

# bird's eye view



issue 30 • summer 2009

  
**BirdLife**  
MALTA



# an inspiration

On 14 April, Foresta 2000 ranger Ray Vella was shot in the head by an aggressor wielding a shotgun at the project site. This was the third time Ray was attacked in the last two years, as he was previously shot at again and his farm burned down by arsonists.

It is impossible to truly understand the trauma Ray has been through, and just as hard to comprehend how he still manages to continue working and fighting for what he believes in. But it is people like Ray who make change come about - people who stand for their values and do not give in to these bullying and criminal tactics. He sends a strong message to his aggressors that he will not be silenced, and continues to inspire us all.

BirdLife Malta project sites, staff, volunteers and active members have been targeted more than 20 times in the last three years. Their cars were burned or vandalised, thousands of trees chopped down, nature reserves torched and oiled,

and fieldworkers repeatedly abused and threatened by aggressive individuals. Yet, no one has been brought to justice, despite promises made by the authorities after each attack. Conservationists continue to be bullied and abused in this tiny

member of the European Union, and the so-called authorities continue to sit idly on the wall and watch.

The situation clearly shows that the criminal elements in the hunting lobby are becoming desperate. Such bullies are used to silencing their opposition with violence, but people are not giving in or shutting up. Public opinion has changed and increasingly supports organisations working for the protection of Europe's common natural heritage.

But organisations like BirdLife cannot exist without supporters and members, who can hold politicians accountable for their actions or inactions. With your support we have achieved a lot over the last years. Stopping spring hunting, putting an end to finch trapping, saving Ta' Ċenċ from a monstrous hotel development and (maybe most importantly) reclaiming our countryside are just a few of these successes.

I would therefore like to thank you for your continuous support to our work. And on behalf of all staff and BirdLife members, I wish to thank Ray for being an inspiration to all of us.



**Tolga Temuge**  
Executive Director



Dunlin

**Bird's Eye View**  
A quarterly publication  
10 July 2009  
ISSUE 30

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All information reported in this publication is correct at time of going to print.

This magazine is printed on Total Chlorine Free paper

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Victor Falzon



## ranger injured

For the third time in as many years, forest ranger Ray Vella was the victim of a criminal attack. Arriving at Foresta 2000 early in the morning of 14 April 2009 he stepped out of his Land Rover to inspect a vandalised gate when an armed criminal, no doubt waiting in ambush, shot at Ray and hit him in the head. Suffering from pain and shock, Ray called for assistance and was rushed to hospital - fortunately the injury was not severe. At a press conference later that day, BirdLife and project-partner Din I-Art Helwa deplored the vile act and appealed to the government to start apprehending the perpetrators of crime against NGOs.

◀ **Crime scene.** The western gate at Foresta 2000 where the ranger was ambushed.

## annual general meeting

BirdLife Malta's 47th AGM was held on 20 May 2009. Members present were given an overview of the society's recent work in conservation, education and research as well as update reports on specific projects. The AGM also elected a new Council for the next two years, namely **David Attard, Stefan Azzopardi, John J Borg, Desirée Falzon, Raymond Galea, Emanuel Mallia, Joseph Mangion** and **Justin Vassallo**. BirdLife thanked outgoing Council member Denis Cachia, who for many years served as General Secretary. At the new Council's first meeting, Joseph was confirmed as President and Desirée as General Secretary. Council also co-opted **Hilary Galea Lauri** as Treasurer.

Mario V Gauci



## swift invasion

Last year Common Swifts were noticed inspecting and entering holes and cracks in high buildings - clear signs of interest in nesting - and some pairs almost certainly bred with success. This year, the swifts (including some Pallid Swifts too) have spread to several other sites, including Mdina, Mosta, Dwejra (Gozo), Sliema, San Giljan, Marsaskala, Xlendi and even Mater Dei Hospital, with breeding confirmed in more than one place. Before last year, swifts had very rarely bred in Malta. But since 2008's first-time ban on hunting in spring, they seem to have decided to move in. Finally Maltese towns can become like thousands of other European towns and host colonies of these flying acrobats.

◀ **Des. res.** A breeding Common Swift in a nest-hole at Mdina.

