

bird's eye view



issue 33 • spring 2010


BirdLife
MALTA



microcosm of illegal hunting

BirdLife Malta recently released a report that exposes the illegalities at Il-Miżieb, Malta's biggest woodland, currently under the so-called "management" of FKNK, the hunters federation.

This woodland was created on public land with donations from the Israeli government and afforestation efforts of many NGOs in the 1970s, including The Men of the Trees, the 4Ts and the Malta Ornithological Society (today BirdLife Malta). The site was also used for scientific bird ringing, and nature walks by the general public.

But just before the 1986 general elections, Il-Miżieb was handed over to the hunters in a desperate attempt to gain political mileage. The move was made overnight, without any legal agreement or shred of management plan. As a result, Il-Miżieb is today dotted with hundreds of illegal hunting and trapping hides. It has also become a hotspot for illegal hunting, as last year's discovery of hundreds of carcasses of protected birds showed. Illegal activity is the order of the day at Il-Miżieb, and carried out with total freedom and immunity, because the authorities just look the other way.

This inaction from the government is not surprising when it comes to dealing with the hunting lobby or

other interest groups who hold both main political parties to ransom with their votes.

Environmental protection is clearly not high on politicians' agenda. It is used instead as greenwash by the politicians who pose in front of the cameras while planting a tree here and there. But when it comes to taking real action to safeguard wildlife they tend to come up with empty promises or excuses for their inaction.

The recent appointment of Dr Mario de Marco as Parliamentary Secretary responsible for the environment raised hopes among environment groups. Dr de Marco is a politician who understands the importance of nature conservation and its benefits to Malta's tourism industry. But the question is: Will he be able to resist the pressure from politicians close to interest groups, and be strong enough to enact policies that benefit nature and ecotourism?

The environment portfolio is always a hot potato, with many controversial issues that take a great deal of courage to solve. But Dr de Marco can rest assured that the environment NGOs are ready to support him in his difficult new position.

Tolga Temuge
Executive Director



Collared Flycatcher

Bird's Eye View
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Geoffrey Saliba



rallying for enforcement

On 13 March 2010, BirdLife joined seven other organisations in a rally in Valletta to protest against a lack of environmental law enforcement on issues such as building outside development areas and illegal hunting. The rally, down Republic Street, attracted a crowd of several hundred who carried placards and streamers. BirdLife Malta Executive Director Tolga Temuge said the government should not be strong with the weak and weak with the strong.

Despite the rain, hundreds turned up.

Victor Falzon



foresta vandalised again

On 23-24 April, vandals struck again at the Foresta 2000 woodland in Mellieħa, sawing off 115 trees. Almost all the trees were young Aleppo Pines that had been planted in October 2007 to replace the 3000 trees destroyed in a previous act of vandalism. The pines had been largely sponsored and planted by members of the public. Although Resources Minister George Pullicino promised increased security at the site in 2007, nothing has yet been done despite repeated requests from BirdLife and Din I-Art Helwa.

Most of the pines were three or four years old.

BirdLife Malta



poacher-policeman convicted

A police constable was given a one-month jail term suspended for a year on 29 April, after he was video recorded hunting illegally by members of BirdLife in Gozo last year. Fabio Schembri, 22, was one of two men captured on film wearing balaclavas and hunting near Ta' Ġordan lighthouse on 18 April 2009, when the hunting season was closed. The court also suspended the police constable's hunting licence for a year. No fines were given.

Hooded hoodlums hunting - one of them was a police officer!

Annalisse Falzon



kids on kemmuna

In May, BirdLife ringers doing their annual spring migration research at Wied I-Aħmar on Kemmuna were joined by students who were participating in an activity organised by Nature Trust. The students from St Augustine's, St Paul's Missionary College, San Benedittu Kirkop and St Joseph School had the opportunity to watch birders at work and understand the importance of research.

A BirdLife researcher explains bird ringing to students on Kemmuna.

upcoming events

• shearwater boat trip

date **saturday 3 july 2010**

meeting place **ċirkewwa**

BirdLife's most popular members' event is the annual boat trip to watch the Cory's Shearwaters rafting off Ta' Ċenċ. These birds breed in cliffs and Ta' Ċenċ holds our largest colony, with over 2000 breeding birds, and a further 6000 non-breeding visitors. These large gull-like birds have a habit of gathering in groups (rafts) at sea not far from the cliffs, and wait for darkness before flying in to the colonies.

Every year hundreds of members (plus family and friends) join BirdLife for a seabird watching boat trip. The boat leaves from Ċirkewwa before sunset and sails towards Gozo in search of rafts of shearwaters. Watching these seabirds glide over the waves, sit on the water and fly over our boats is a unique experience. The trip lasts just over 2 hours.

