

# Bird's Eye View



**Nature days**  
Take a floral walk at  
Majjistral park



**Spring wildlife**  
What to look out for  
in springtime



**Latest news**  
catch up with the news and  
see what's coming up...



**Important Bird Areas Worldwide**  
Find out more about the global network of bird hotspots

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**Mark Sultana**  
Executive Director

## Dear Members and Friends,

This is my first time communicating with all of you through the Bird's Eye View publication since my appointment as CEO of BirdLife Malta in December, and I would like to start by wishing you all another year full of joy, satisfaction and good health.

While I'm writing this, everyone is preparing for the festive time of Christmas. It is also a time to look back at the year. Last year was a year which BirdLife Malta should feel proud of. Apart from successful management of three nature reserves, we also had yet another fulfilling year educating school children about birds and nature. Over 5000 students visited our nature reserves and twelve more schools than the previous year participated in our 'Dinja Waħda' programme. We also celebrated 50 years of scientific bird studies through the BirdLife Malta Ringing Scheme. During the last quarter of the year we had been notified that our new 5 year Life Project Arcipelagu Garnija was granted funding from the EU. This will allow us to continue with our seabird studies, this time engaging more stakeholders and the general public.

If there is one thing that will keep us remembering 2015, it is definitely the spring hunting referendum. The campaign has been a success even if not with the result we aimed for. We all worked hard for it and I felt lucky being the spokesperson of the campaign. We received the biggest ever support for any environment issue in our country and are still motivated by it. Looking back gives me a lot of emotions but also an understanding and appreciation of all the previous CEO's, employees' and volunteers' hard work. I am truly grateful for anyone who helped this organisation at any point. Finally, I thank those who have served at Council in the past and look forward to more interesting work with the new President, Mr Darryl Grima, and council members.

There are many plans for BirdLife Malta for this year. We would like to expand the nature reserves under our management while continuing with the pressure to stop spring hunting. Our arguments are even stronger now when the European Turtle-dove's status has unfortunately been declared as vulnerable both globally and regionally in Europe. We will also be working on increasing our membership numbers in hope to get more support by those who believe in our mission like you do.

I cannot conclude by not thanking each and every member of BirdLife Malta. Your support is not only financial but even more importantly - moral. I urge you to spread the word and encourage others to join us. The more of us, the stronger we are.

Thank you  
Mark  
CEO

## Dear Members,



**Darryl Grima**  
President

The Spring Hunting Referendum was a call for action for many, along them myself. After twenty odd years of absence in Malta's environmental scene I came back in the fold. Not much has changed in this time. The institutions set to safeguard the environment are powerless to protect it but powerful to consent abuse. The political class rediscovers a green conscious when in opposition but is bought out the very same day it goes in office. On the other hand the building lobby has actually organised itself and is trying to package itself and its message.

Many people still have the wrong meaning of the word environment. The environment is still very much our back yard and what effects our back yard. Cleanliness of roads, potholes, dog litter, parking, pavements are all top of the agenda!

It is clear that if we want to safeguard the environment, experience has shown that we cannot rely on the political class, but we need a strong environment lobby. This is where BirdLife Malta comes into the scene. We are the largest environmental NGO on the island having an operational setup with a strong conservation and education team supported by a finance team, and now run by Mark, our new CEO. The organisation is headed by a council, which has the strength of having a diverse set of individuals all well equipped to help in leading the organisation forward.

The environment is as always under threat and what little is left of our countryside will probably be soon subject to yet another fast track planning permit. Birds are more than ever assaulted by the agency that was allegedly set up to protect them, the WBRU. I believe that if we want to succeed in safeguarding our birds and the environment we need to grow!

Our next stage is to move forward from where we are to where we want to be. To be strong enough a lobby to save birds and their habitats. To increase the reach of our education, conservation and research activities and lead in the environmental field.

Feel free to communicate with me on [president@birdlifemalta.org](mailto:president@birdlifemalta.org)



BirdLife Malta is an environmental organisation working to protect Malta's wildlife by managing natural spaces, inspiring the new generation, opposing illegal hunting and undertaking research.

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Reg. Vol. Org. VO/0052

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## Mediterranean seabird scientists gather in Malta

Malta's new IBAs were announced in November during an international conference in Gozo on marine and seabird protection. Over the week, participants from 17 Mediterranean countries discussed their projects, challenges, and set ways to work together to protect our common seabird heritage.