## upcoming events

### • shearwater boat trip

date **Saturday 18 July 2009**

time, place, price: **please call for more details and for booking**

Our annual appointment with the seabirds is due. BirdLife invites members and their friends and family for this memorable experience. Cory's Shearwaters breed along our southern cliffs, and the biggest colony is at Ta' Ċenċ in Gozo, with 1000+ pairs nesting there. As these birds have a habit of congregating in large groups offshore shortly before sundown, we will be sailing out to be in their presence for a while. It is a unique birding experience that no nature lover should miss. During the trip, a talk about Malta's seabirds will be given. The event lasts 2-3 hours. As this is a boat-based activity, space is limited, so booking is essential. Call BirdLife on 21347644/5 (office hours) to reserve a place and to be given more details. Closing date is **Thu 16 July 2009** - early booking is advised.



Denis Cachia

### • illustrated talk and documentary

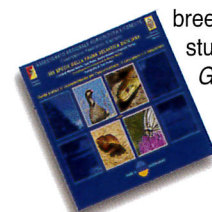
date **Wednesday 29 July 2009**

time **6.30pm** place **National Museum of Natural History, Mdina**

**Lampedusa - Ecological Sister or Distant Cousin?** Lampedusa is often in the news due to the illegal immigration issue. But this small island south-west of us has much more to offer. It is of particular interest to us, being geologically very similar to the Maltese Islands. This presentation delves into the history and ecology of our nearest island neighbour.

**La Notte delle Berte** (Night of the Shearwaters) is a documentary about the second largest breeding colony of Cory's Shearwaters of Linosa. It presents these various stages in the life of these enigmatic seabirds and the long-term study on their life cycle being carried out by researchers from Palermo University. Produced (2008) by naturalist Francesco Petretti (of *Geo & Geo* fame) and Professor Bruno Massa. Narrated by the late Claudio Capone. Language: Italian. Duration: 45 minutes.

◀ There are 20 FREE copies of this CD-ROM about Sicilian wildlife to be given out at this event.



John J Borg





Sean Gray (www.seangrayimages.co.uk)

# of kestrels...

André Raine Conservation Manager

After 15 long years of absence, this year a pair of Common Kestrels was confirmed breeding in the Maltese Islands...

In Gozo this spring, BirdLife Malta ornithologists observed a pair of adult Common Kestrels feeding three young. Their nest was concealed in a crevice in a cliff face, and the watchers witnessed what hadn't been seen locally since 1994: the first flights of newly-fledged kestrels<sup>1</sup>.

poachers to return to the countryside with shotguns, and resume with impunity the shooting down of our rare breeding birds.

Indeed, the male of the breeding pair of kestrels was seen being shot at while he hunted in nearby fields to feed his young, and was later seen with shotgun damage to his wing.



Denis Cechia

Two of the young kestrels peer out at the world from the relative safety of their cliff-hole nest in Gozo. Will this be a regular sight in future?

## momentous

This was truly a momentous conservation event, an event that highlights what has been obvious all along: Malta does indeed have the breeding habitat and food sources required to support breeding populations of birds of prey. The primary reason why kestrels - and Peregrine Falcons and Barn Owls - have not bred in Malta in recent years is illegal hunting. Simple as that.

So it is no coincidence that this has happened in the second year of a ban on spring hunting - with fewer hunters in the countryside, the kestrels had a much better chance of surviving the dangerous spring period and establishing a breeding territory.

## open door

While this momentous occasion is one that should be savoured, the plight of our birds of prey does not end with a ban on spring hunting. The opening of the rabbit hunting season on 1 June once again left the door open wide for



Background photo: Joe Silana / Photomontage: Victor Falcon

BirdLife used the photomontage above with a recent press release to make a point about the rabbit season anomaly. Some prominent hunters' apologists apparently failed to be amused.

In other areas in Malta, where other kestrels have remained into the breeding season, so-called 'rabbit' hunters have been recorded shooting at the birds as they flew overhead.

And as happened last year, Turtle Doves and other rare breeding birds that had stayed to nest in Malta after the migration period are beginning to disappear, one by one.

It is evident that this rabbit hunting loophole needs to be dealt with. After spending so much time and effort on protecting birds in the spring, both through the efforts of BirdLife's Spring Watch Camp and the hard work of the ALE, it is a great shame that our breeding birds should be abandoned at such a critical period.

## licenses galore

In the last 15 months there was an increase of over 20% in new rabbit-hunting licenses. It can be no coincidence that the date directly coincides with the ban on spring hunting. Furthermore, while the Police Commissioner continues to issue hundreds of rabbit-hunting licenses, airguns are now also being allowed for so-called 'control' of rabbits. This makes law enforcement even more difficult.

Yet - with hundreds of men again roaming the countryside armed with shotguns and airguns - an already severely under-resourced ALE gets diverted to other duties, such as beach patrol.