As this is a boat-based event booking is essential as space is limited. Call Victoria or Jessica on 2134 7644/5 (office hours) for more details and to book. Early booking is advised.



Adin Vella

another spring another story

André Raine



Neil Wright

Blast off. This female Marsh Harrier narrowly escaped a direct hit, losing only half its tail.

Spring is the season where nature is reborn, and birds too are part of that regeneration as millions fly to Europe to nest. Many of these regularly migrate over Malta and often stop to rest during their tiring journey. But too many of them still meet a violent end here, which is why BirdLife Malta persists in its efforts to end spring hunting forever.

international call

BirdLife's efforts started well before spring, with an international effort to deliver a message to Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi from members of the public throughout Europe and beyond. BirdLife delivered over 122,000 signatures to the Office of the Prime Minister at Castille on 23 March demanding an end to illegal hunting in Malta. BirdLife volunteers holding placards reading 'Stop Illegal Hunting' at the entrance to Castille also presented three

shot birds of prey (a Common Kestrel and two Marsh Harriers) before they were handed to the police in Valletta. All the birds had been delivered to the BirdLife office the previous day.

BirdLife Malta President Joseph Mangion called on politicians to stop treating Europe's common natural heritage as a commodity of the Maltese hunters. Instead, he said, they should comply with EU laws and listen to the majority of the population who are against the illegal killing of wild birds and against hunting in spring.

The killing of migratory birds before they have a chance to breed can have serious consequences on their populations. This is particularly true for Species of Conservation Concern in Europe, such as Turtle Dove (Gamiema) and Quail (Summiena), or Globally Threatened Species such as Pallid Harrier (Baghdan Abjad) and Lesser Kestrel (Spanjulett Sekond).

decision time

Following the European Court of Justice ruling last September, which judged Malta's past derogations on spring hunting as unlawful, the Office of the Prime Minister had said that it would study the court ruling before deciding whether to open another spring hunting season. But the Ornis Committee, assigned the task of advising government on hunting, had not been given any plan by government on which to base its recommendations.

The FKNK went ahead and tabled its proposal for a spring hunting and trapping season. The following week, the Malta Environment and Planning Authority (MEPA) made its own proposal based on the FKNK's demands. To BirdLife's amazement, the proposal was not even circulated for evaluation and consideration, but verbally communicated during the meeting. The result was chaos.

Chris Cachia-Zammit



Petition. On 23 March, BirdLife presented 122,000 signatures and three injured raptors to the Office of the Prime Minister.

The committee Chairman pushed the members to vote on MEPA's proposals, which recommended a spring hunting and trapping season from 10-30 April and a bag limit of 22,298 Turtle Dove and 10,837 Quail. BirdLife objected to the manner the discussion on whether Malta should risk another ECJ ruling was conducted by the Ornis chairman and refused to take a vote without the necessary scientific and legal justifications for another derogation.

Even though this proposal was extravagant, the FKNK were still not satisfied with a three-week season and the bag limits proposed. They voted against, aggressively arguing for more. So the only committee members to vote in favour of the proposed bag limits and duration were the MEPA representative, the government-appointed Chair and the former assistant of the Resources Minister. Two other independent members abstained.

The Prime Minister exploited the Ornis Committee's 'independent' decision to open a spring hunting season. Knowing, however, that the committee's proposal would be risky due to the ECJ ruling, Dr Gonzi announced a six-day season with a lower bag limit than originally proposed.

This was the government's attempt to make its decision look less provocative to the European Commission - whether Malta will justify this decision will be judged when Malta presents its report on the derogation to the EU. Malta has to convince the Commission that the reasons for implementing a exemption (derogation) from the Birds Directive were justified. It also needs to convince Brussels that all the conditions for such a derogation were met.

The Commission was reported giving a preliminary nod of approval to a shorter season. As usual, the Commission adopted a measured and diplomatic approach, but it reminded Malta of its obligation to meet the conditions for a derogation. It also emphasised 'strict supervision', which is one test that the country will have difficulty meeting, as evidence gathered by BirdLife shows.

poacherwatch

Even before the 'six-day derogation period', many hunters and trappers were already in the field killing migratory birds. This year, it was immediately apparent that BirdLife volunteers would have a tough time in the field. The poachers knew what was at stake if they were caught hunting illegally.

Their solution was to try and prevent BirdLife from monitoring bird migration and recording illegal activity. Their chosen method was intimidation, violence and vandalism. The attacks against BirdLife volunteers occurred almost daily (see p6), but our people persisted. Every morning and every afternoon, for three weeks, birdwatchers from Europe joined Maltese volunteers in the field.

