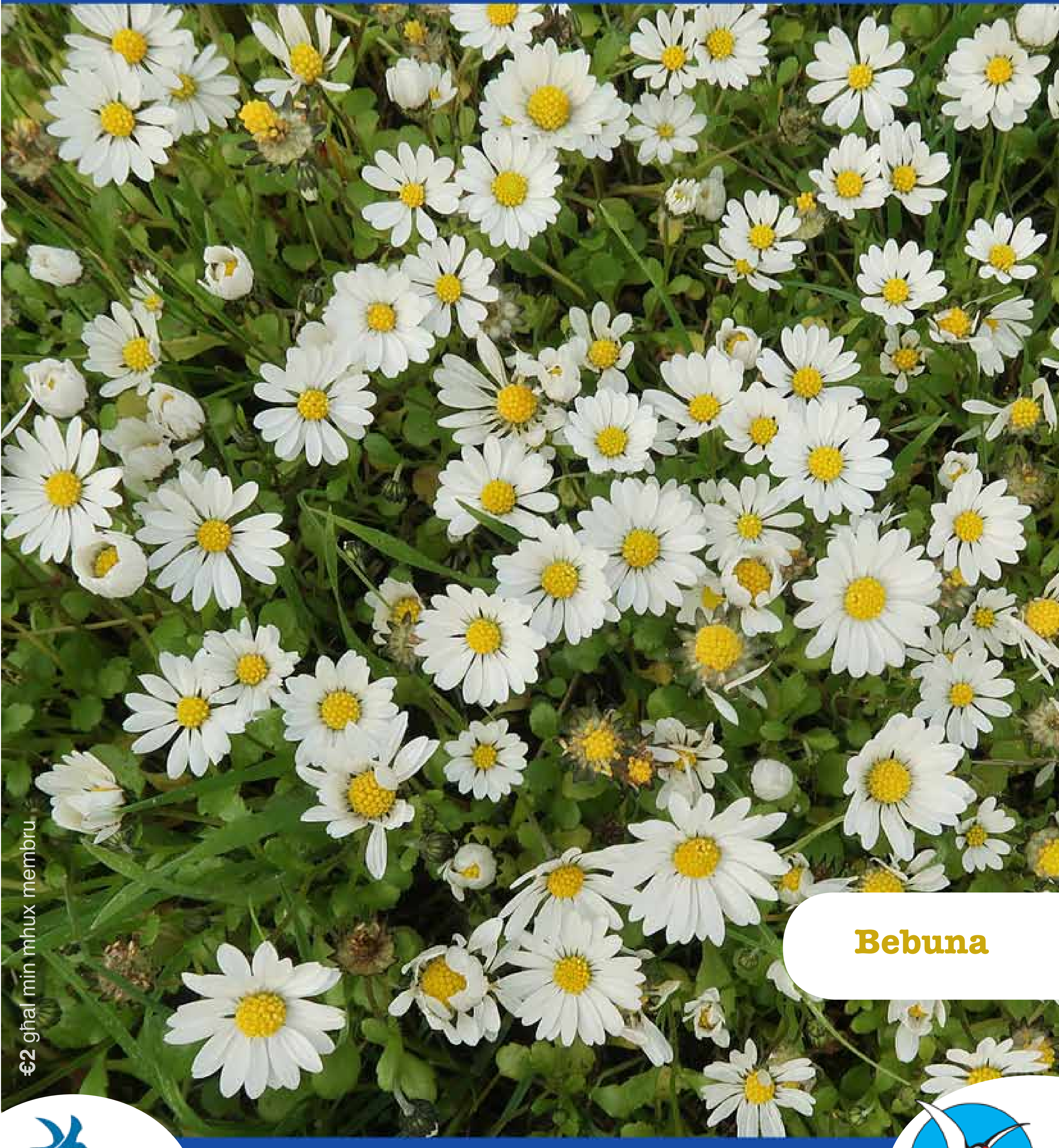
Il-Ħuttafa

Numru **156** Jannar – Frar 2020



Bebuna

€2 għal min mhux membru

BirdLife Malta

Il-magażin ta' Klabb Ħuttaf

Klabb Ħuttaf

Aron Tanti

Eastern Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla tschutschensis*
fir-riserva tas-Salina – għasfur ieħor ġdid għal Malta!

mill-editur

Ħbieb Ħuttaf...

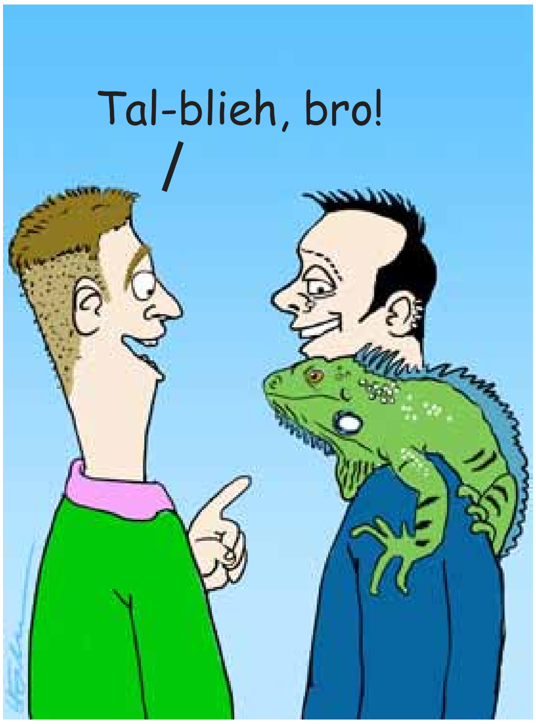
Attenti x'pets tixtru!

Illum saret moda li jkollok pet mhux tas-soltu. Ħafna studenti jsemmuli gremxul kbir bħal igwani, basiliski, kamalejonti u draguni. Jew xi flying squirrel... għax tgħidx kemm hu *cute*!

Donnu m'għadux biżżejjed kelb jew qattus. Irridu bilfors xi annimal eżotiku, forsi biex nimpressjonaw.

Mhux sew!

Miljuni ta' annimali qed jinqabdu mis-selvaġġ kull sena biex jinbiegħu bħala pets. Ħafna minnhom imutu fil-vjaġġ u lanqas jilħqu jaslu fil-post tal-bejgħ. Għal kull pappagall ħaj li tara fil-petshop, mijiet ikunu mietu. L-istess jgħodd għal ħafna rettili u ħut tropikali.