## Environmental education grows in Malta's schools

We have proudly awarded 92 schools for their achievements within Dinja Waħda, our environmental education programme. Last scholastic year it reached over 80 % of primary schools and more than 5,000 students, a record number, enjoyed outdoor classes in the nature reserves. We're now working to expand Dinja Waħda in secondary schools to help even more children building a connection with nature.

## Turtle Dove now threatened world-wide

The global conservation status of European Turtle-dove has been uplisted from Least Concern to Vulnerable with the IUCN Red List update in 2015. This means Turtle Doves are facing a high risk of extinction in the wild. Their declines are largely down to habitat loss and hunting pressure. Malta remains the only country in the EU to allow hunting Turtle Doves in spring.

## First ever Eastern Imperial Eagle visits Malta

A new species has been added to the list of birds recorded in the Maltese Islands. The end of autumn migration brought a great surprise of the rare Eastern Imperial Eagle choosing to roost in Buskett woodland. The massive eagle was later confirmed to be born this year within a satellite-tracking conservation programme led by BirdLife Austria. It was nicknamed Odysseus thanks to its unusual migration route.

## Nature Alert goes forward

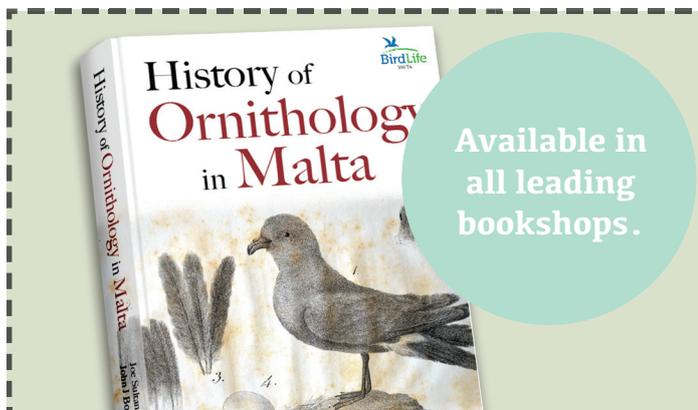
Last year BirdLife Partnership worked hard to defend the EU's Birds and Habitats Directives. With our Nature Alert campaign over half a million Europeans said No to the Commission's 'fitness check'. In December EU's environment ministers also called for better funding and implementation of the Directives. Alarming results of the mid-term assessment of the EU's Biodiversity strategy for 2020 proves that this is the only way to save Europe's nature.



DINJA WAHDA AWARDS CEREMONY Steven Williams



IMPERIAL EAGLE TRACKED OVER MALTA BirdLife Austria



Available in all leading bookshops.

## New book 'History of Ornithology in Malta'

Malta has a rich and diverse history of bird studies that is now gathered in a new book. Many years of research by the authors Joe Sultana and John J Borg has resulted in a comprehensive publication. It looks back hundreds of years from the first written bird observations to the modern day ornithology in Malta.



MEDITERRANEAN SEABIRD WORKSHOP Steven Williams

## Yelkouan Shearwater Garnija

February is the time when cliffs in Malta wake up at night from the haunting calls of courting Yelkouan Shearwaters. Being early breeders, Yelkouan Shearwaters actually return from their 'wintering grounds' in winter. As early as October bird colonies begin preparing nesting sites and strengthening pair bonds with their typically life-long partners. Life is a little harder for the new breeding birds that have returned to the same site where they hatched themselves. Newbies have to find a partner and compete with the old birds for the best burrows in the cliffs.

After all this preparation, in March, somewhere in the deep crevices of the cliffs an egg is laid – the only one for the whole breeding season. Such single-child policy unfortunately makes shearwaters especially vulnerable to predators like rats. Their nocturnal behaviour is also a way to avoid the predators naturally. Returning to the land in the dark, they don't give away their nest's location. (Unfortunately, light pollution disrupts this natural trick.)

The daytime is almost exclusively spent out at sea. During incubation or when the time comes to feed the young chicks, one of the parents (no gender roles) will spend several days looking for food. These birds can fly hundreds of kilometres to forage. They plunge up to 30 m deep to catch the perfect meal - squid or fish. When coming back home in the dark, shearwaters find the entrance of their tiny burrows thanks to the well-developed sense of smell.

