

Bird's Eye View

A BirdLife Malta members' magazine

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BirdLife
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Watch your impact



One of the most important things that we, as individuals and collectively as communities, need to start doing is assess the impact we have on the main issues of concern right now. Climate change and loss of biodiversity are by far the two main environmental concerns, coming from various other issues such as pollution, waste, and intensive agriculture.

At the sight of these problems one can easily feel overwhelmed. How can one person solve any of these problems? Primarily the first step would be to admit that these are problems that need to be tackled. Next is to see how each of us contributes to this problem. Some are rather easier than others. With sound and light pollution, we can keep in mind that when in nature especially at night or out at sea, we should lower our volumes of music and keep lights to the lowest possible level.

We should also avoid participating in bright and noisy commercial activities in natural areas. With air pollution, waste and intensive agriculture the best solution is to reduce our consumption. Buy more in bulk to avoid the extra packaging and it could also be simply by reducing the quantities with the aim of reducing the items we throw out. With some thought we can cut down on surplus clothes, food (including water), tools and various other consumables.

But the one thing I would urge all to try is to reduce our meat consumption. Becoming vegetarian would be ideal but if not, just cutting down on meat will be a very positive step. If all the people in the world halved their consumption of meat there would be less need for space for farms and less need for intensive agriculture to grow animal feed. This will not only reduce the carbon emissions but imagine how much land we would free up to thrive again with biodiversity.

It's not easy but it is necessary. Start by reading more about it and challenge yourself. Change is happening so take the lead.

Mark Sultana
CEO



New seabird report

A BirdLife Europe and Central Asia report has revealed that EU countries are failing to protect seabirds. Sixty seven species of seabirds, including a number of endemics, breed and/or winter in EU territory. While they nest on land, seabirds depend on the sea for food, and spend long periods of time out at sea. Sadly, their homes on land and foraging areas at sea are threatened. In 2019, only 11% of EU sea were protected, but the EU Biodiversity Strategy aims to increase this figure to 30% by 2030, with an expansion of Marine Protected Areas as part of the Natura 2000 network.

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CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Apr 2022. Hunter fined €5,000 + hunting licence suspension for life. CRIME: Shooting protected Common Shelduck off Qawra (Dec 2020)*

May 2022. Trapper fined €1,500 + 2yr trapping licence suspension + confiscation of finches & equipment. CRIME: Illegal trapping in Kordin (Mar 2021)*

May 2022. Trapper fined €600 + 2yr trapping licence suspension + confiscation of finches & equipment. CRIME: Illegal trapping in Delimara (Dec 2020)*

Jun 2022. Trapper fined €1,000 + 2yr trapping licence suspension. CRIME: Illegal trapping in Miġra l-Ferħa (Mar 2021)*

Jun 2022. Hunter fined €1,200 + 2yr hunting licence suspension. CRIME: Killing protected Turtle-dove at Il-Kuncizzjoni (Apr 2021)*

Jun 2022. Falconer fined €4,000 + 5yr licence suspension. CRIME: Possession of protected raptors

Jun 2022. Trapper fined €1,200 + 2yr trapping licence suspension + confiscation of finches. CRIME: Illegal trapping at Żurrieq (Nov 2020)*

*Culprit brought to justice after being observed and reported by BirdLife Malta teams.

Editorial Board

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Front cover photo A flock of Squacco Herons on autumn migration by Mario V Gauci © 2022 BirdLife Malta. All rights reserved. Reg. Vol. Org. VO/0052

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Shot Flamingo found off the coast of Gozo

BirdLife Malta

Greater Flamingo shot as season opens

Within 24 hours of the opening of the autumn hunting season on 1 September, at least two shot protected birds – a Black-crowned Night-heron in Ħad-Dingli and a Eurasian Collared-dove in Ħ'Attard – were recovered. The following day a fisherman rescued a badly injured Greater Flamingo off the coast of Gozo, which however died shortly after. This made it the third known illegal casualty

since the start of the season. The government vet confirmed all three birds as shot. The autumn hunting season runs for five months (1 Sep–31 Jan) and hunting is permitted for 40 species on land and 12 species at sea. Of these, the European Turtle-dove can be hunted from 1–30 September, and hunting at sea starts on 1 October.