Victor Falzon

Dawn annimali sensittivi ħafna għall-bdil fl-ambjent. X'ma jmutux bil-gzuz!

Tal-ħanut forsi jgħidlek li dawn l-annimali ma nqabdux mis-selvaġġ imma tfaqqsu u trabbew fil-magħluq. Jista' jkun li veru, imma biex razza domestika tibqa' b'saħħitha spiss iħalltu magħha annimali maqbudin mis-selvaġġ. Dan spiss isir kontra l-liġi għax dik l-ispeċi tkun protetta.

Din hi r-raġuni għaliex ħafna speċi ta' pappagalli saru rari fid-dinja, u oħrajn sparixxaw għal kollox.

Biex tgħaxxaqha, iktar ma annimal ikun rari iktar jiswa flus. U fejn jidħlu l-flus spiss jinkisru l-liġijiet. Sfortunatament f'ħafna pajjiżi tropikali fejn jgħixu dawn l-annimali, il-liġi tkun fjakka u tinkiser qisu ma ġara xejn.

In-negozju illegali tal-annimali mis-selvaġġ jiswa mal-€5 biljun fis-sena! Meta tixtri annimali eżotiċi aktarx li tkun qed tħajjar biex il-liġijiet ikomplu jinkisru u biex iktar annimali jinqabdu mis-selvaġġ.

Għalhekk jekk veru tħobbu l-annimali u tridu trabbu annimal ixtru kanarin, amorin jew ħemster. Jew kelb jew qattus. Basta tkunu lest li tħobbuhom qishom ħutkom tul ħajjithom kollha.

U *cute* kemm huma *cute*, il-flying squirrels inħalluhom għall-foresti please!

Victor

Victor Falzon L-Editur

Bebuna Annual Daisy *Bellis annua*

Il-bebuna rari taraha weħidha. Tħobb tikber f'bukketti baxxi baxxi li jibdlu roqgħa art battala fi splużjoni ta' xmux żgħar bojod bil-buttuna safra fin-nofs. Iħobbu jikbru speċjalment fejn ikun hemm xi ħofra baxxa li fiha jkun żamm ftit iktar umdu minn madwarha. Ftakru dejjem: qatt taqtgħu fjuri mis-selvaġġ. Ħudulhom miljun ritratt jekk tridu, imma qatt taqtgħuhom.

Ritratt ta' Victor Falzon

FUQ QUDDIEM

F'din il-ħarġa...

Mill-editur	2
Aħbarijiet	3
Ġnien għan-Natura	4
Għadna lura	5
Iż-Żrinġ	5
Amy's Diary	6
Ħabbara tar-Rebbiegħa	7
Zakak Abjad	8–9
Clownfish	10
Walk for Nature	11
Friefet u Baħrijiet	11
Il-Ġaħġaħ	12–13
A walk at Tal-Wej	14–15
National species	16

Kitbu f'dil-ħarġa

Thais Amaral (National Aquarium), Desirée Falzon, Victor Falzon, Marie Vella (BOV)

Klabb

Klabb Ħuttaf is the junior section (-18yrs) of BirdLife Malta. Members can attend many activities, including walks, visits to nature reserves, boat trips and environmental work. Members received by post the bi-monthly magazine *Il-Ħuttafa*. Families too can become members, and will then also receive the quarterly adult members' magazine *Bird's Eye View*. Subscription is €10 per annum for Klabb Ħuttaf and €29 for Family.

Kuntatt

tel **21347645 / 21347646**
indirizz **57/28 Triq Abate Rigord Ta' Xbiex XBX 1120**
imejl **info@birdlifemalta.org**
websajt **www.birdlifemalta.org**

© BirdLife Malta, Frar 2020

Disinn u produzzjoni Victor Falzon
Stampat għand Poulton's Print
Reg.Vol.Org. VO/0052

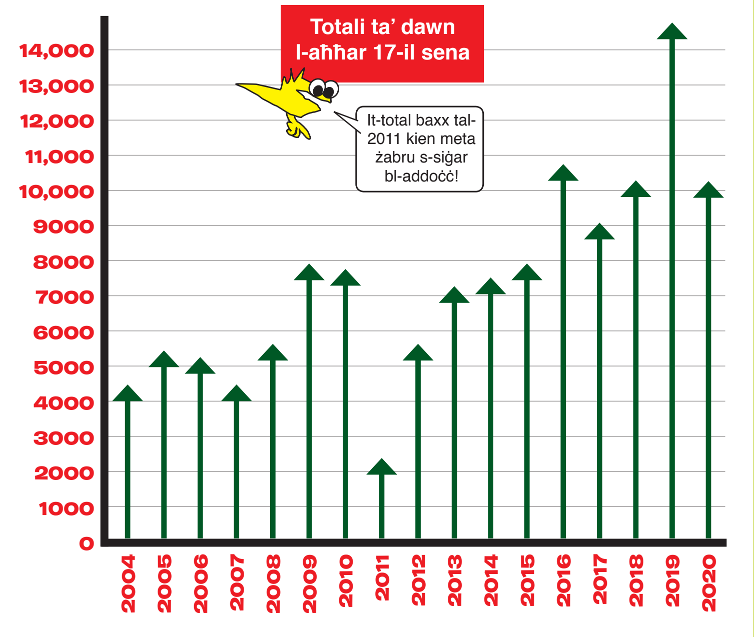
10,366 reqdin!

Nhar is-Sibt 11 Jannar 2020 ftit qabel inżul ix-xemx grupp membri tal-BirdLife tqassmu madwar is-swar tal-Belt Valletta biex jagħmlu *roost count*. X'jiġifieri? Jiġifieri biex jgħoddu l-għasafar li jkunu deħlin jorqdu! U l-għasafar li kienu ħa jgħoddu kienu z-zizka bojod.

Iz-**zakak abjad** (*white wagtail*) iżurna fil-ħarifa – jiġu bl-eluf. Ħafna minnhom jieqfu ftit jistrieħu imbagħad ikomplu jtiru lejn l-Afrika. Oħrajn jieqfu u jgħaddu x-xitwa magħna. Matul il-jum jinfirxu mal-kampanja jfittxu dud u insetti żgħar fir-raba' u anke mal-ġnub tat-toroq. Imma filgħaxija jinġabru f'numru kbir biex jorqdu flimkien f'xi siġar li jkunu għall-kenn. Dawn il-postijiet speċjali ngħidulhom *roosts*, u l-ikbar wieħed f'pajjiżna qiegħed il-Belt Valletta, sewwasew fis-siġar fi Pjazza Assedju faċċata tal-Qorti!