Yelkouan Shearwaters are well adapted to basically living out at the sea having a dense and waterproof plumage and also tube-like nostrils on the top of the beak, used to expel salt from their bodies. Yelkouan Shearwaters' flying techniques are also ideal for crossing long sea distances. Spreading their long and narrow wings and using the upwinds above the waves, these seabirds glide in high speed and cover considerable distances with minimum energy. In summer the fluffy and well-fed chicks will become real wind chasers too. Together with others they will travel to the east of the Mediterranean and into the Black Sea to feed in the rich waters. Then, in a year's time, colonies will find their small breeding islands again, returning home from thousands of kilometres away. But is this their true home? Or is it rather the open sea itself?

**Ketija Riteniece** is the Communications Assistant at BirdLife Malta

Turn page 6 to learn how shearwaters are protected out at sea and on land



WORDS RAY VELLA

## Field Gladiolus **Ħabb il-Qamħ tar-Raba'**

Field Gladiolus is very frequent in spring, and is associated with wheat fields and other cultivated areas. It grows up to 50 cm tall with a purplish red flower on a large stem. Although the flower has no scent, it is still very attractive and, in fact, closely related to the domesticated Gladiolus of the Iris family. Field Gladiolus is a widespread plant that can be found from the Canary Islands to Central Asia.

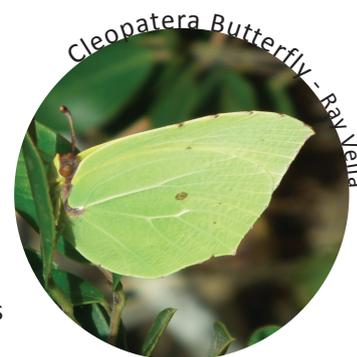
## Cat Snake **Qattus**

The Cat Snake is one of the four species of snakes found in Malta. It can grow up to one metre in length and similarly to cats it has a slit eye pupil. Unlike the other snakes found in Malta it does have very mild venom, which is used to immobilize its prey, normally mice, rats, chameleons and lizards. This snake will even climb trees to catch its prey. It is also very aggressive as it will stand its ground and hiss at approaching danger. However, Cat Snake's venom is not dangerous to humans as its mouth is very small.



## The Cleopatra Butterfly **Farfett taz-Ziju**

The Cleopatra Butterfly is one of our most beautiful and showy butterflies. Its bright lime green and yellow colour is complemented by the bright orange spots on the male. Cleopatras hibernate in winter, to appear once again with the warm spring sun. Their favourite plant hosts are the Mediterranean Buckthorn and the Olive-leaved Buckthorn. The female lays single eggs on its host plant and the caterpillar feeds on the leaves. Cleopatra Butterflies are easy to see at Foresta 2000 and other areas where buckthorns are common.



## Marsh Harrier **Buġhadan Aħmar**

The Marsh Harrier is our most common large bird of prey, surpassing the Honey Buzzard in numbers and is common in both spring and autumn. The first spring birds arrive in March. They can be seen criss-crossing open fields in search for reptiles, mammals and birds to catch. When it spots prey, it swiftly pounces on it from above. The male has a tri-coloured pattern of grey, brown and black, whereas the female is dark brown with light yellowish patches on the head and shoulder.



# Safeguarding homes for birds

WORDS KETIJA RITENIECE

**A huge part of bird conservation efforts consist of habitat protection. Decades ago the BirdLife partnership created a world-wide programme to protect their most needed sites, so-called Important Bird Areas (IBAs). Recently, such areas were newly found at sea within Malta's waters, so it's time to bring the network of IBAs 'in focus'.**

To protect birds means to protect their homes, would it be the grounds where they lay eggs, waters and fields where they find food or channels they pass through on migration. The areas that are the most important for birds' survival are places where they feed, nest, rest and migrate – in good numbers and regularly. It is impossible to protect all the natural places in the world that birds use, but protecting those that are crucial for threatened species, is an efficient way to ensure they survive. Since the 1970s global BirdLife partnership is finding these places across the world and striving to make sure birds can use them undisturbed. Therefore our planet's richest natural areas would be well-managed, healthy and give homes to birds and other wildlife.