PM ignores open letter

Just before the start of the autumn hunting season BirdLife Malta sent an open letter to Prime Minister Robert Abela following the massacre of two flocks of Black Kites that reached Malta on 22 and 23 August, first in Malta and then in Gozo. With enforcement practically non-existent, BirdLife Malta demanded the delay of the hunting season until 15 October to safeguard the migration of protected species like raptors and herons. We also requested support by law enforcement units present in the countryside to monitor hunting activity. We received no reply to the open letter and the season opened as planned, permitting the hunting of 500 European Turtle-doves, against recommendations from an expert EU task force. In a statement prior to the start of the season entitled *PM has lost the plot on hunting or simply doesn't care*, BirdLife Malta revealed how the Government's decision to



Injured Black Kite rescued from San Blas Bay in Gozo

Benjamin Green

forge ahead with the season followed direct meetings between the hunting federation, the Wild Birds Regulation Unit and the Ministry for Gozo, shunning the ORNIS Committee.

Grounded Yelkouans rescued



Yelkouan Shearwater being released back to sea

At the start of summer we launched our annual public appeal for help in rescuing grounded Yelkouan Shearwaters. Over two long months, Yelkouan chicks are raised in dark seacliff burrows.

On fledging, the young birds leave their burrow and take their maiden flight. They usually head out to sea but unfortunately fledglings are often drawn to artificial coastal lights. The birds fly around these lights to the point of exhaustion or collide with structures. Once grounded, the birds risk being killed by cats or dogs, hit by vehicles or succumb to dehydration and starvation. In such conditions, these tired and sometimes injured birds are unable to make their way back to sea without human help. This year's campaign was a great success. Thanks to the public we rescued and released no less than 13 stranded seabirds back to sea.

Saving Simar

Alexandr Krushinsky



Simar is already half hidden by development along its north border

BirdLife Malta has formally objected to a proposed development located less than 20m from our Simar Nature Reserve. The development is inside an area designated as a bird sanctuary, and borders a Natura 2000 site and Special Protection Area, which will impact breeding birds but also migratory species seeking refuge at Simar. Not only will material flowing out of the construction site risk contaminating the reserve hydrology, but the high-rise building will permanently diminish the aesthetic, recreational and educational value of Simar to the visitors who visit the reserve for a nature experience. We have called on the Planning Authority to revise the building policies in the area, and requested the developer to downsize the planned height to respect the natural and visual value of the area.

Healthy environment a human right

BirdLife International



BirdLife International has worked hard with supporters and experts to get the UN to discuss the human right to a healthy planet through the #1Planet1Right campaign. On 28 July, with 161 votes for, 0 against, and 8 abstentions, the UN General Assembly adopted the historic Resolution recognising the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right.

EU nature restoration law

On 22 June, the European Commission published its proposal for an EU Nature Restoration Law, which will be the first law in the world to set legally binding targets to restore nature. The proposed law includes the overarching objective for area-based restoration of 20% of EU territory by 2030; time-bound restoration obligations for natural habitats, including terrestrial, coastal, freshwater and marine ecosystems; results-based targets for restoration of agricultural and forest ecosystems; and non-deterioration obligations to ensure that restored sites benefit biodiversity and the climate in the long-term. EU Member States will have to draw up national restoration plans that clearly indicate what to restore, where and how to finance it.

Taxidermist sentenced



A haul of stuffed protected birds (file photo)

BirdLife Malta

Mario Ellul, a taxidermist and hunting tour organiser linked to an international bird poaching racket, was recently fined €6,000 fine and slapped with a 2yr taxidermy licence suspension, after over 700 carcasses of protected bird species were found at his premises. While laudable, the sentence is a tiny dent in a lucrative business through which Maltese hunters are systematically destroying the avifauna of countries like Egypt and Sudan. Maltese 'entrepreneurs' organise these hunting expeditions to target protected species, and the service also includes the smuggling and stuffing of the carcasses! It's a well-oiled one-stop-shop machine that makes the organisers rich and feeds the insatiable appetite for more stuffed exotic birds in Maltese hunters' private collections. This is all made possible because the Wild Bird Regulations Unit does little to control the racket. It is estimated that over 500,000 stuffed birds were in private collections prior to the transfers being legitimised. *(More wildlife crime court sentences on page 2).*

BirdLife turns 100!