During BirdLife's three-week (11-30 April) Spring Watch camp, over 1300 illegalities were recorded. These included

1. hunting from rooftops
2. the use of modified shotguns (over 100 cases)
3. shooting of protected species
4. active trapping

Poachers were also seen using watch-out points and radio communication to alert each other and avoid detection.

During the six-day 'open season' illegal activity was rampant. Around 260 illegal hunting and trapping incidents were recorded by BirdLife and CABS (Committee Against Bird Slaughter) teams from 24-30 April. These illegalities violated the conditions and restrictions imposed for 'a derogation' to be permitted. Many unlicensed hunters were actively shooting migratory birds during this period; during the mornings, birdwatchers logged 640 observed cases of hunting, with 1305 shots in Malta - and all this when only 16 valid hunting licenses had been issued. Since March, 20 injured protected birds have been passed to BirdLife, all confirmed by a vet as suffering from shotgun wounds.

tip of the iceberg

Although high, these figures are far from representative of the actual scale of illegal activity. The data was limited to what was witnessed by teams covering a limited area in Malta (no presence in Gozo). CABS had only two teams in Malta for 10 days. Still, illegalities were regularly seen at almost every observation post, despite the presence of birdwatchers and, in some cases, even the police.

A selection of illegal activity caught on camera was presented at a press conference held in Valletta on 1 May. A full report was also sent to the government and the Commission.

Dr André Raine is Conservation Manager of BirdLife Malta



BirdLife Malta

End of the road. One Turtle Dove that will not be nesting any more.

black diary

These incidents are the latest in over three years of violence and vandalism. On 3 May 2010 BirdLife sent a letter to the Prime Minister demanding serious action, saying it was unacceptable that on an island this size, none of the criminals have been caught or brought to justice.

Giulia Valentini



Sunday 11 April 2010

An unarmed hunter approached the Nadur team and hurled abuse at them. He left when the team leader threatened to call the police.

Monday 12 April 2010

An armed hunter was filmed in the Mtarfa area. The team was then approached and threatened by men with sticks. The men left before the police arrived.

Wednesday 14 April 2010

The team in Mtaħleb discovered a freshly-painted sign in the morning saying *RIP YOU IS GOKING WITH JOR LIFE* (sic), surrounded by animal entrails. In the afternoon, abuse and intimidation were hurled at teams in two locations.

Giulia Valentini



Friday 16 April 2010

Obscene and racist graffiti spelling out a threatening message was found at the Had-Dingli watchpoint.

Saturday 17 April 2010

In the morning, the surveillance team at Has-Saptan had stones hurled at them. In the afternoon, the team in Mtaħleb were faced with death threats and aggression. At Manikata, a car used by BirdLife volunteers had its windscreen shattered by a shot in broad daylight when the vehicle was parked only 20m from a children's playground.

Sunday 18 April 2010

Two BirdLife volunteers, one Maltese and one Italian, were thrown to the ground and violently assaulted at Had-Dingli. It was an unprovoked assault: the two volunteers heard shots and walked down a country lane to investigate. Suddenly two men drove up in a pick-up truck, jumped out and started punching the volunteers, even kicking one of them in the stomach, and yelling that they wanted the camera. All the

evidence on film, including the aggressors' identity, was handed to the police.

Monday 19 April 2010

Verbal abuse was hurled at the team at Mellieħa in a drive-by incident.

Thursday 22 April 2010

Unknown persons wearing balaclavas hurled rocks at the team at Torri l-Aħmar in Mellieħa while they were inside their car. The rocks could have caused serious harm had they smashed the window and hit someone. In the afternoon, at the same location, the car tyres were slashed.



Giulia Valentini

Friday-Saturday 23-24 April 2010

Foresta 2000 site was vandalised, with over 115 young Aleppo Pine trees cut down at It-Taflija at the eastern end of the afforestation site.

Monday 26 April 2010

A vehicle deliberately drove straight towards the team at Ġħargħur, so fast and close that the volunteers narrowly escaped being hit.