## Global criteria for a global network

The uniqueness of the IBA network lies in its international recognition and operation. With over 12,000 sites qualifying as Important Bird Areas, it is the largest world-wide network of important biodiversity sites. But to build such a network and achieve consistency across our diverse world, local ornithologists and bird conservation groups must work by the same standards – internationally agreed and based on the latest knowledge about bird populations. Beneath the surface of this massive world-wide network are countless projects and years-long research work by local organisations.

Identifying these areas requires substantial observations and studies to find where most birds breed, feed and migrate through. A standardised system is used when ornithologists observe, track, monitor or otherwise study the birds. When these data are collected, they must be analysed following certain criteria. These criteria then determine if a place is an Important Bird Area or rather not-so-important and where to draw the border line. This means that data must be quantitative and scientific, also being assessable by the BirdLife framework for IBA monitoring later on to detect threats and observe improvement.

Such an approach ensures that locally found IBAs are not just great places for birds, but are truly significant for the safeguarding of world's biodiversity. For example, IBA status is given to places that are regularly used by significant numbers of endangered bird species. So-called 'triggers' can also be such bird species that can be found only in particular places in the world, i.e., endemic or restricted range species. Many places, for example wetlands or rich seas, are selected because they are important for not just one, but many bird species. Moreover, it's not just about birds. Birds are well known to be the indicators of biodiversity. The IBA network entails habitat research too and comprehensive data on an area's ecology is also collected. Therefore by conserving the bird areas, a number of other animals and plants can survive too.



Comino is protected as an IBA and Natura 2000 site



The Malta-Gozo channel is Malta's first Marine IBA



IBAs safeguard shearwater breeding sites in Malta

## On land and at sea

For some time Important Bird Areas were designated only on land, but for the last decade this process has been adapted to protect the seas, oceans and above all – seabirds, the most threatened group of birds. Such breakthrough has also forwarded seabird research in the Maltese Islands.

The very first marine IBA in Malta is the Malta-Gozo channel that is a bottleneck for migrating ducks and rafting spot for local shearwaters. Last November the Malta Seabird Project announced the most crucial areas at sea for the three local breeding seabird species. When successfully designated, these newly found sites will add about half of the Maltese waters to the worldwide conservation programme, thus also influencing local authorities to work for protection of local birds and habitats.

## Legal stepping stone

Despite the substantial research, finding the IBAs is only the first step for well-designed management of the area and for actual statutory protection. But the designation as an IBA makes a strong case for the area being of international importance. Its legal protection locally most often fulfils the obligations governments face from various European directives and international conventions. Many IBAs are at the same time part of the EU's Natura 2000 network or Ramsar Sites of the globally important wetland network. However, 442 of these crucial biodiversity sites are identified as IBAs in Danger. It might not sound like too many, but the fact that only 40% of IBAs are actually protected by law to some extent, is troubling.

With 12,000 sites now and many more to be identified, the global network is believed to have 15,000 sites and cover around 10 million km<sup>2</sup> in the future (think: 7% of the world's land surface). Not that all of that will be fenced, restricting all human activities. In fact, a significant part of monitoring and protection is the inclusion of local communities, especially those whose livelihood depends on the areas. Including various partners is a good way to collectively oppose a range of budding development projects which would threaten the irreplaceable ecosystem services, just as important to animals as people.

**Ketija Riteniece** is the Communications Assistant at BirdLife Malta



# Majjistral

WORDS CAROLINE RANCE

**Once earmarked to become a golf course, public opposition saved this area from development and in 2007 it became Malta's first national park. Majjistral Nature and History Park is now the largest protected area in Malta and boasts an incredible wealth of wildlife. Before the hot summer sunrays leave the park with no shade, head out for a lovely spring walk.**

Begin at the recently restored visitor centre, originally built as barracks for the British army, where you can pick up a map and leaflets about the park's wildlife and historical features. Leaving the centre, turn right and follow the track towards the sea. You will pass some large carob trees (*ħarruba*) sculpted by the strong north westerly winds from which the park gets its name (Majjistral meaning north west in Maltese). This is a good place to stop for a moment to stand quietly and listen for bird songs.

Twelve species of birds breed in the park including swallows (*ħuttafa*) and blue rock thrush (*merril*). Majjistral is one of the few places left on the island where you can hear the characteristic 'jangling' song of corn buntings (*durrajsa*). These small, brown birds used to be common in Malta but changes in farming practice mean they are much less numerous than they once were. Look for them perching on top of a bush or on overhead wires.