The historic BirdLife100 World Congress brought together conservationists to work together and bring nature back from the brink. Held in Cambridge and London, the Congress launched an ambitious 10-year global strategy to address the nature and climate crises threatening our existence. At least a million species are at risk of extinction, climate change is causing unprecedented natural disasters and the pressures we're putting on our planet are unsustainable. For this occasion, BirdLife Malta recruited two Young Leaders for nature protection to join the World Congress and training held on 11–16 September 2022.



BirdLife International

WORDS Ilaria Marchiori BirdLife Malta Communication Assistant

MALTESE NAME: Agrett Isfar
SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Ardeola ralloides*
LENGTH: 40–49 cm
WINGSPAN: 71–86 cm
CONSERVATION STATUS: Least concern
LOCAL STATUS: Regular spring and autumn migrant
CALL: A hoarse croaking 'kaahk'
BEHAVIOUR: Mostly a shy bird, but also hunts in the open
HABITAT: Reed marshes and freshwater habitats, both natural and man-made



Mario V Gauci

Victor Falkson

Squacco Heron

The Squacco Heron is one of the smallest members of the heron family. It is a stocky bird with a long bill, short neck and legs. On the ground, the bird blends very well with the surroundings due to its buff brown breast and back, but in flight it totally transforms due to its striking pure white wings and tail. As with most other birds, the adult plumage changes during the breeding season. The breast and back turn from buff brown into a peachy-pink colour, its cream-coloured head attains fine black streaks and long white and black-edged plumes appear on the hindneck. These plumes are synonymous with herons and egrets during the breeding season. The bill also takes a conspicuous bluish colour with a black tip.

In Europe, the Squacco Heron's breeding range is restricted to the south since it prefers warmer climates. Its breeding habitat are marshy wetlands, along rivers and wet grasslands. The birds nest in small colonies, occasionally with mixed species of herons and egrets. The nest is made up mostly of sticks in the form of a well-constructed platform, usually placed less than two metres high near or over water. Three to four green-blue eggs are laid. The eggs are incubated mostly by the female for 22–24 days, but the chicks are fed by both parents. The young herons begin to clamber from the nest into nearby branches after 14 days. They will be able to fly at 30 days, and are fully fledged and independent after 45 days.

The Squacco Heron is normally crepuscular, that is, it is mostly active at dusk and dawn, when light levels are low. But in our nature reserves it has been observed feeding also during the day. Its diet is mostly larval insects, small fish, amphibians and insects such as grasshoppers and beetles.

The Squacco Herons we see in Malta are from Palearctic populations that migrate south to African sub-Saharan countries in autumn and return to their breeding grounds in spring. The best months to observe Squacco Heron are from April till late May and from August till October, although sightings also occur in other months. It is often seen singly or in small flocks, and occasionally migrates with other flocks of herons and egrets. The best places to observe this heron in Malta are BirdLife Malta's reserves at Ghadira, Simar and Salina. Occasionally it is seen along the coast, flying low over the water and settling on the rocky foreshore. Some individuals use the nature reserves as a stopover, staying for several days to rest and refuel before continuing their migration.

The greatest threats to this species are the loss and degradation of its natural and man-made freshwater habitats and wet woodlands. This degradation has been the cause of various population declines. On the plus side is the species' adoption of rice fields as feeding and breeding sites, especially when these are near wooded areas. This phenomenon has been mainly responsible for range and population increases.



