

Working for a Better Future

10 Electoral Requests

BirdLife Malta

1st March 2022

Introduction

As a country of 316 square kilometres and over half a million citizens, Malta and the other islands of Gozo and Comino is the sixth most densely populated country in the world and the first in Europe and also the most built-up country from all the European Union Member States.

In view of this, nature and biodiversity need concrete protection, and excellent planning of both urban and natural open spaces is crucial. BirdLife Malta has been at the forefront of not only taking action in this field but also to lobby and advocate for proper planning, conservation and protection of our natural heritage.

In the running towards our country's general election we collect the ten concrete proposals for our politicians and our citizens.



www.birdlifemalta.org

1 Respect ODZs

Areas designated as Outside Development Zones are treated as such and no person or entity should be allowed to plan development in these sites. The Environment and Resources Authority should also have a veto vote for any development proposals within 1km of ODZs boundary and 3km from Natura 2000 sites boundary.



2 Focus on Nature



There is a misconception that environment is nature. It is not. It is important to understand that while taking care of the pavements, urban open spaces and sustainable development are necessary, this is nothing to do with nature. Natural habitats and biodiversity need stronger conservation efforts and protection holistically. That is why it is necessary to give nature importance rather than just the environment.

It is also important that legislation, policy and administrative setups cater for our natural resources, habitats and biodiversity holistically. we demand that bird protection is not removed from the rest of biodiversity and away from the Environment Ministry and the Environment and Resources Authority.



3 Enforce Nature Laws



The Environmental Protection Unit within the Malta Police Force should be working only on enforcing nature and biodiversity laws to make sure it curbs wildlife crime. This unit should be given enough resources to handle this work both in Malta and even in Gozo.

4 End Bird Trapping



Bird trapping goes against the EU Birds Directive since it can be very efficient in taking large numbers of birds from the wild. The scope of trapping is also purely for enjoyment of individuals and is not justifiable. This activity should come to an end saving not only many birds but also eliminating the impact on habitat degradation through such activities.

5 Stop Spring Hunting

There is no doubt in anyone's mind that when one kills a bird migrating to its breeding grounds during spring, it is unsustainable. This is even more amplified when the birds shot at are drastically reducing in numbers across Europe. There is no justification for spring hunting seasons and Malta should stop battling against the European Commission on this and take the decision to stop spring hunting seasons once and for all.



6 Create No Hunting Zones

The countryside is for everyone to enjoy without disrupting others. With less natural footprint and over nine months of hunting seasons there needs to be more areas where citizens can go in nature without finding persons with loaded guns hunting. We demand public land in Natura 2000 sites to be free from hunting while Qawra Point is declared a no hunting zone as promised by the Environment Minister in 2021.



7 Place Nature in Schools

Children can learn through nature and our schools need to have nature areas and wildlife gardens with native species. This not only improves the learning experience of the students but also improves the urban greening concept. Green spaces already present within school grounds, should be protected and untouched while creative ways to set up such sites in others schools need to be sought. New school plans should incorporate this concept from design stage.



8 Create Nature Reserves



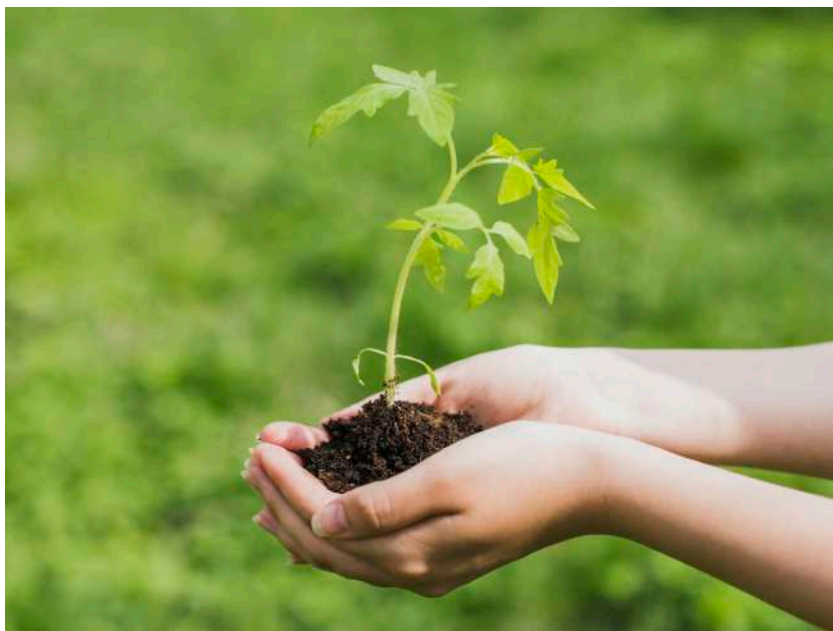
There are only a few small nature reserves in Malta where biodiversity takes priority. We request that the nature reserves of Ghadira and Simar expand. This will allow the rare wetland habitats to thrive while catering for more visitors such as families and school children. It is also relevant to set up nature reserves in Gozo for the benefit of biodiversity and the residents and visitors of the island.

9 Protect Comino

Comino has a unique beauty and its importance is defined in its designation both as a Natura 2000 site but also a bird sanctuary. We are requesting that the management plan starts implementing the crucial aspect of capping the number of visitors on the small island. It is high time that this issue is tackled and solutions found in order to eliminate the degrading state in certain parts of the island.



10 Involve ENGOs



In Malta there are various competent environmental NGOs with a core competence and a set of values that lie within protecting and respecting nature and biodiversity. We should be given all the possible opportunities to be involved in consultation, advice and most importantly decision-making in relation to the state of our natural environment in Malta and Gozo.



Established in 1962, BirdLife Malta is celebrating its 60th Anniversary. It is the oldest environmental organisation in Malta, committed to the protection of wild birds and their habitats. A non-governmental organisation (NGO), BirdLife Malta is also part of the BirdLife International network working towards conserving global biodiversity and the sustainability of natural resources.

The mission of BirdLife Malta is to conserve wild birds, their habitats and biodiversity, working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources.

BirdLife Malta has been an advocate for the protection of Maltese wildlife. We engage Maltese people in their natural environment, and ensure a natural legacy is left for the next generation.