Kull sena l-BirdLife torganizza attività biex tgħodd iz-zizka li jidħlu jorqdu l-Belt. L-ikbar numru li qatt tellajna kien is-sena l-oħra: 14,475 zakak. Din is-sena n-numru kien inqas, imma xorta total sabiħ ta' **10,366** zakak. Dan kien it-tielet l-ikbar total minn meta bdejna nagħmlu dawn ir-*roost counts* fl-1986.

Bħas-soltu, grazzi u prosit lill-ħabib tagħna Denis Cachia li sena wara sena jieħu ħsieb dan l-istudju interessanti u importanti.



Fomm ir-Riħ fil-mira

Hawn min jara biċċa kampanja u jgħid "Xi ġmiel in-natura!" u hawn min jara l-istess art u jgħid "Kif se nsir sinjurun minnha?" Hemm pjan biex xi kmamar qodma fl-inħawi ta' Fomm ir-Riħ (ara r-ritratt) jitwaqqgħu u flokhom jinbena kumpless taparsi agri-xi-ħaġa-bil-pixxina – f'kelma waħda jiżviluppawh. Tgħid jirbaħ ir-rispett lejn l-ambjent jew tirbaħ il-kilba għall-flus.

Ġiet iżżurna Snowy!

Mhux soltu jżuruna għasafar li f'isimhom hemm il-kelma 'snow'! Id-**durrajsa bajda** (snow bunting *Plectophenax nivalis*) hija għasfur żgħir li jbejjet fit-tundra fl-inħawi ta' fuq nett tal-Ewropa, fosthom fl-Iżlanda, eċċ. Għalkemm fil-ħarifa din id-durrajsa tpassi 'l isfel, ftit li xejn tinżel sa dan-naħat tad-dinja, u għalhekk f'Malta u anke fil-Mediterran din l-ispeċi hija rari mhux ħażin. Imma sewwasew fl-aħħar jiem tas-sena l-oħra tfaċċat waħda fl-inħawi tal-punent ta' Malta. Hemmhekk għamlet ftit żmien tferkex qalb il-blat għal xi dudu Malti, u tat ċans lil skoss berdwoċers jitpaxxew biha! Imbagħad sparixxiet...

Nisperaw li l-ikel lokali għoġobha, ħalli ma tafx kif nerġgħu narawha x-xitwa li jmiss!

Ġnien għan-Natura

Kitba u ritratti Desirée Falzon

Il-kampanja Maltija qiegħda dejjem tonqos u n-natura qed titlef ħafna postijiet fejn tista' tgħix. Bi ftit ħsieb nistgħu npattu xi ftit billi noħolqu ħabitati għan-natura fil-ġonna u l-btieħi tagħna. F'dis-sensiela Desirée taqsam magħna l-esperjenzi tagħha ta' kif ħajret lin-natura tersaq lejn il-ġnien.

Ħaxix ħażin!

Dil-frażi ma teżistix għal min iħobb in-natura! Il-ħaxix selvaġġ huwa l-uniku ikel għal ħafna insetti. In-naħal u l-friefet iħufu mad-djar, il-btieħi u l-ġonna tagħna jfittxu l-fjuri. Mill-fjuri jieklu l-polin (trab isfar) u jixorbu n-nektar (ilma ħelu).

Ħafna fjuri li nixtru mill-ħwienet tal-ġonna jkunu razez imkabbrin għall-kulur biss, u la jkollhom polin u lanqas nektar. Tkun mingħalik qed tkabbar il-fjuri għall-insetti u bla ma taf tkun qed toqtolhom bil-ġuħ!

Allaħares ma jkunux il-fjuri selvaġġi għall-insetti. Għalhekk ma jeżistix ħaxix ħażin.

Ix-xewk abjad u t-tfief huma fost l-iktar fjuri mfittxijin mill-insetti fix-xitwa u r-rebbiegħa.

X'nista' nagħmel?

Ħalli roqgħa ħamrija bla ma tiżra' xejn fiha. Ftit ftit taraha timtela fjuri selvaġġi. Ħallihom jagħmlu ż-żerriegħa. Din tixtered waħedha u s-sena d-dieħla aktarx li dawn il-pjanti jerġgħu jikbrulek.

Ħalli żewġ roqgħat ħamrija vojta. F'waħda minnhom qalleb il-ħamrija wara li l-fjuri jxerrdu ż-żerriegħa. Is-sena ta' wara tara differenza f'dak li jikber fiż-żewġ roqgħat. B'hekk ikollok iktar varjetà ta' fjuri slavaġ. Din tiġri għaliex meta tqalleb il-ħamrija tkun qisek ftaħt pagna ġdida għal ħafna żrieragħ li jkunu jittajru mar-riħ u jaqgħu fil-ħamrija mqallba friska.

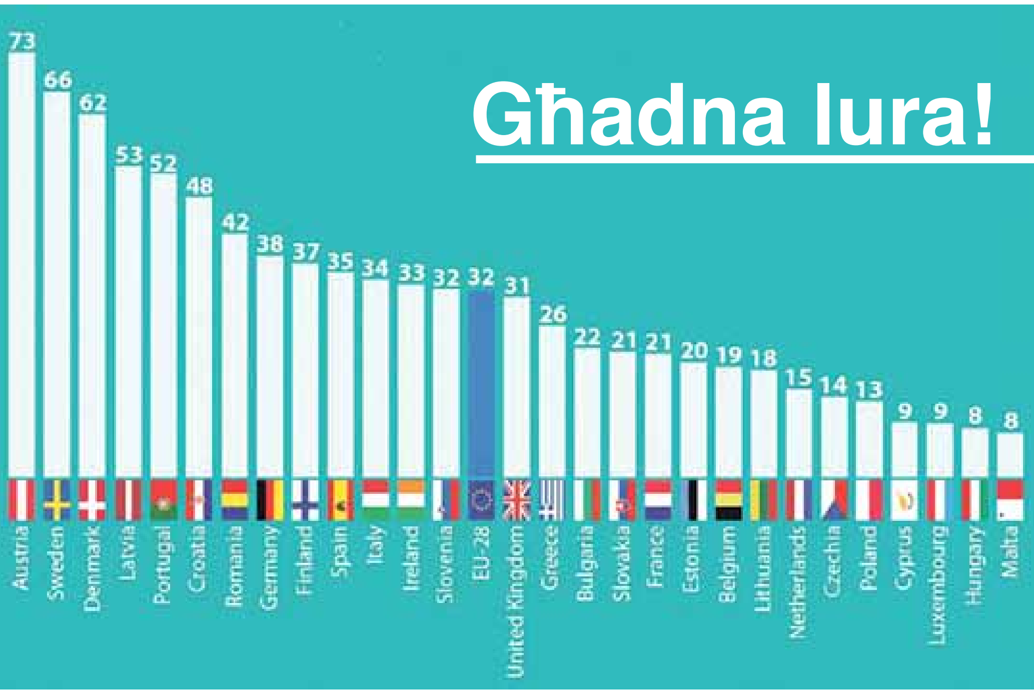
Iġbor żerriegħa ta' fjuri slavaġ li tara fil-kampanja u li jkollhom l-insetti magħhom. Itfagħhom fil-ħamrija fejn tridhom jikbru u stenna sakemm jerġa' jasal l-istaġun biex jikbru. Jekk trid fjuri s-sena kollha, iġbor żerriegħa fi staġuni differenti.