Thursday 29 April 2010

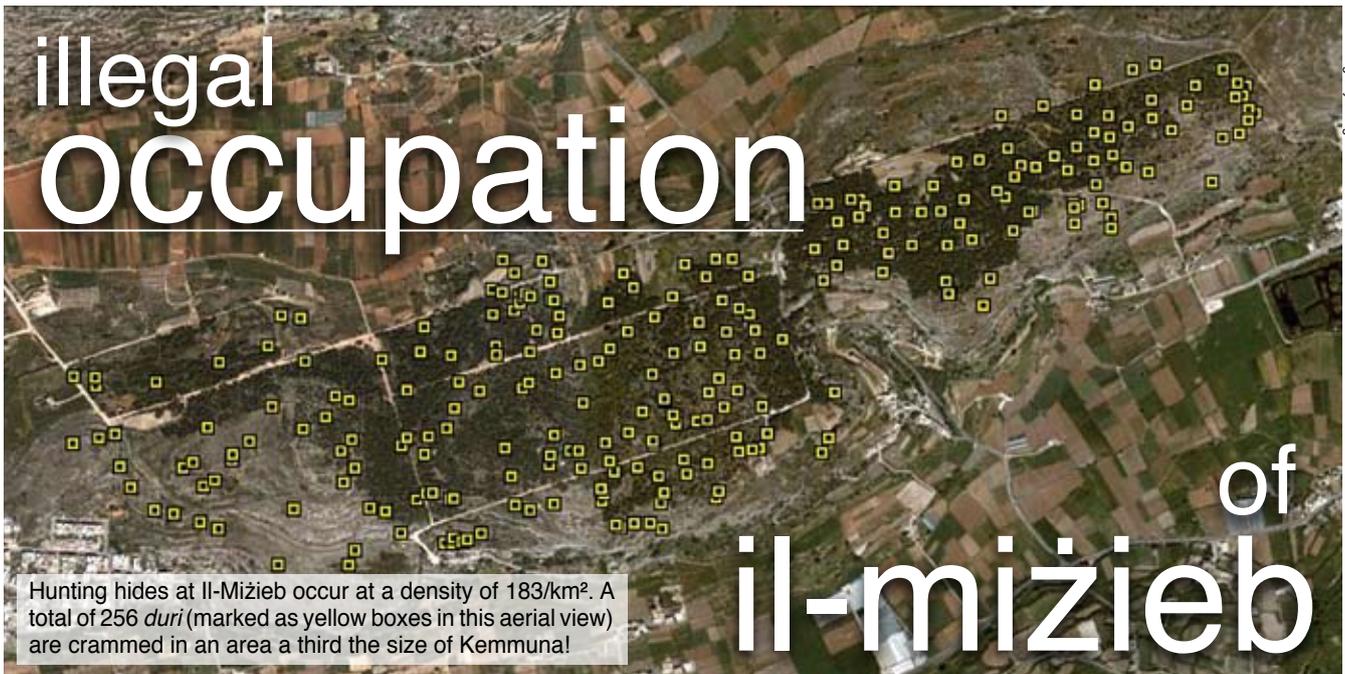
A 50kg stone was used to smash the windscreen of a car rented by CABS and parked by the roadside at Delimara. The incident took place in the early hours when two CABS teams, in the company of ALE officers, were investigating reports of illegal hunting and trapping in the area.

Saturday 1 May 2010

The CABS team came under attack again, this time by five people wearing balaclavas who ambushed their car and threw large stones at them at Had-Dingli.



Victor Falzon



Hunting hides at Il-Mizieb occur at a density of 183/km². A total of 256 *duri* (marked as yellow boxes in this aerial view) are crammed in an area a third the size of Kemmuna!

Il-Mizieb is the largest woodland in Malta. It draws the public for recreation, and its rich archeology also attracts tourists. But access is often near-impossible: for over 20 years the Hunters Federation has made the area its own private hunting ground!

Most of Il-Mizieb is public land that is currently occupied by hunters. A BirdLife Malta report released in May reveals that the authorities could not provide legal documentation validating the transfer of public land for use as a private hunting ground. The only document that exists is a letter to the Għaqda Kaċċaturi u Nassaba (now FKNK) from former Prime Minister Karmenu Mifsud Bonnici who - in the run-up to the 1986 general elections - promised them use of the land. The law, however, does not permit any Prime Minister to treat public land as his own to give away for political favour.

Since then, Il-Mizieb has virtually become a piece of breakaway territory, where illegal activity is rampant while the authorities turn a blind eye. The BirdLife report documents the mismanagement, illegal development and hunting and trapping that defy regulations.

The management of public land by NGOs is only permitted following a legal agreement that imposes strict regulations for site management. Such plans for Il-Mizieb do not exist, even though parts of the

area are a designated Natura 2000 site, and supposedly protected as a Special Protection Area and a Special Area of Conservation.

MEPA's lack of action to remove the illegal structures encourages the construction of more hides even within the boundaries of nearby Is-Simar, a Bird Sanctuary. At least 23 *duri* fall within the limits of Is-Simar even though the law prohibits hunting or trapping in a bird sanctuary.