It is time that the government conducts a serious review of the rabbit hunting legislation. Rabbit populations may be an issue in some agricultural areas, and in these cases control may be necessary. However, in the critical breeding period spanning June and July, it is no longer acceptable to allow hunters to wander about in the wider countryside with shotguns.

## The rabbit loophole must be closed.

<sup>1</sup>A sighting of a pair of kestrels in the same area last year, and a juvenile bird later in the season, suggests that this year's pair may even have bred as early as last year (the first year of a spring hunting ban). As the nest was never found, however, breeding could not be confirmed.

birds	rabbits
J	J
F	F
M	M
A	A
M	M
J	J
J	J
A	A
S	S
O	O
N	N
D	D

Victor Falcon

The rabbit-hunting season currently runs from 1 June to 31 December (right column). As the bird-hunting season does not usually open until 1 September (left column), this gives hunters with a rabbit license an extra three months (June-August) in which to abuse the legal loophole and shoot birds rather than rabbits.



# bird watch crime watch spring watch

André Raine Conservation Manager

Every year, BirdLife organises two international camps to monitor bird migration and to ensure that birds fly safely across Maltese skies. One of these camps is Spring Watch, and this year's was no exception...

The year 2009 was the second year running with a closed spring hunting season, and once again our Spring Watch teams were out in the countryside, recording bird migration and making sure that hunters respected the law. BirdLife's annual Spring Watch camps are an important part of our campaign against illegal hunting.

Fifty-two volunteers from eight countries joined local ornithologists for Spring Watch Camp

2009, and it is a testimony to the success of these camps that many of our international volunteers were returning for their second or even third time.

## good news, bad news

As with our other camps, this year's Camp had its share of good news and bad news. Despite the ban on spring hunting, our teams recorded 2699 shots (596 on 23 April alone). Furthermore, illegal hunting incidents were widespread and recorded in most sites visited by our teams, especially in well-known hotspots in the south, such as St Thomas Bay, Delimara and San Niklaw. Illegal hunting was also focussed on areas where large numbers of birds of prey congregate or come in to roost. The fields directly adjacent to Gudja International Airport, particularly on the southern side, continue to be one of the most notorious areas, as is Tal-Handaq valley just north of the runway. That poaching can be so prevalent and persistent next to Malta's international airport speaks volumes about the



**Armed and anonymous.** Some poachers have taken to wearing balaclavas to hide their faces. The two pictured above were caught on camera by a BirdLife Malta team. The poachers were tracked down and apprehended by the police - a court case is under way.

## masked gunmen

situation in the country.

There were also sinister developments in the way some poachers are adapting to the increased surveillance by Spring Watch and the heightened police presence. Several poachers were seen wearing balaclavas to conceal their identity. This development increases the seriousness of the situation in the countryside: these individuals are now essentially masked gunmen! In other cases, poachers have changed from shooting raptors by day to killing them at night. Camp teams recorded numerous instances of hunters pinpointing the fields where flocks of harriers landed to roost, then returning at night with torches and shooting the birds as they slept. By what stretch of the imagination can such barbaric activity be called hunting? It is simply killing for killing's sake.



**End of the road.** Being large raptors, relatively common and often flying low in search of somewhere to roost, Marsh Harriers often fall victim to poachers' guns. The one pictured above was shot down this spring.



**Flat out.** Late at night on 24 April 2009 three men were seen approaching the parked Spring Watch cars. When challenged they ran off, slashing two tyres of the nearest car and shouting obscenities in their escape. The police were on site minutes later but by then the criminals had disappeared. An hour later, a number of shots were heard.

## less hunters less kills

But there were also some very positive developments. Our Camp this year had more participants than last year's, and so we were able to cover many more locations in Malta and Gozo than we did in 2008.

The Camp certainly made its presence felt. Analysis of the data showed that illegal hunting incidents decreased by 10.3% from last year's Camp, showing a slow but hopefully steady decline. Numerous reports of illegal hunting were made to the police, and more arrests were made as a direct result of this information provided by our teams in the field. Footage shot by Camp participants was also passed to the police to help with their investigations.

The combination of a closed spring hunting season and increased pressure from Spring Watch and the police was also apparent in the massive decrease in the number of shot protected birds received by BirdLife this spring. From 10 April to 10 May - the period spanning the 2007 spring hunting season - BirdLife received 7 shot protected species. This was a 78.1% decrease on the 32 casualties received in the same period in 2007, when the season was still open. This amply shows the conservation benefits of a closed hunting season.