Reaching the cliffs, follow the track north and around the headland, taking you towards the crumbling cliffs of Rđum Majjiesa and views across to Ta' Cenc on Gozo. Deep in caves beneath your feet, Yelkouan shearwaters (*garnija*) will be closely guarding their eggs, while the other parent is out at sea. These seabirds will come back to land only in the dark. For those adventurous enough to wander in the park after the sun has gone down, a cacaphony of their howling calls will intrude the quiet night.

## how to get there

Buses 44, 223 and 225 to Golden Bay stop at the southern edge of the park, bus stop 'Tuffieħa'. From here walk past the Scout camp site, turn left at the road and then left again to reach the visitor centre

Drivers may park in the small car park at the entrance to the barracks.

**Majjistral Nature and History Park was designated as a national park in 2007. It is managed by the Heritage Parks Foundation (comprising of NGOs Din I-Art Ħelwa, Gaia Foundation and Nature Trust)**

**For more information and upcoming events visit**  
[www.majjistral.org](http://www.majjistral.org)  
[facebook.com/majjistralpark.org](https://facebook.com/majjistralpark.org)

**The park is open all day, every day. To check opening hours for the visitor centre, call 2152 1291 (8.30am-3pm)**

MALTESE TREE SPURGE Aron Tanti



Along the way, you can try to detect the smells of the Giant Fennel (*Ferla*) and the Mediterranean Thyme (*Sagħtar*). The scent of thyme comes from an oil, which deters nibbling goats, as they don't like the taste.

The natural cracks in the stone walls around Ramla l-Ħamra provide shelter for many creatures, including Geckos (*Wizgħa*). Keen eyes will be able to spot their camouflaged bodies between the rocks, or on a summer's evening you may hear their mating calls, which sound like tiny barks.

Back on top of the cliffs, an incredible 430 different types of plants and flowers have been found growing in Majjistral, almost half the number of plants found across the entire Maltese islands.

In early spring the red soil along the paths are carpeted with daisy-like flowers of Maltese sea chamomile (*bebuna tal-baħar*), a small, hardy plant found only in Malta. Another Maltese speciality is Maltese spurge (*tengħud tax-xagħri*), the yellow bushes providing a splash of colour in springtime. Spurge has developed a clever self defence mechanism to protect it from being eaten by goats or rabbits, it secretes a nasty tasting liquid which will make sure the hungry animal doesn't come back for a second helping.

Majjistral is also home to 10 types of orchid. In February and March look out for pale pink cones of the Maltese pyramidal orchids (*orkida piramidali ta' Malta*), delicate milky orchids (*orkida tat-*

*titek*) and furry Maltese spider orchids (*brimba sewda*). Bright pink common pyramidal orchids (*orkida piramidali*), featuring on the park's emblem, won't be in flower until May.

When you reach the old military pill box you may choose to continue towards Għajn Żnuber tower (interestingly, not a coastal watchtower built by the Knights but a copy from the 1800s) and along the coast to the very northern edge of the park at Anchor Bay.

Alternatively, you can loop back inland towards the visitor centre, passing some of the 30 corbelled stone huts (*girna*) in the area and old rubble walls on which you may find reptiles basking in the sun. Whichever route you take, Majjistral's stunning views and wildlife will make you want to come back again and again. Next time, why not join one of the regular guided walks or joint events run by Majjistral and BirdLife Malta?

**Caroline Rance** is the former Communications Manager at BirdLife Malta.

MALTESE SPIDER ORCHID Alex Casha



GECKO Aron Tanti

## what to look out for

**Maltese Sea Chamomile (*bebuna tal-baħar*)** gives off a gentle, sweet fragrance on warm days

**Corn Buntings (*durrajsa*)** Listen for the 'jangling' call

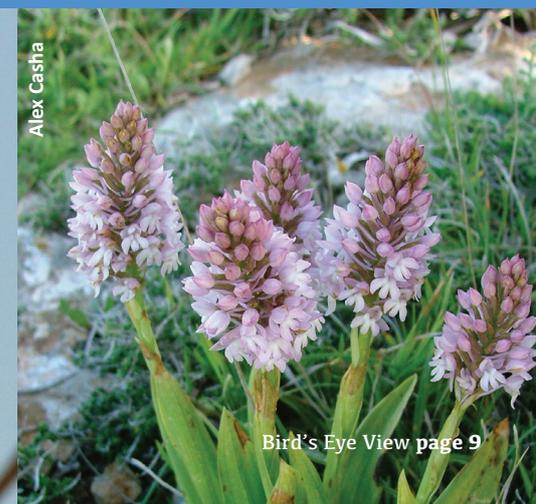
**Maltese Pyramidal Orchids (*orkida piramidali ta' Malta*)** can only be found in Malta