Jekk m'għandekx ġnien, tista' xxerred iż-żerriegħa fil-wiċċ tal-qsari. Fir-ritratt jidhru xi qsari bil-fjuri tal-buttuniera.

Busuf mitluf jiekol il-polin mgħannaq ma' fjura taċ-ċistu roża

Naħla qed timla l-bwiet bil-polin minn fjura tad-denb il-ħaruf

Farfett tal-kaboċċi qed jixrob xarba nektar bnin minn fjura tat-tfief



Għadna lura!

Din il-graf turina l-pajjiżi tal-Unjoni Ewropea u kemm iġġeneraw enerġija sostenibbli fl-2018, fi kliem ieħor kemm mill-elettriku tagħhom ġie minn sorsi ndaf, bħal xemx, riħ u ilma tax-xmajjar. Bi 73% l-Awstrija ġiet quddiem nett, u fl-aħħar post, bi 8% biss... Malta! Veru m'għandniex xmajjar imma xemx għandna bir-rimi.

Jekk irridu li pajjiżna jagħti sehmu fil-ħarsien tal-ambjent, irridu naqdfu ħafna iktar.

Prosit għalina!

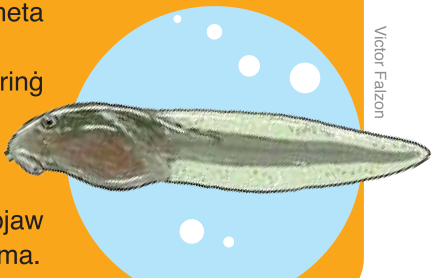
Niltaqgħu ma'...

Victor Falzon

iż-żrinġ

Iż-żrinġ *(painted frog)* huwa l-uniku amfibju [1]indiġenu ta' Malta. Jgħix f'nixxigħat, vaski u ġwiebi, basta jkun ilma ħelu. F'dan l-ambjent iż-żrinġ jiekol insetti żgħar bħal nemus. Iż-żrinġ ibid ukoll fl-ilma, li minnu jfaqqsu l-imrieżeb *(tadpoles)*. Sa ma jikber, il-marżebb jgħix fl-ilma u jieħu n-nifs mill-ilma bħall-ħut. Jiekol billi jnaqqar mill-pjanti tal-ilma. Huwa u jikber u jrabbi s-saqajn ikabbar ukoll il-pulmun f'sidru biex meta jsir żrinġ ikun jista' jieħu n-nifs barra mill-ilma.

Jekk fis-sajf jinxiflu l-ambjent fejn jgħix, iż-żrinġ kapaċi jibqa' ħaj billi jħaffer fit-tajn u jgħaddi s-sajf rieqed! B'xorti ħażina bin-nuqqas ta' xita ħafna nixxigħat u għadajjar qed jinxfu iktar kmieni mis-soltu. Xi bdiewa wkoll jippumpjaw l-ilma min-nixxigħat u jkomplu jkabbru l-problema.



Victor Falzon

[1]**indiġenu.** Speċi li tinsab f'dak il-post b'mod naturali, jiġifieri ma ddaħħlitx mill-bniedem (bl-Ingliż *native* jew *indigenous*)

Dan l-aħħar daħal grupp ta' 65 membri ġodda fi Klabb Ħuttaf, ilkoll mill-iskola Primarja tan-Naxxar! Prosit, grazzi u merħba.

Birds of Malta

A memory game from BirdLife Malta

€9.75

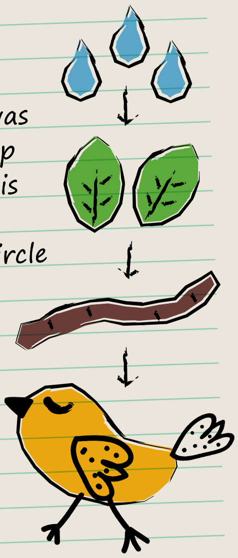
Available from BirdLife outlets or online at **www.birdlifemalta.org**