Not only are hunters allowed to occupy the land illegally, but they freely ignore regulations that bind other NGOs legally entrusted with the management of natural and cultural sites. Managers of such sites are required to submit all planned alterations - even signboards - to MEPA through an architect and to seek permits. BirdLife has been waiting

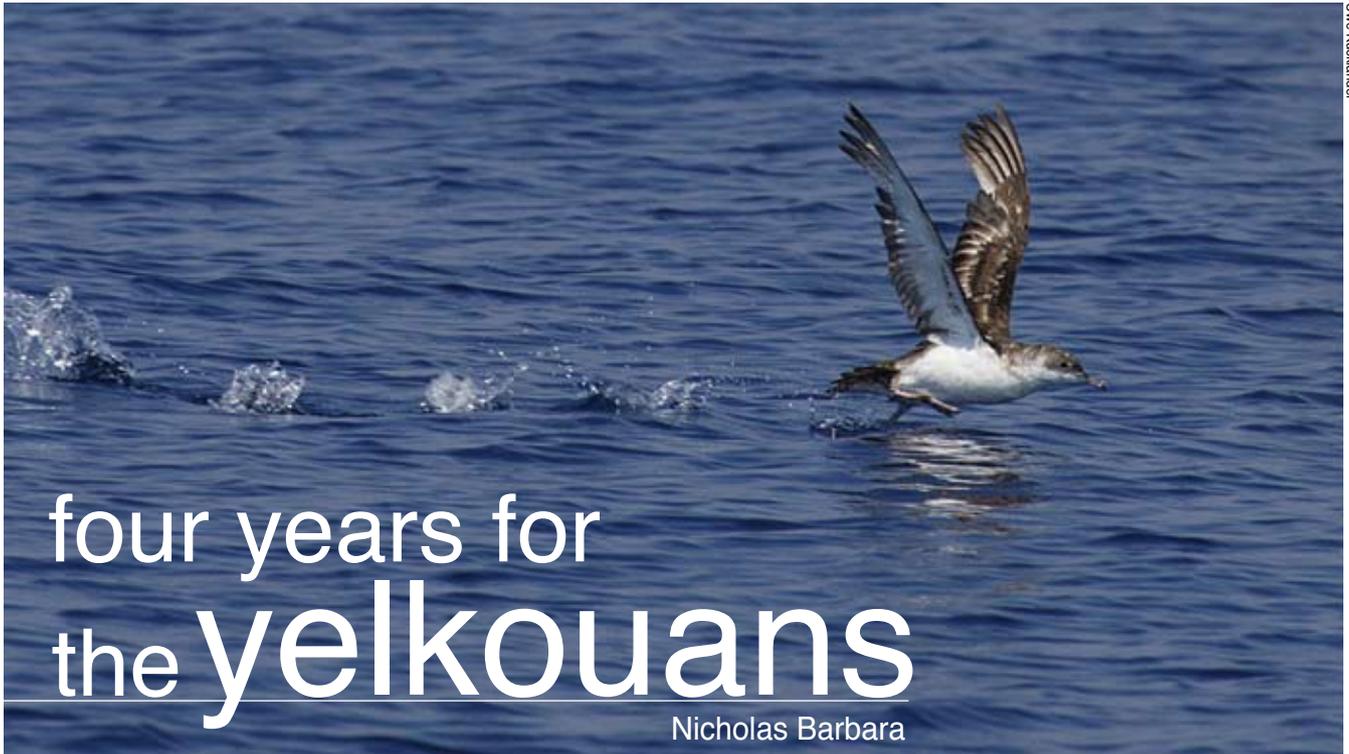
more than a year for permission to instal signs at Ghadira. But at Il-Mizieb, signs appear overnight in all shapes and sizes, even spray-painted on walls. There are at least 49 FKNK signs put up at Il-Mizieb, all without permit.

The lack of scrutiny at Il-Mizieb renders the site a hotbed for illegal hunting and trapping. In September 2009, over 200 dead protected birds were discovered at Il-Mizieb by BirdLife and CABS, under the eyes of the police. Yet the authorities never carried out a proper investigation.

In its report, BirdLife demands accountability for the misappropriation of Il-Mizieb and calls for proper regulation of the area in line with the law.



Durable dura. Some of the hunting hides at Il-Mizieb are reinforced with concrete and metal.



four years for the yelkouans

Nicholas Barbara

June 2010 marks the end of the EU LIFE Yelkouan Shearwater Project, a project that focused on reversing the decline of the Yelkouan Shearwater (M: Garnija) at L-iRdum tal-Madonna through conservation, research and increased awareness. This month will see the completion of a number of tasks that the project team has been working on since September 2006.