Holly Forsyth



Aron Tanti



Alex Casha



John J. Borg is a museum researcher and field ecologist who specialises in the study of Maltese and Central Mediterranean seabirds. He has always been fascinated by birds, having first joined BirdLife Malta as a member 40 years ago and is still actively conducting bird research in Malta and French Guiana.

We spoke to John today to get to know more about seabird research in Malta and his journey from a young bird fanatic to an accomplished ornithologist.

### How long have you been researching and ringing birds?

I became a licensed bird ringer before my 16th birthday in 1981. I spent the first two years mainly ringing migratory birds and going around searching for nests to ring various species of warblers and sparrows. However as soon as I got my driving license at the age of 18 the first place I went to was Hal Far to search the cliffs for any accessible sites of shearwaters.

### In 2013 BirdLife researchers recaptured a Scopoli's Shearwater that you had ringed 28 years prior in the same nest; the oldest known Maltese shearwater. What was that like?

It was very satisfying and interesting to find that such a bird managed to survive all these years despite the intense human impact in the area. There are two or three other sites which I used to visit regularly but haven't been to recently, so I'm sure there would be some other old-timers too.

### What is it about seabirds that you find so fascinating? Why did you choose to study this group of birds?

Actually my first choice was barn owls. I started studying the behaviour and diet of a pair of barn owls in Gozo but they got shot. Then, I remembered a discussion I had in my early years as a young member about seabirds and shearwaters. I was always fascinated by the sea. When I went out fishing with my father I occasionally saw these birds flying around. Joe Sultana then gave me a copy of his and Charles Gauci's "Bird Studies on Filfla". At that time shearwater studies were still in their infancy. Only a few people in the whole world were studying them. Almost nothing was known about their ecology and breeding biology, which is why I chose to study them. For the first eight years I teamed up with my bird ringing trainer Richard Cachia-Zammit and worked tirelessly to collate as much data as possible.

### What is your brightest memory about any of the seabirds that you've studied?

The discovery of the Storm Petrel breeding in Ta' Cenc. In 1746 Etienne Francois Turgot, a French Knight, collected eight specimens of a small unknown seabird from Ta' Cenc Cliffs. Agius de Soldanis, a Gozitan historian who also saw

the birds, described them as being strange, black, and foul-smelling. For many years no one followed up on this. But then in the 1970's Joe Sultana found a dead one in a cave. After that I started visiting sea cliffs in Ta' Cenc and lo and behold, I found one pair nesting. Two days later I took Joe there, but the birds had disappeared. However, searching more diligently through a very narrow hole, we found that there were at least 20 birds nesting, probably more.

### What's it like being one of only a handful of people who have got to visit and conduct research on Filfla?

It makes me feel very privileged. I have been visiting the island since the 1980s and I go there, on average, three times a year. The importance of the island stems from the fact that it holds the largest known population of Storm Petrels in the Mediterranean. This bird species will very probably be split into two distinct ones - the European Storm Petrel and the Mediterranean Storm Petrel. Once that happens, the importance of Filfla will be multiplied because, with a population of around 8,000 pairs, it will hold approximately 92% of the species' global population.

### Recently BirdLife Malta held a marine protection workshop which brought together over 100 people from 17 different countries.

### How do you think that will benefit seabird populations?

I've always believed that the protection of seabirds has to be a collective approach. Maltese birds go to forage in Tunisian waters, Libyan waters and Italian waters and they spend winter as far away as the Black Sea, the Aegean and even the Atlantic. Unless a common approach for the conservation of these birds is taken by all the countries in the Mediterranean, North Africa and Southern Europe, there's very little chance these birds will have a good future. However by bringing the different countries together at the workshop, we were able to work towards a common framework and approach, giving these birds a much better chance of protection.