AMY'S DIARY

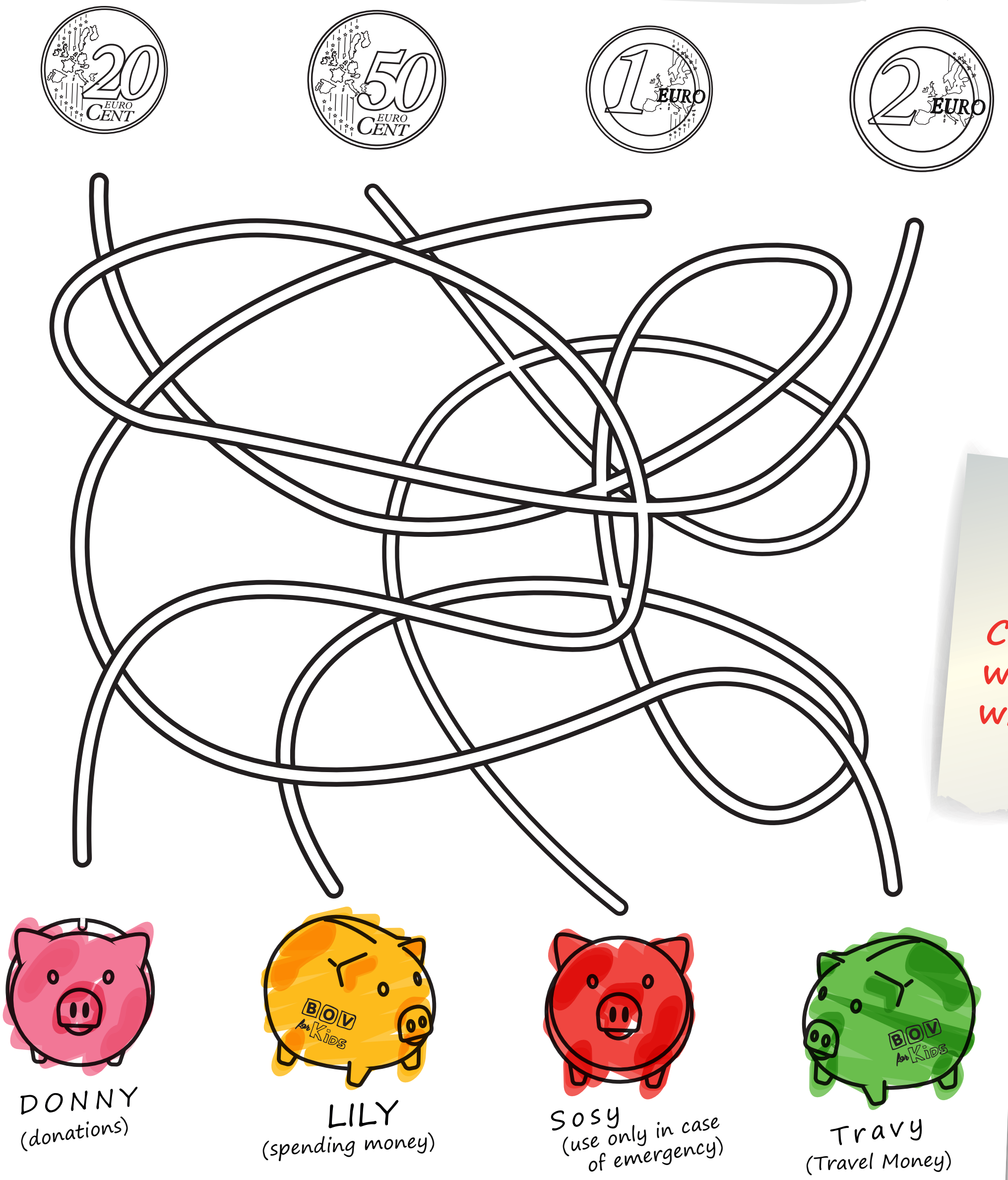
HEYYY ĦUTTAFERS,

The one and only Amy here!

How is your 2020 so far? We walked a lot this winter because the weather was not too cold, with lots of sun and no rain. No muddy puddles for me to stomp on, making Dad laugh and Mum roll her eyes at me... But I do worry that this means less food for BIRDS later on. During Science class and Environmental Week at school we learnt that everything is connected. You know, like the Circle of Life in the **Lion King?!** (Oh Gosh! Now I'll have that song stuck in my head ALL DAY)!



The nice weather did impress my cousin though. He came over from London, and we spent a lot of time together. Let me tell you it was tough keeping his hands off my toys... I know I know sharing is caring...



But anyhow, Charlie took a liking to Travvy, and just could not understand why I couldn't spare one piggy bank when I had 4!

Luckily, BOV's colouring book (I got it at a Birdlife event), helped me explain my savings strategy to him.

Can YOU figure out which coin went into which PIGGY?!

Peace Out

Amy

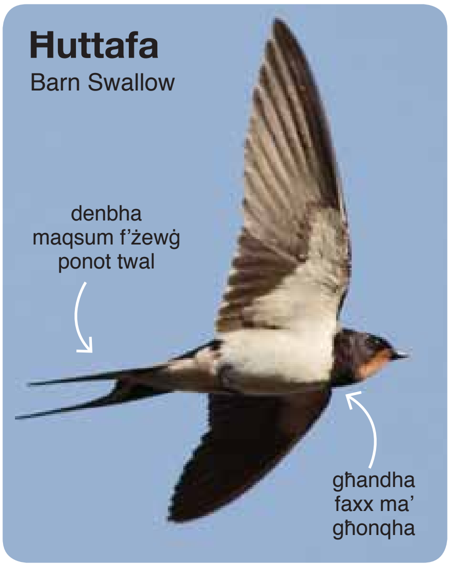
Issued by Bank of Valletta p.l.c., 58, Triq San Zakkarija, Il-Belt Valletta VLT 1130.

Bank of Valletta p.l.c. is a public limited company regulated by the MFSA and is licensed to carry out the business of banking in terms of the Banking Act (Cap. 371 of the Laws of Malta). BOV CashlinkMALTA is available to persons over 16 years, loans are available to persons over 18 years. Other Terms and Conditions apply and can be accessed on www.bov.com.

BOV Bank of Valletta

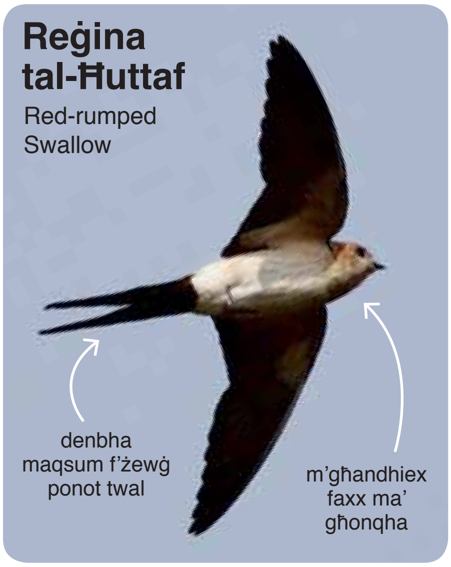
Ħabbara tar-Rebbiegħa

Ix-xitwa għaddiet u xi għasafar tal-passa diġà tfaċċaw biex ifakkruna li waslet ir-rebbiegħa. L-għasfur li s-soltu nassoċjaw mal-wasla tar-rebbiegħa huwa l-ħuttafa, li għaliha msemmi Klabb Ħuttaf u l-magażin tagħna! Xi ħuttaf fil-fatt diġà beda jidher. Imma kif naraw minn dawn ir-ritratti hemm xi kuġini u terzi kuġini li jixbhu l-ħuttaf. Naraw liema huma, u kif nagħrfuhom minn xulxin...



