed plovers with its brood of four (one chick almost entirely hidden underneath the parent bird).

## Breeders' return

This spring has seen the return of little ringed plovers at Ghadira nature reserve. This wader species has been breeding exclusively at the nature reserve every year since 1995, spending the summer here and then returning to winter in Africa along with all the newly-fledged young. Meanwhile, at Is-Simar, coots too are breeding again, making this the fourth year almost in a row since 2008.

It is always encouraging to see these birds returning every year to nest at these sites, as they breed nowhere else in the country.

Other birds breeding at the reserves include reed warbler at Is-Simar, and - for the first time inside the reserve - collared doves at Ghadira.

# Out and about

forthcoming member activities

richard cachia zammit

Members enjoying spectacular scenery at Cava d'Ispica, one of the highlights during last May's trip to Sicily.



Kathleen Mamo

## July 2012 • Shearwater Boat trip

The shearwater boat trip has become an annual event, popular with many members. No wonder, since this activity practically guarantees a spectacle of shearwaters, not to mention the magnificent sunsets. This activity comes with a fee, with booking in advance.



Victor Falzon

## August 2012 • Back to Africa

By mid-summer, migratory birds start returning to their wintering quarters in Africa. The earliest birds to appear are the waders and the best place to watch them at close range is Ghadira nature reserve. During last summer's migrant-watching, we saw several species of waders, little egrets and more (although the kingfisher eluded us). So this summer we will try again, and hopefully spot the colourful king this time! Due to restricted space in the hides, participation in this activity will be limited.

For more details, send an email to [blmactivities@gmail.com](mailto:blmactivities@gmail.com) or call **Richard Cachia Zammit** on **21672939** (5-7pm). When you join our Activity Mailing List, you will receive email details and reminders of forthcoming events. Unless otherwise specified, all BirdLife activities are **free of charge**. At all outings there will be **experienced naturalists and birders** eager to help with bird identification and other points of natural interest.



Avon Tanti

## September 2012 • 50 years together

BirdLife Malta is not the only local NGO celebrating its 50th anniversary this year: Nature Trust too turns 50 this year. The two organisations have cooperated on many occasions, and for a time - back in the 60s - they even merged into one! A special joint activity is being organised for members of both societies. The activity will include a guided tour of Verdala Palace and its gardens, followed by a walk in the surroundings. Founders of both societies will be invited to accompany us. This activity comes with a fee and participation will be limited.

## September 2012 • Soaring raptors

September is the best time of the year to watch birds of prey migrating over our islands, so a weekend will be dedicated to these magnificent birds where experienced birdwatchers will help members spot and identify these birds.



Victor Falzon

## October 2012 • The Lords of the Rings

Why ring birds? This and more will be explained during an interactive outing that will focus entirely on the science of bird ringing. Licensed BirdLife ringers will take participants on a journey through the world of bird ringing. The activity will be held at Is-Simar nature reserve, where places will be limited due to logistics and restricted space.

**Richard Cachia Zammit** is Coordinator of the BirdLife Malta Activity Team.

While every effort is made to stick to the activities as planned, unforeseen circumstances may force us to revise or cancel some of them.

  
**BirdLife**  
MALTA

  
**50**  
YEARS  
1962 - 2012

Fund-raising dinner  
for birds and nature



date Friday 6 July 2012  
time 8pm  
dress smart casual  
price €50 per person

*at*  
**The Reef Club**  
Westin Dragonara Resort  
Dragonara Road  
St Julians

More details on flyer inside