Quite simply: less hunters in the countryside mean less protected birds shot.

## eighty-one species

The Camp also continued to highlight Malta's importance on the European-African migration flyway. A total of 81 migratory species were recorded in the two-week period alone, including several rare or globally threatened species like Lesser Kestrel and Pallid Harrier. Raptors were much in evidence, with many Marsh Harriers recorded, and an influx of Montagu's Harriers being a welcome addition to the Camp's daily records.

As another breeding season gets under way, we (and maybe



**Fresh kill.** Very early on in the camp, a Spring Watch team found these two freshly-killed harriers in a field, close to where a poacher had managed to run and evade the police.

## making a difference

you as well) are already beginning to see the benefits of the spring hunting ban. Have you noticed the flocks of breeding swifts screaming around your town this year? Or heard the gentle cooing of nesting Collared Doves? This year we also confirmed the successful breeding of Common Kestrel in many years (see pp 4-5).

With hopefully a permanent ban on hunting in spring, efficient law enforcement, and serious punishment for law-breakers (see box), such success stories can only become more regular.

## in court...

The courts are a critical part of the process in controlling illegal hunting and trapping. It is with heavy fines and even prison time that poachers will start thinking twice before killing protected species. Unfortunately, hunting-related court sentences in the past have too often been inadequate.

But we have seen a positive trend in 2009. Maybe the courts are finally starting to take the situation seriously, and handing down sentences that match the gravity of the crime. Two such cases - both following from BirdLife reports - are highlighted below:

● In March 2009, following a report by BirdLife Malta, three sea hunters were caught killing protected species off Kemmuna by the AFM and ALE. The three hunters were found guilty and fined a total of €16,500. They also had their hunting licenses suspended for two years.

● During Raptor Camp 2008, two poachers were caught killing a Lesser Spotted Eagle in Buskett Bird Sanctuary and trying to hide the carcass by a roadside. The hunter was fined €2500 and had his shotgun confiscated, and his accomplice was fined €1800. They also had their licence suspended for one year.



# "Dear Minister..."

Nicolette Falzon Dinja Wahda Co-ordinator

The children kept looking back expectantly down the aisle of the hall: he would arrive from one moment to the next. Some of them were hardly tall enough to be visible from behind the lectern, but they all had something very important to say to the Minister...



Climate change, pollution, species decline, deforestation... it was clear that environmental issues were no longer unfamiliar, irrelevant matters for these children gathered at the Mosta Community Hall. They were representing their school for this very important appointment with 'the man in charge': the Minister for Resources and Rural Affairs.

After almost another scholastic year of spreading awareness and knowledge on environmental issues in primary schools, children were primed for the next step in Dinja Wahda: empowerment. In an activity called *Dear Minister!* schoolchildren were invited to express their environmental concerns in a letter to the Minister in charge of such matters. Scores of letters were received at the BirdLife office, which were shortlisted to one per school for reading out to the Minister in person. A children's hearing was organised for this occasion by BirdLife and Bank of Valletta, our partners in education. On 21 May 2009, twenty children from twenty schools, accompanied by their teachers and some of their schoolmates, came to make their point. To add to the challenge, a panel of judges was set up to choose the letter that impressed them most.

MRRA Minister George Pullicino arrived and took up his position, and the children walked up one by one and read their letters.

The letters certainly aired the children's complaints and concerns, but they were not lacking in recommendations either. Suggestions included nation-wide campaigns, the building of infrastructures such as windfarms, government subsidies for environment-friendly equipment, and calls for new legislation and law enforcement.



Andrew Gauci Altard / BirdLife Malta

The judges had no easy task, as all the children were very conversant with environmental issues. As BirdLife Education Coordinator Desirée Falzon observed, children's communication on environmental matters are becoming increasingly refined from one year to the next: they can see both the negative and the positive in what is happening around them, and they can identify which practices are to be reinforced and which habits are condemnable.

The recommendations in the winning letter were humble yet effective: they are practices within everyone's reach.

"Although I am still a young girl of nine years," wrote Milena Borg from Birkirkara Primary, "I feel that it is my responsibility to care for our environment ... When I brush my teeth, I always close the water and do not leave it running... I wish that all Maltese children and adults will not waste electricity and water in vain."

Minister Pullicino reiterated Milena's appeal: "If everyone does these little simple things, our country will be a better place to live in and everyone will be happier and healthier."

This principle lies at the heart of Dinja Wahda: Young and old, everyone has a role to play in taking care of the environment.