Mario V Gauci



Mario V Gauci

WORDS Mario V Gauci BirdLife Malta licensed bird ringer, birdwatcher and nature photographer

Nature at our reserves

Salina



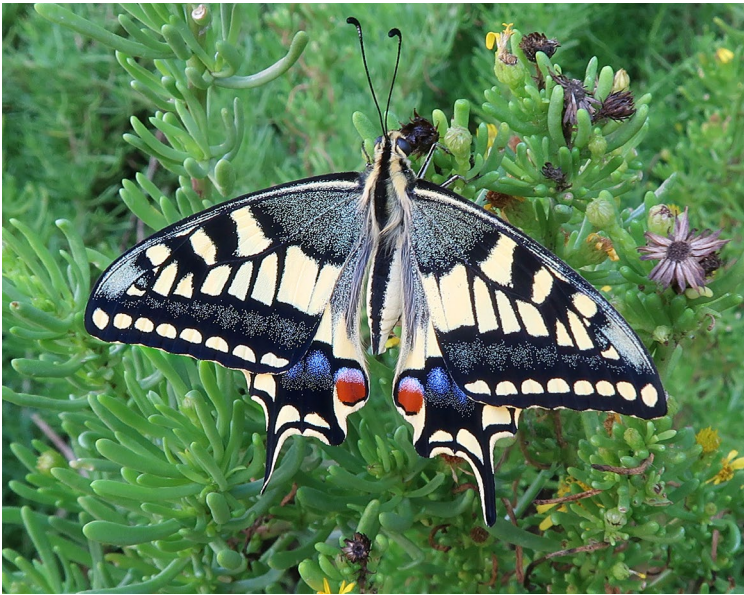
Opening hours

Nature Reserve: Daily 7am–6pm
Visitor Centre: Monday to Friday
8am–2pm, Saturday closed,
Sunday 10am–4pm
Entrance free (donations welcome!)

More info at

<http://bit.ly/SalinaNatureReserve>





Swallowtail

Swallowtail

Farfett tal-Bużbież *Papilio machaon*

The Swallowtail is easily queen among our butterflies. Its large size and flashy pattern render it easy to spot and familiar with everyone – in Malta alone it is known by no less than 18 different names from various districts of the Islands, how's that for popular! Most of our butterflies are named in Maltese after the foodplant of their caterpillar. So Fennel (Bużbież) is vital in the life cycle of this beauty – another reason why roadside vegetation should not be destroyed in our chronic obsession that wildflowers shabbify our roads. At Salina Fennel is revered along with all other native plants, so Swallowtails are most welcome to come and safely lay their precious eggs.



Mediterranean Gull

Mediterranean Gull

Gawwija Rasha Sewda *Larus melanocephalus*

To most people all gulls look the same: big, white and noisy. It's true that gulls don't digress much from the general pattern but there are always differences to watch out for – some obvious, others subtle – and finding them is part of the fascination of birdwatching. One of our regular species is the Mediterranean Gull. It's medium-sized as gulls go but what it lacks in size it makes up in number: being gregarious like most gulls, it's often seen in flocks, adding movement to our ports and particularly Salina. Although it's called Gawwija Rasha Sewda we mostly see this bird in its non-breeding plumage, as it doesn't nest in Malta. And that usually means a white head – indeed, an all-white body except for the grey back.



Sticky Fleabane

Sticky Fleabane

Tulliera *Dittrichia viscosa*

This is one plant whose aroma has people divided: some (like me) love it, others find it offensive! The scent comes not from its bright yellow flowers – now coming into bloom – but from its wavy, somewhat sticky leaves, hence its name. The Sticky Fleabane is not a fussy plant – although it grows at Salina it also grows happily most everywhere where it can root and spread, even in tight cracks among stones and kerb pavings. Wherever it grows it brings colour and life, and its flowers attract myriad bees and butterflies, which in turn draw in the birds and reptiles. Sadly, it too often also attracts those zealous men with their infernal weedkillers. Thankfully, there's no fear of that at our nature reserves of course.

Avian assassination

Significantly, in the last 30 years there has been a 40% decline in long-distance migrants using the African-Eurasian Flyway. An estimated 11-36 million birds are illegally killed/captured annually across the Mediterranean. Malta, a vital stopover site for long-distance migrants crossing the Mediterranean, has one of the highest densities of hunters per square kilometre which subsequently threatens birds that seek refuge on the archipelago. Illegal persecution is an ongoing and increasing issue in Malta. This photographic documentary highlights conservation efforts of BirdLife Malta, showing the importance and necessity of their work.