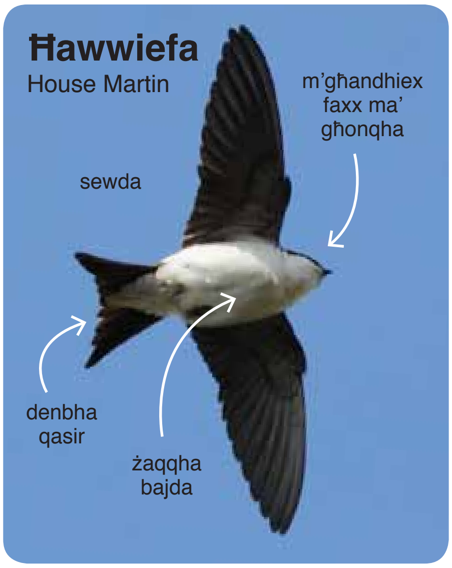
Ħuttafa
Barn Swallow

Aron Tanti



Reġina tal-Ħuttaf
Red-rumped Swallow

Aron Tanti

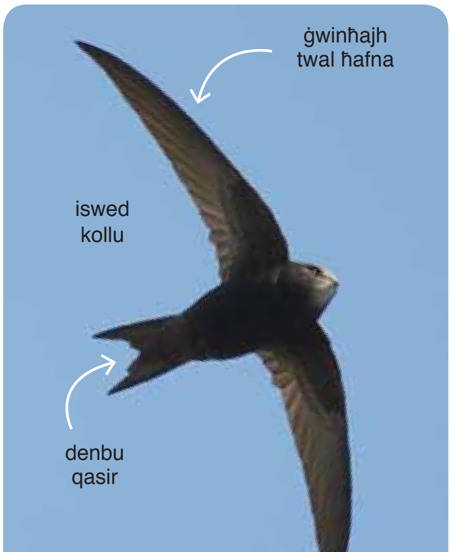


Ħawwiefa
House Martin

Aron Tanti

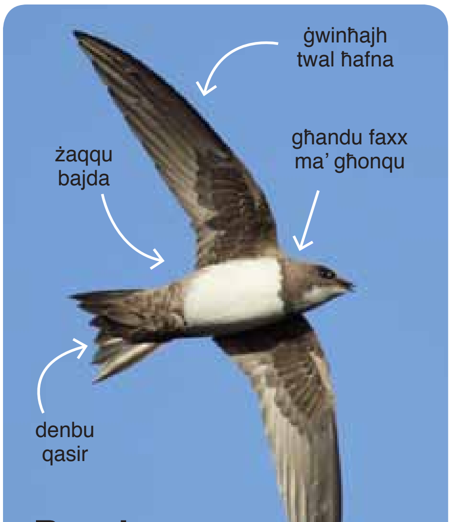
Ħawwiefa tax-Xtut
Sand Martin

Aron Tanti



Rundun
Common Swift

Victor Falzon



Rundun Żaqqu Bajda
Alpine Swift

Denis Cachia

Zakak Abjad

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Ritratt ta’ Charles Galea Bonavia meħud fir-riserva naturali tal-Għadira

BirdLife MALTA

DO YOU WANT TO FIND NEMO, THE CLOWNFISH?

MALTA NATIONAL AQUARIUM

THEN YOU BETTER LOOK CLOSELY IN SEA ANEMONES (EVEN THOUGH THEY DO NOT HAPPEN IN MALTA)!

WHY DO THEY STAY THERE?

By hiding among the anemones' tentacles, the clownfish receives protection from predators and also ends up eating the anemone's food leftovers. They actually can't survive out of the anemone!

DON'T THEY GET STUNG?

Sea anemones have stinging tentacles that are used to immobilise their prey. However, clownfish have mucus outside their skin that protects them from being stung!

THEY CAN CHANGE SEX!

Clownfish live in groups of one dominant female (the largest fish in the group), one adult male and other immature juveniles. If the female dies, the male will become a female to replace her leading position, and the largest undifferentiated juvenile will become the new male of the group!

DO ANEMONES BENEFIT TOO?

Yes! Some species of clownfish are very territorial and defend their anemone from predators. They also pick away parasites from the anemone, and the fish's waste give essential nutrients to the anemone.

COME AND VISIT OUR CLOWNFISH AT THE MALTA NATIONAL AQUARIUM!

Walk for Nature 2020

Il-Ħadd 29 Marzu 2020

Iktar tagħrif fl-isponsorsheet inkluża mal-magażin.

Reġġħet waslet il-Mixja ta' Marzu, u kif taraw mill-mappa dis-sena għandna rotta ċirkolari, jiġifieri li tispiċċa fl-istess post fejn tibda. Se niltaqgħu l-Buskett, nimxu lejn Dingli Cliffs, ngħaddu mill-Fawwara, mis-Salib tal-Għolja u l-Wied tal-Girgenti, u nerġgħu lura l-Buskett. Twila 8km imma fi tliet sigħat għandna nagħmluha, anke b'żewġ waqfiet ta' mistrieħ.

Sintendi, għal min jieħu sehem, xi rigali ma jonqsux!

Friefet u Baħrijiet

José Luque

15 Frar 2020. Membri ta' Klabb Ħuttaf jiltaqgħu ma' baħrija fir-riserva tal-Għadira, ftit qabel ma nħelset. Din l-attività saret apposta filgħaxija ħalli l-membri jgawdu ftit annimali li mhux soltu narawhom, minħabba li joħorġu meta jidlam. Barra baħrijiet rajna wkoll ħafna friefet il-lejl u qgħadna nsegwuhom bil-*bat detectors*.

Għal aktar attivitajiet dejjem iċċekkjaw fil-websajt www.birdlifemalta.org/events

BirdLife Malta

Bħas-soltu għal dil-mixja nistiednu l-parteċipanti biex jiġbru xi flus, biex il-BirdLife tużahom f'xi proġett milli jkollha. Dis-sena bil-flus li jinġabru ħa nixtru *satellite tags*, apparat żgħir u ħafif (imma għaljin immens!) li jitwaħħlu mar-rix ta' dahar xi għasafar (ara ritratt). L-għasafar jinħelsu, u bil-GPS insegwu mnejn jgħaddu waqt il-passa, fejn jieqfu u ħafna tagħrif ieħor. Dan it-tagħrif imbagħad jgħinna biex nipproteġu l-għasafar. Pereżempju bis-saħħa ta' dawn it-*tags* erba' snin ilu l-BirdLife ġabet protezzjoni għal roqgħa kbira ta' baħar fejn it-tajr tal-baħar imur jistad.

Għalhekk jekk jogħġobkom għinuna biex ngħinuhom! Grazzi.