Andrew Gauci Altard / BirdLife Malta

Nine-year old Milena Borg reading her winning letter to Minister Pullicino.

# nights on the rocks

Nicholas Barbara Project Manager



John J. Borg

Their backs facing outward, they give the equipment a final once-over and then walk backwards off the cliff edge. It's not long before the sun sets, and thus begins another night of work...

Abseiling down the sheer cliff face to narrow rocky ledges is not everyone's cup of tea, but for this small team of researchers it is daily routine. And if you think that walking backwards off a cliff is daunting, imagine climbing back up the cliff face, in pitch dark, after a hard night's work.

Our fieldworkers are fully aware that all the nights sacrificed down at the cliffs tagging Yelkouan Shearwaters are now paying off. New data, together with data from previous years, is building an impressive picture of the lives of these birds at sea - data that for the first time worldwide has been made available thanks to this project. With this information, MEPA will be able to protect these birds' feeding areas at sea and ensure that future generations enjoy the wonders of our natural heritage.

Visit our website at [www.lifeshearwaterproject.org.mt](http://www.lifeshearwaterproject.org.mt)

The EU LIFE Yelkouan Shearwater Project is a partnership project with BirdLife Malta, Malta Maritime Authority, Malta Centre for Fisheries Sciences, Heritage Malta, Armed Forces of Malta, BirdLife UK (RSPB) and BirdLife Portugal (SPEA). It is 50% funded by the EU LIFE Nature Fund, with contributions from partners, MEPA and HSBC.

Approaching its final year, the LIFE Yelkouan Shearwater project (Proġett Garnija) is far from over for our researchers. The last three years have kept them busy, dedicating long nights down the cliffs at the project site - Rdu tal-Madonna - discovering more about Malta's elusive shearwater. The fieldwork is now in its final phase, gathering more data on the lives of these seabirds.

At roughly the time that you are enjoying your breakfast coffee, one research team will be typically heading home to sleep after a tiring night of tagging, ringing and counting the Yelkouans - all the while perched in pitch dark on a narrow ledge high above the sea. Meanwhile, another team is already far out at sea, observing and counting shearwaters from the deck of a sailing boat.

The boat-based observation team keep a sharp eye out for Yelkouans out at sea. Teams sail off for a week every month, following transects through Maltese waters. The methods used are standard throughout Europe so that local records can later be uploaded to a central database, helping to reveal European trends.

Cutting-edge technology, in the form of satellite tags, also plays a very important role. These tags, weighing no more than a few grams, are revealing where these birds go and what they do at sea.

To date, Malta has only designated Important Bird Areas (IBAs) on land, but once the project establishes the most important marine areas, the government will be able to designate Malta's first Marine IBAs, a crucial step in protecting these birds at sea. By gathering data on these areas, the project not only helps protect these birds at sea, it also helps Malta fulfil its EU obligations.



Nadia Tschornikov

Fieldworkers abseil down a sheer cliff face to reach the birds burrows. While the climb down is made just before sunset, the climb back up must be made in the dark.





# born to travel

Geoffrey Saliba Campaigns Coordinator

Migrating across many national borders, wild birds belong to no one particularly country. During their vast journeys they face both natural threats, like mountains, deserts, oceans, storms and rain; and man-made dangers, like habitat destruction, wind farms, power lines, illegal hunting and trapping.

In the last 30 years, more than 40% of migratory bird species passing between Africa, Europe and the Middle East have declined. Of these, 10% are listed as Globally Threatened or Near Threatened on the IUCN Red List. These worrying declines gave rise to BirdLife International's *Born to Travel* campaign - an initiative to protect migratory birds by coordinating the efforts of BirdLife Partners across three continents. *Born to Travel* was launched last March and supported by 36 personalities from 16 EU countries - with Niki Gravino from Malta - and 70 BirdLife Partners in Europe, Africa and the Middle East are running projects as part of the campaign.

The biggest so far is probably *Spring Alive*, the children's contribution to this campaign. Through *Spring Alive*, children from 42 countries in Europe (including Malta) and Africa got busy last spring taking note of Common Swifts, Barn Swallows and other familiar birds as these passed through their country. The children uploaded these sightings on a special website, where a map shows which countries the birds passed through first. This year, children from Russia to the Mediterranean logged over 31,000 swallows and over 17,000 swifts. Through *Spring*

*Alive*, children are becoming more aware of the phenomenon of bird migration, not least in Malta.