Volunteering for Raptor Camp

As a volunteer each day started early. Equipped with binoculars, a camcorder, a scope, a team phone, and a record sheet, we would be stationed before sunrise in areas with notorious hunting offences, ready to record any illegal activity that occurred as birds left their roost. We also undertook an evening shift to ensure birds could safely return to their roost.

"In a flash it was over. We all wished the bird a safe return to Africa, thrilled to see that the dedication and hard work of BirdLife Malta had been a success."

At the start of camp, I was hopeful I wouldn't see an injured, or worse, a dead bird, but unfortunately this positivity was short-lived. One of our first evening shifts was ending when we received a call to collect an injured Bee-eater. After retrieving the bird, it was clear its condition was poor, sustaining a broken wing and torn tendons. My heart sank. With injuries beyond repair and an ever-growing infection, it was even more upsetting that the bird would have to endure the pain throughout the night, only permitted to

be euthanised by a government-appointed vet which would open in the morning. Previously, I have never had the opportunity to see this stunning species up-close so to see it in this condition was gut-wrenching and a sombre experience which stuck.

Although volunteering on the forefront at times was difficult, it was also extremely rewarding actively fighting to stop illegal persecution. During camp, I attended the release of a Honey-buzzard. It was a great triumph that this bird had been successfully rehabilitated after six months and was now ready to be released. As we stood at the top of Girgenti, I remember the mix of emotions. There was a sense of urgency and nervousness. This adult male had a piercing yellow eye and a pristine grey head – it was spectacular. The excitement grew as it was ready to be released. In a flash it was over. We all wished the bird a safe return to Africa, thrilled to see that the dedication and hard work of BirdLife Malta had been a success.

Raptor Camp was an opportunity for me to support BirdLife Malta and to utilise my photographic skills, in the hope that my photography would aid BirdLife and add publicity to this issue. My overall experience of Raptor Camp 2020 was fantastic. The camp was a great way to connect with like-minded people who share the same passion for birds and conservation as myself. Throughout camp all of the organisers showed their knowledge and willingness to go above and beyond for me, organising meetings with the chief of police and curator of the Natural History Museum. This helped me gain a greater understanding of the hunting issue in Malta, which was extremely beneficial for my photography and dissertation which was based on this topic.

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHS **Ewan Heath-Flynn** Wildlife photographer



Ewan Heath-Flynn is a wildlife photographer and conservation photojournalist who attended BirdLife Malta's Raptor Camp 2020 as an international volunteer in Malta. His work from his time with us in Malta has been recognised by Bird Photographer of the Year, a global photographic competition, in which he won the Conservation Award 2022.



Littered - Littering Malta's countryside, shotgun cartridges are commonly found scattered around a hunter's hide.



On the Lookout - BirdLife Malta's annual Raptor Camp heavily relies on eagle-eyed volunteers to spot and document any hunting activity deemed illegal.



The Loss of a Lesser Kestrel - A dead Lesser Kestrel found in an area regarded as an illegal hunting hotspot. Finding a wounded or dead bird is not easy as most of the land in Malta is private. This suggests that the number of birds killed may be greater than the number recorded.



Release - In spring 2020, this European Honey-buzzard suffered multiple gunshot wounds. Fortunately, after extensive rehab, the bird was ready to be released. Just prior to release, the bird was fitted with a satellite tracker to try to ensure a safe departure.



Love and Care - This Common Kestrel is undergoing care at BirdLife Malta's rehabilitation centre. Pictured in the background are a variety of vitamins and minerals, added to improve the nutritional value of the chick, the food of the bird, aiding a quick recovery.



Tranquillity - Highly prized by poachers, the Greater Flamingo is a regular migrant to the Maltese Islands. The juvenile in the picture was released at Ghadira Nature Reserve, after being nurtured back to full health at BirdLife Malta's rehabilitation facility. Cordoned off and highly protected, Ghadira offers migratory birds safety, allowing them to peacefully rest before departing on their migratory journey.



NATURALment



Produced by BirdLife Malta and presented by Communication Manager Nathaniel Attard, **NATURALment** will be a weekly programme aired on NET TV to celebrate BirdLife Malta's 60th anniversary year.