Aron Tanti

Victor Falzon

il-ġaħġaħ

Mad-daqqa t'għajn taħsbu għasfur tal-bejt għax jixbhu ħafna. Imma fil-fatt huwa għasfur differenti għal kollox, fl-imġiba, fl-ambjent fejn jgħix, fid-daqs u anke f'leħnu.

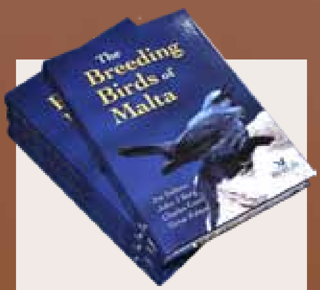
Il-qurriegħa kannella lewn iċ-ċikkulata. Bħal tal-għasfur tal-bejt imma ftit iktar ħamranija.

Il-fattizz li mill-ewwel jagħraf ġaħġaħ minn għasfur tal-bejt hija din id-dabra sewda fuq wiċċu. L-għasfur tal-bejt ma jkollux din id-dabra.

Bħall-għasfur tal-bejt, il-ġaħġaħ ukoll għandu l-iswed taħt geddumu, imma ma jibqax nieżel sa fuq sidru.

Il-ġaħġaħ huwa ftit iżgħar mill-għasfur tal-bejt. Kultant l-għasafar tal-bejt jibbulijaw lill-ġaħġaħ! Isibuh żgħir miskin!

Isem xjentifiku *Passer motanus*
Isem bl-Ingliż Tree Sparrow
Daqs 12.5-14ċm
Piż 24g
Ikel żrieragħ, insetti, frott
Ħabitat Rziezet fil-kampanja, bini qadim
Status Residenti s-sena kollha. Mhux komuni



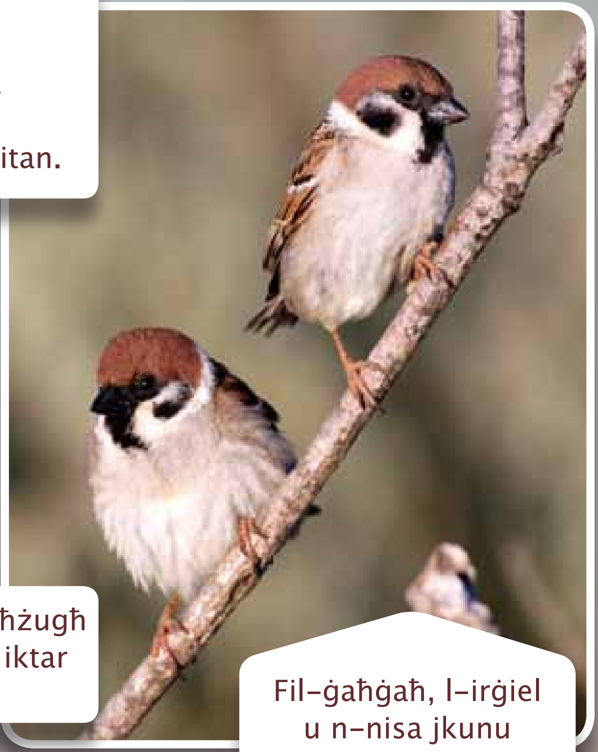
Jekk trid titgħallem iktar fuq l-għasafar li jbejtu f'Malta **The Breeding Birds of Malta** huwa l-ktieb għalik. Għall-bejgħ mill-BirdLife u xi ħwienet tal-kotba.

Aron Tanti

Id-daqs proprju ta' bajda tal-ġaħġaħ

Victor Falzon

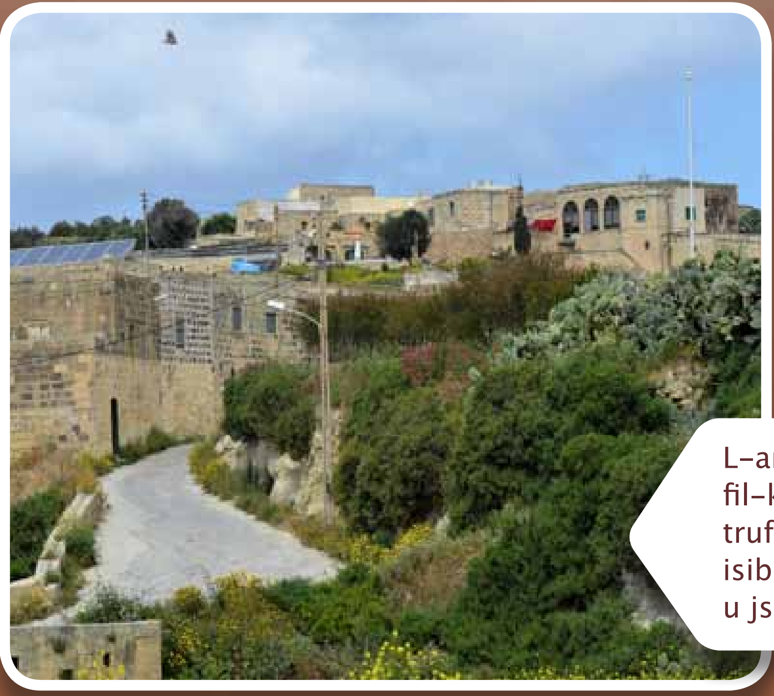
Għalkemm bl-Ingliż jismu *tree sparrow*, il-ġaħġaħ rari ħafna jbejjet fis-siġar. Jippreferi xquq fil-ħitan.

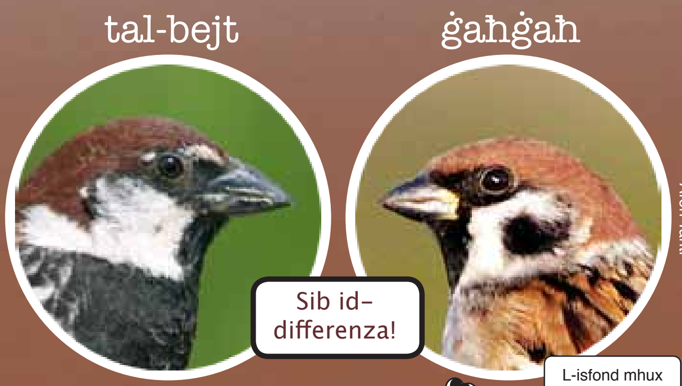

Aron Tanti

Denis Cachia

Il-ġaħġaħ żagħżugħ ikollu l-kuluri iktar mitfijin.