With the help of SPEA (BirdLife in Portugal), this and other data gathered through the monitoring of the seabirds by boat, will be presented in a report to the government proposing the first Marine Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for Malta. These will ensure that Yelkouans are protected at sea, beyond their nesting colonies on land.

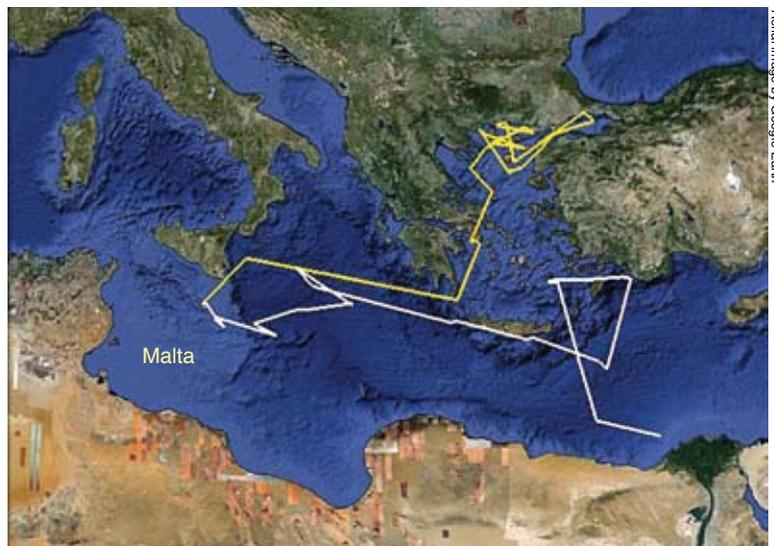
marine IBAs

Important areas at sea where Yelkouans feed, raft, moult and migrate have been identified through the use of GPS data loggers, satellite tags and geolocators - unique tracking devices deployed for the first time ever on these seabirds. The research revealed that adult Yelkouans fish in both inshore and offshore areas up to 300km to the southeast of Malta and off the Sicilian coast during the breeding season. Adults also congregated in offshore areas off L-iRdum tal-Madonna making these critically important rafting sites.

protecting them on land

The project has managed to eliminate the biggest threat to Yelkouan Shearwaters at L-iRdum tal-Madonna: the rats! Through a professional eradication programme, rat predation of Yelkouan nests and chicks has been eliminated. Ferreting and illegal hunting were also brought to an end thanks to presence of a site warden and patrols by the AFM's Maritime Squadron.

Geolocators, fitted to the rings of adults and recovered the following year, enabled the discovery of the migratory spots of Yelkouans. They spend months away from Malta in the Black Sea, Aegean Sea, the Adriatic and the coast of north Africa. Tracking 10 newly fledged juvenile birds, using high-tech satellite tags, revealed that these seabirds migrated independently into the Eastern Mediterranean mostly settling in the Aegean Sea, but with some travelling south of Cyprus and off the coast of Egypt.



Eastbound. The movements of two satellite-tagged juvenile Yelkouan Shearwaters after they fledged and left the colony in June 2009.

The project also explored the light pollution problem in Malta, suggesting suitable measures to minimise coastal sources of light. Meetings were held with developers, local councils and hotel owners to tackle sources of noise and light pollution.

We now also know more interesting facts about Yelkouans, from their return after migration to their same nesting site, to how they select nesting spots. An infrared camera designed by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (BirdLife in the UK) provided first-time footage of Yelkouans returning to the cliffs, allowing us also a glimpse into their most intimate moments.

protecting them at sea

Disturbance from boat parties and other maritime activities close to L-iRdum tal-Madonna has been greatly reduced through legislation introduced, known as the Notice to Mariners. Noise and lights are not allowed close to the colony, leaving shearwaters to tend to their nests in peace and darkness.

The project also studied the scale of impact of longline fishing on shearwaters. It contracted 10 fishermen to record their catch over a two-year period. Although accidental catches of Yelkouan Shearwaters were low, Cory's Shearwaters were more susceptible to being caught, prompting the need to adopt further mitigation measures by fishermen. Fishermen can now identify seabirds, and have also learned how to free hooked birds thanks to workshops and seabird guides prepared by the project.



Helen Raines

Watchful eye. Monitoring of the birds and the colony site will ensure the future well-being of Yelkouan Shearwaters.

protecting their future

As a result of the Yelkouan Shearwater Project, more Yelkouans are now breeding at L-iRdum tal-Madonna. This improvement should shortly be further consolidated as a result of the first Marine SPAs. The project team and partners have also prepared an 'After-LIFE' plan for the continued monitoring of the colony, rat eradication and vigilance of L-iRdum tal-Madonna, to ensure the future conservation of this threatened seabird.