*Born To Travel* also focuses on some of the bigger threats to wild birds in the Mediterranean: illegal hunting and trapping. As part of the campaign, BirdLife Malta and LIPU (BirdLife in Italy) ran two-week observation camps during peak spring migration. Camp participants recorded details on bird migration, and by maintaining a strong presence in the countryside also acted as deterrents to illegal hunting and trapping.

The camps highlighted the importance of the Central Mediterranean migration route for raptors, with many thousands of Honey-buzzards passing through the Straits of Messina, and large numbers of Montagu's, Marsh and Pallid Harriers roosting in Malta. It wasn't all pleasant birdwatching: unfortunately the camps again confirmed Malta's reputation as Europe's poaching black spot, with 2699 shots recorded in Malta over the two-week period (compared to 200 shots in Reggio di Calabria in Italy).

In the face of these challenges to wild birds, BirdLife Partners are active across the globe, monitoring birds, educating children, empowering local communities and lobbying for better legislation.

More at [www.borntotravelcampaign.com](http://www.borntotravelcampaign.com)

## birding

On Saturday 13 June 2009, BirdLife birders at Ghadira nature reserve spotted and photographed (two digiscoped images at right) a **Pectoral Sandpiper**. In birding circles such a bird is known as a *lifer*, as it is so rarely seen. While not particularly rare in their normal range (the Americas, Eastern Asia and the Pacific), very few Pectoral Sandpipers are seen in Malta - this was only the third record in local ornithological history. The previous two sightings are from 1982 and 1998. The Ghadira bird only stayed the day.



Victor Falzon

Ray Galea



# roots of a forest

## part 2: a place to grow

Victor Falzon



Two thousand oak seedlings were growing in the nursery. The hunt was now on to find a place where to carry out the most exciting phase of Foresta 2000: the planting of our new forest...

In 1997, several potential sites were discussed and a number of them also visited. Apart from sites on mainland Malta, there was a valley in Gozo that had potential, but the land was private. Kemma too was considered, but logistics would prove very difficult. At one point BirdLife was invited to combine Foresta 2000 with a proposed historical-natural park around Victoria Lines, but the proposal was abandoned. For one reason or another all the sites proved unrealistic. In June of

the same year BirdLife set up a working group to manage this project better.

## the perfect site

In August 1997 the group visited a site known as It-Taflija, a clayey slope north of Ghadira, to assess its potential.

The site seemed to fit the bill perfectly. It was largely unworked because of its steep gradient, and further west there were many abandoned fields that had degraded to a poor steppe. The site was also easily accessible for regular management and for visits by the general public and school groups - the educational potential of our projects is always a priority. Another bonus feature was that the entire area was inside the no-hunting buffer zone that surrounded Ghadira nature reserve. And while the site had a number of unsightly features

that would need addressing, it also had great landscape value.

The working group decided to go for it!

## studies and meetings

Shortly after, an MSc student from Bari<sup>1</sup> researching Mediterranean forest regeneration made It-Taflija the case project of his thesis. Concluded in 1998, the study mapped all the major and minor habitats of the site and drew up a vegetation checklist and a number of recommendations. This study became the document on which the committee developed the afforestation plan for Foresta 2000.

Meanwhile, meetings were held with key people to discuss, promote and clear the way for Foresta 2000, not least a meeting with the Works Minister and the Environment Minister. BirdLife also met the Local Council of Mellieha (where the site lies) and the proposal was positively received and the mayor promised full support. The site was confirmed to be virtually all government property.

By the end of 1999, the ball was truly rolling. It was time to start raising money again, but not for flower pots. This time we needed a project manager and a forest ranger.

To be concluded

<sup>1</sup>Istituto Agronomico Mediterraneo di Bari (IAMB)

Foresta 2000 is a joint project of BirdLife Malta, Din l-Art Helewa and PARK.



**Abused land.** A 1999 photograph of It-Taflija shows an offroad track and a derelict holiday complex. Sadly, the latter is still there today.

Desiree Falzon



# The Yelkouan Shearwater project

The Maltese islands are home to approximately 10% of the world's population of Yelkouan Shearwaters. BirdLife Malta is leading a partnership of four government authorities and three conservation organisations to protect these secretive seabirds at Rdum Tal-Madonna, the largest breeding site on the island.

The project, Malta's largest conservation initiative of its kind, aims to achieve better breeding conditions for the birds by the end of the project in 2010. It will also improve the protected site for wildlife and visitors, whilst setting an example for the management of other protected sites in Malta.



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*Photo courtesy of Frank Dhermain.*

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