Fil-ġaħġaħ, l-irġiel u n-nisa jkunu l-istess kulur. Iż-żewġ għasafar f'dan ir-ritratt jistgħu jkunu raġel u mara, żewġ irġiel jew żewġ nisa!


Joe Sultana



Denis Cachia
Aron Tanti

L-ambjent tal-ġaħġaħ huwa rziezet fil-kampanja, bini qadim, barrieri, truf ta' rħula żgħar. Hemmhekk isib x'jiekol mill-kampanja fil-qrib, u jsib fejn ibejjet fil-ħitan.

Victor Falzon

A walk at Tal-Wej

Victor Falzon

Tal-Wej... what a strange name! Many people have no idea where the place is or even heard of it. But the hundreds of families who live around this green oasis are proud of their very own nature park. And if you like nature or archaeology, it's a great place for a walk.

So off I went for a walk there some days ago.

Charles Galea Bonavia

The **comm** **stonechat** tax-xitwa) l perch on to

Nice and green

The first thing I noticed was how green the place was. It hadn't rained for weeks so I thought it would all be kind of drying up. But it wasn't, it was lush and full of wild flowers everywhere.

What's that lovely call?

The second thing I noticed was the **meadow pipits** calling. They have this nice *Pss-wss-wss-wss-wss!* call that tells you they're around. And a good thing too, because meadow pipits are so hard to spot. They have great camouflage and you don't see them if they're on the ground among the plants. But I had my trusty binoculars, so I zoomed on a place where I heard some calls, and yup! I soon spotted two or three walking about in a rocky field. Looking for bugs and slugs, I'm sure.

And that other nice call?

But now there was another bird calling. Another small bird, but very different from the meadow pipit – this one was going *wss-chak! wss-chak! chak! wss-chak!* and I knew just where to look to find him. On top of that pile of stones? No! Top of that shrub? No! Top of that tall dry stalk? Aha! Black head, rusty breast... yesss, a lovely male **stonechat**.

Trumpets, bees, fans and vipers!

I walked along the stony path, with lots of flowers growing on each side. There was a row of lovely **red campion** flowers waving in the breeze, and **cape sorrel** with yellow trumpet flowers. Some flowers had **honey-bees** stuck half-way in drinking the sweet nectar. There were also lots of **borage**, with big bristly leaves and blue

Aron Tanti

The **meadow pipit** (pespus) is a small spotty greenish brown bird with good camouflage.

Victor Falzon

The **small-flowered viper's bugloss** (ilsien il-fart żgħir)

Crown anemone (Kaħwiela)

on
(buċaqq
ikes to
p of things.

Fan-lipped orchid (orkida ħamra)

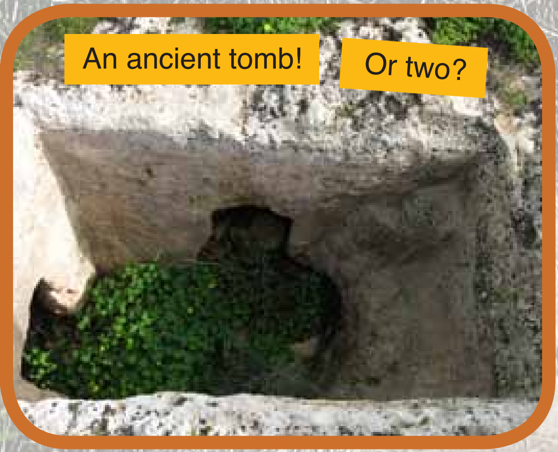
flowers, also a favourite with bees. Blue flowers are not common in Malta, but there was another plant with blue flowers: the **small-flowered viper's bugloss**. My, what a long name! Its flowers are very small, and to take a picture I had to squat down real low, I felt almost like a bee... bzzz!

And just as I was getting up, I came face to face with a lovely **fan-lipped orchid**. Just one. So pretty, so delicate and so rare. And so easy to miss.

An ancient tomb

I walked to a rocky patch. There were some **ancient square holes** cut in the ground. I wonder how old they were, and what they were for. There was an **old stone tomb** nearby too. Wow, the ancient people cut all that rock without power tools!

And there were **ancient cart ruts** too, right across the path. If you like archaeology (like me), Tal-Wej is a great place to visit.


An ancient tomb! Or two?

No shrimpy!

Then I walked to a place where there's usually a nice big pond, where I knew a strange ancient creature lives: the **tadpole shrimp**. But when I got there there was no pond... just a dry patch with dry mud at the bottom. Ah, but in that dry mud there are the eggs of the shrimp, lying there waiting for the rain. And when it rains the eggs will hatch and grow into shrimps. And they too will lay eggs! Well I hope so because the tadpole shrimp is mega-rare and almost extinct from Malta.

Cissik! Cissik! A **white wagtail** zoomed by and landed ten metres away, bobbing its long tail up and down. Maybe he too hoped to find the pond. Wagtails love to walk around the edge of a pond looking for tiny creepy crawlies to eat. Sorry friend, no luck this time!

Queen of flowers

It was time to head back home. But as I looked about through my binoculars one last time I saw a violet spot in a patch of yellow flowers. I walked to the patch and yayy! it was a **crown anemone** – a queen among flowers. I was so excited because I hadn't seen one in three years. And around it... a whole patch of them. Awesome!

NATIONAL SPECIES

WE ARE SO LUCKY! Lucky that in Malta we share our lives with so many different types of plants and animals. Each one with its own unique qualities. Some of these flora and fauna are indigenous while others are endemic. But what does this really mean?

MEDITERRANEAN KILLIFISH
Photo: © Raymond Caruana - Killifish Conservation Project (KCP)

MALTESE FRESHWATER CRAB
Photo: © Annalise Falzon

SANDARAC GUM TREE

MALTESE ROCK CENTAURY

BLUE ROCK THRUSH
Photo: © Carmel Camilleri

When a species is indigenous it is naturally found in one country but can also be found in other countries. On the other hand, an endemic species can only be found naturally within its country of origin. This makes them very unique and also very special!

Five of these types of species have been crowned as National species. Meaning that not only is there a law that protects them, but that they have been recognised as species which remind you of Malta and our Maltese identity. The National species of the Maltese Islands are the Mediterranean Killifish, the Maltese Freshwater Crab, the Maltese Rock Centaury, the Sandarac Gum Tree and the Blue Rock Thrush.

LOOK OUT FOR THE BLUE ROCK THRUSH IN THE NEXT ISSUE !

ERA
Environment & Resources Authority