Visit our website at www.lifeshhearwaterproject.org

Nicholas Barbara is Project Manager of the Yelkouan Shearwater Project



Aron Tanti

Cliff of life. L-iRdum tal-Madonna hosts the largest colony of Yelkouan Shearwaters in Malta, and has been the focus of land conservation actions throughout the project.

biodiversity on the brink



2010: Turning or Breaking Point for Europe's Wildlife?

is the name of a new report by BirdLife International on the state of biodiversity in the EU. The report deplors the EU's failure to reach its target of halting biodiversity loss by 2010. It also maps out the steps needed to stop further declines and to reverse the loss of biological diversity.

"The message is clear: the EU needs to take decisive action if it wants to turn the tide on the deepening biodiversity crisis," says Ariel Brunner, Head of EU Policy at BirdLife International European Division.

The report was compiled in cooperation with BirdLife Partners in all 27 EU Member States. It analyses each country's progress against 10 major groups of biodiversity indicators. Worryingly, three were rated 'highly insufficient', while all the others were 'inadequate'.

The emerging picture was one of continuing declines in biodiversity, but there are also several local success stories, such as the recovery of White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* and the Critically Endangered Azores Bullfinch *Pyrrhula murina*. These are proof that the EU already has powerful conservation tools, such as the Birds and Habitats Directives. Another great strategy is the setting up of the Natura 2000 network, in which great progress has been made.



The report suggests specific actions that would enable a new EU biodiversity policy to achieve its goals, such as stronger enforcement of legislation, developing 2020 biodiversity strategies for key policies such as the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), and new investments in green infrastructure.

It is also essential that the EU plays a leading role at the new Convention on Biological Diversity meeting later this year in Nagoya, where the next global biodiversity target for 2020 is expected to be adopted.

"We know what to do," Mr Brunner added, "The question is: Do Europeans have the will and the courage to take action before it is too late?"

Condensed from www.birdlife.org

You can help protect biodiversity

The International Year of Biodiversity offers an important focus of attention on the failure of nations to meet their 2010 targets of halting the loss of biodiversity, while spotlighting the need for real and binding future targets.

This year must be seen as the point where we stop the over-exploitation of the natural world and build a new efficient economy that allows us to live within our ecological means.

Biodiversity is our collective life insurance policy. For the future we are in need of high ambitions and specific proposals to invest in our natural capital. The UN must set an example by adopting the highest targets for biodiversity protection and restoration.

This is the message BirdLife members and supporters are being asked to send in a letter to the Heads of State before the High-Level Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly as a Contribution to the International Year of Biodiversity on 22 September 2010.

Make your voice heard. Visit www.birdlifemalta.org for a copy of the letter to sign and send to world leaders.



roots of a forest

part 3: a time to plant

Victor Falzon

The young trees in the nursery were now ripe for planting. The slope of Marfa Ridge overlooking Ghadira had been chosen as the ideal site for the project. It was high time that planting began. With help from its two new project partners, BirdLife began the greening of the land.

Apart from ample land for afforestation, the site also had several features of historical and cultural value, especially St Agatha Tower that dominates the ridge. Wouldn't it be great if Foresta 2000 were also to preserve history as well as nature!

So BirdLife approached the heritage organisation Din L-Art Helwa - manager of the Tower - who willingly joined in the exciting venture. Another key partner in the project was PARK, the afforestation section of the Environment Ministry. This "triumvirate"

added vision, resources and expertise to Foresta 2000. In January 2003, the three partners signed an agreement and planted a few trees on site to commemorate the event.

a hundred jobs

Over that year and the next, skilled PARK personnel got busy restoring a number of drystone walls to reduce soil erosion, while heavy machinery shored up the ugly erosion gully at It-Taflija, that had formed from years of illegal offroading at It-Taflija. Meanwhile BirdLife and Din L-Art Helwa pooled funds and employed a person to look after the day-to-day management of the project. This move created a job that was to be the first of its kind in the country: a forest ranger!

Foresta 2000 is a joint project of **BirdLife Malta, Din L-Art Helwa and PARK**

Autumn of 2003 saw the first serious wave of tree-planting. Schools, companies, institutions and individuals sponsored many of these trees, and thousands of saplings were also donated by the Italian Corpo Forestale

dello Stato. The following spring, grass control took over, while watering was the ranger's main summer occupation - summer watering is vital to young trees for the first few years. To facilitate this, a network of underwater hoses was installed and connected to the Red Tower reservoir, with additional bowser service regularly provided by PARK.

Since that year, the same general calendar has been followed by the ranger, with a hundred other jobs thrown in along the way. To date, over 15,000 trees and shrubs are growing healthily at Foresta 2000, despite several acts of vandalism including arson and the heartless hacking of thousands of healthy young trees.