**Rohan Trivedi** is the Events Assistant at BirdLife Malta.

# what's on

## Delimara Nature Walk

Sunday 14th February  
09:00 – 13:00

Meeting point: Ta-Silg, Marsaxlokk

A scenic circular walk through Xrobb L-Ghagin, Ponta Tal-Munxar and St. Paul's Chapel  
Free, donations welcome

## Walk for Nature

Date: Sunday 13th March  
08:30 – 13:00

Meeting point: Old railway station at the foot of Mdina

A family walk from Mdina to Simar nature reserve. Funds raised will support new educational resources to connect young people with nature. All children participating and raising sponsorship will gain Dinja Waħda points for their school. No booking required.

This is a fundraising event and all participants are asked to collect sponsorship or make a donation on the day

## Easter Egg-citement

Saturday 26th March  
Simar Nature Reserve

A 90 minute guided activity which includes an Easter Egg Hunt, nature detective activities and exploration of the reserve.

10:00AM – 11:30AM  
11:30AM – 13:00PM  
13:00PM – 14:30PM  
14:30AM – 16:00PM

Booking required: €5 per child  
When booking please indicate which session you would like to join.



FAMILY WALK AT MAJLISRAL PARK Steven Williams

## Sicily Day Trip

Saturday 2nd April, 05:30 AM– 22:15 PM  
Meeting point: Virtu Ferry Terminal, Marsa  
Price: €128.00

Description: A day spent exploring Sicily which will include a morning visit to Cava Dei Servi, lunch at Agriturismo Tenuta Carbonara and an afternoon visit to Noto. The price includes the cost of the ferry, coach, restaurant and tour guides. BirdLife Malta members will have priority for booking. Cancellations will be subject to a €20 administration charge.

## Nature Reserve Open Days

Saturday 28th May - Għadira  
Sunday 29th May - Simar  
Time: 10:00 – 16:00

This is the last weekend our reserves will be open before summer closing so we invite everyone to visit to see the breeding birds and take part in activities.

Free, no booking required.

## Sunset Shearwater Boat Trips

June 24th & June 25th  
July 22nd & July 23rd  
18:45 – 21:00

Marfa jetty, opposite the Riveria Hotel  
A boat ride to the Ta' Cenc cliffs in Gozo to observe one of Malta's most enigmatic seabirds: the Scopoli's Shearwater

Members: €7 adults, €5 children (under 14s)  
Non-member prices: €10 adults, €6 children (under 14s)

For further information or for bookings please email: [events@birdlifemalta.org](mailto:events@birdlifemalta.org) or call the BirdLife office on +356 213476446

Check our Facebook pages for up to date events info:

 [/birdlifemalta](https://www.facebook.com/birdlifemalta)

 [/falkoblmalta](https://www.facebook.com/falkoblmalta)

Remember to check the members email newsletter for further event details.

## Give home for swifts

Last spring we installed nearly 50 nest boxes for swifts thanks to our APUS project and children who helped us building them. Many boxes are still waiting to be placed on suitable buildings - at least three stories high with plenty of vertical space in front of them. Swifts are known to breed in the central and northern parts of Malta. They will start looking for places to nest in May, so we need to be ready to welcome them before that. If you would like to host a nest box on your property, please get in touch via [apus@birdlifemalta.org](mailto:apus@birdlifemalta.org).

## Make the Mediterranean safer for birds

As birds know no country borders, so shall our awareness and help to protect them. Our partners in France need your signature to stop songbird poaching. The government is turning a blind eye that these birds are protected and each year 400,000 fall victims to becoming a traditional meal. Illegal killing is surprisingly widespread across the whole Mediterranean. Each year 25 million birds are shot, trapped and glued. Help BirdLife International to carry out work in most dangerous areas for birds by donating to the campaign 'Keeping the Flyway Safe'. Find both links on [www.birdlife.org/illegal-killing](http://www.birdlife.org/illegal-killing)



## ID: Spring Orchids

Maltese Pyramidal Orchid  
*Orkida piramidali ta' Malta*  
February-March,  
Scarce



Fan lipped Orchid  
*Orkida hamra*  
January-March,  
frequent



Milky Orchid  
*Orkida tat-tikek*  
February-March,  
rare



Yellow Bee Orchid  
*Orkida tat-tikek*  
February-March,  
rare



Maltese Spider Orchid  
*il-brimba s-sewda*  
March-May, frequent