As the forest slowly matures, the biodiversity of the site becomes richer as new foodchains connect. Warblers and thrushes already regularly gorge on Buckthorn and Lentisk berries, and insects are active for longer periods, which is good news for birds, chameleons, bats and spiders. Meanwhile Zitting Cisticola and Sardinian Warbler are already nesting in the new trees. Slowly nature takes over, as humans gradually take a backseat.

Fifteen years ago, Foresta 2000 was just a name and a dream. That dream is happening.

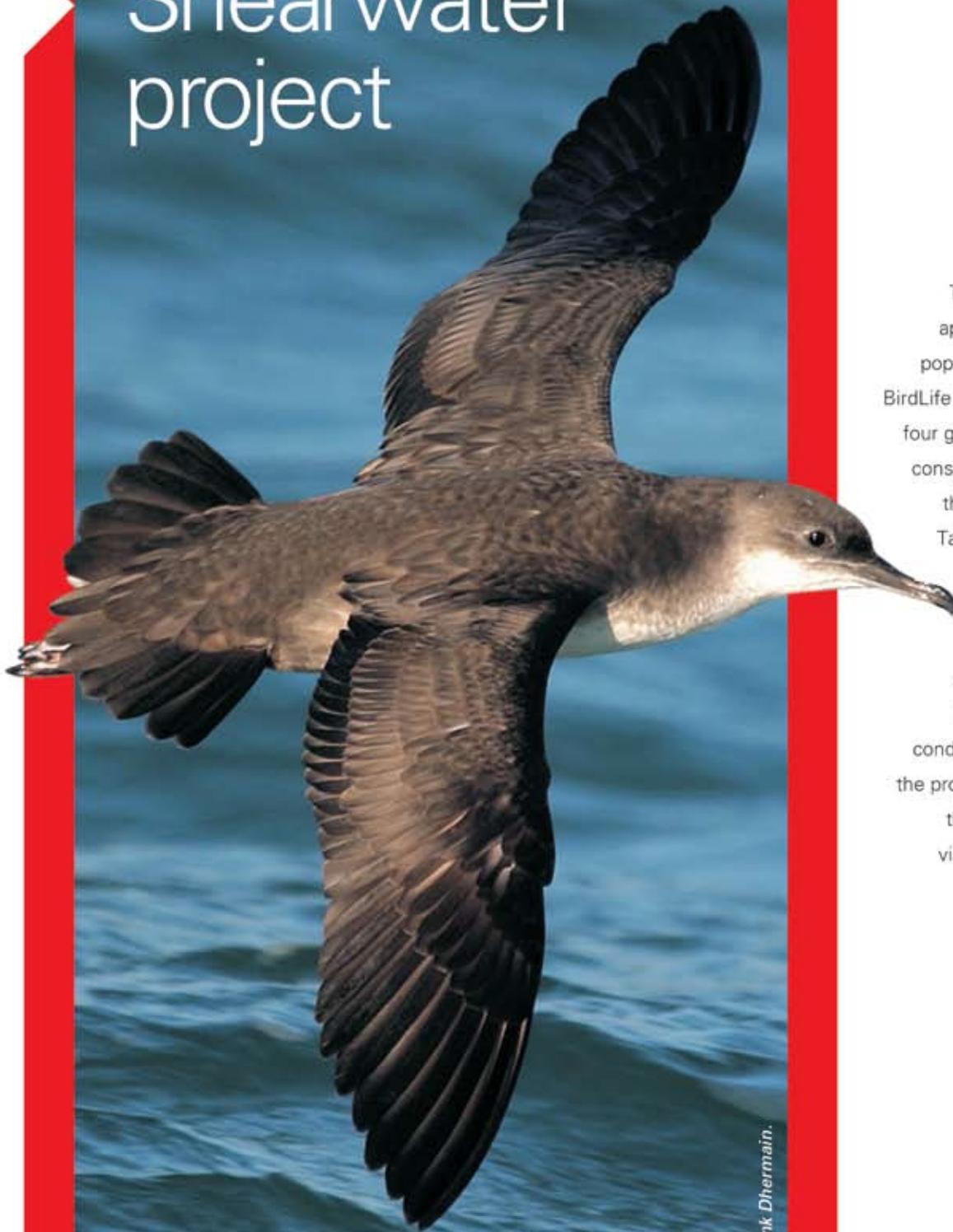
concluded

Victor Falzon is a founder of the Foresta 2000 Project.



Project Partners. 11 January 2003. Din L-Art Helwa, BirdLife Malta and PARK plant a young tree at Foresta.

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 Rđum 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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