This exciting project aims to raise awareness on the beauty of nature and the importance of protecting and caring for our biodiversity. Topics of the TV series are varied and will include guests in studio together with informative features which will be aired in between discussions. Other environmental NGOs and activists will also be invited. The first programme will air on Thursday 29th September 2022 as NET Television's autumn schedule kicks off!

Every Thursday at 21:35 on NET TV



YES! I WANT TO BECOME A NATURE GUARDIAN!

TO LOVE NATURE'S FLORA & FAUNA IS TO PROTECT IT!

Which is why BirdLife Malta is offering 12 lucky children (girls & boys aged 9 to 12) the golden opportunity to DISCOVER, LEARN & have lots of FUN in this 12-session nature programme where they will visit all the nature reserves as Nature Guardians/Wardens for a Day.



- 12 JUNIOR WARDENS (Aged 9-12)
- 12 SATURDAY MORNINGS (3 Hour Sessions)
- 12 COLOURFUL STICKERS TO COLLECT!
- 12 GOOD REASONS TO DISCOVER, LEARN & HAVE FUN!

Register your interest in enrolling your child for the winter season, by sending an email to mark.gauci@birdlifemalta.org



mark.gauci@birdlifemalta.org



(+356) 2134 7645/6



birdlifemalta.org



Charles Colero



With a little help...

The reedbed at Simar Nature Reserve



Sedge Warbler at Simar

How management work at our nature reserves helps birds

Managing our nature reserves is no easy task. People might think that, being so small, the sites would be easy to manage, but small size is in fact a limiting factor, rather than an advantage. Managing a diversity of habitats and activities in such areas is tricky, but thanks to meticulous work plans, the results are proving positive. This is evidenced by several indicators, mainly our flora and fauna.

Let me explain, by taking our Simar Nature Reserve as an example. Over the years, we have focused on the study of several key bird species at this site. Three such species were chosen based on being common during migration and, more importantly, because they frequent different habitats at the reserve. The species are:

- Sedge Warbler, a small spring migrant that frequents the reedbed and wetland vegetation;
- Wood Warbler, which hunts small insects in the Olive grove and nature trail;
- Common Sandpiper, a wader that prefers the muddy water's edge.

How do these birds show that management work is yielding positive results? Through scientific bird ringing, these birds have been monitored at Simar for over 10 years and the results speak volumes. Let us start with the Wood Warbler and the Olive grove. Works over the past decade have created open

spaces in the grove and added a mixture of other typical shrubs, which include Bay Laurel, Lentisk and Carob. During this period we established that retrapped Wood Warblers (birds ringed and recaptured a few days later) spend an average of four days refuelling at the reserve; we also confirmed that they gained body fat over this period. Clearly, the improved habitat is yielding more insects for the species to feed on.

A similar trait was recorded for the Sedge Warbler. The average duration of stay for this species at the reserve decreased over the past decade, but the average increase in weight during this shorter stay increased, which reflects an increase in food supply.

The above work and results, taken into context with other research works like water quality parameters, fish and flora surveys, all seem to indicate that the reserve is thriving, and this despite the challenges brought on by increased salinity, reduced rainfall and more disturbance and stress from the surrounding buildings.

We look forward to more sustained monitoring and planning to ensure our sites are always at the forefront of providing nature with a place to call home.

WORDS **Mark Gauci** BirdLife Malta Head of Land Management



Wood Warbler



Simar Olive grove



Bird ringing takes place regularly at Simar



Spectacled Warbler

Aron Tanti



Il-Qolla l-Bajda

Joe Sultana



Common Kingfisher

Aron Tanti



European Honey-buzzard

Aron Tanti



Flock of Grey Herons

Aron Tanti



African Tamarisk

Desirée Falzon



Golden Samphire

Victor Falzon



Painted Frog

Aron Tanti



- 1 Qolla I-Bajda Battery
- 2 Il-Qolla I-Bajda
- 3 Saltpans
- 4 Natural Arch

The northern coastline of Gozo was chosen for this autumn walk, starting from Qolla I-Bajda “The White Hillock” which is located between Qbajjar bay and Xwejni bay, a geographical symbol of this part of the island. An easy coastal walk takes you from here to Reqqa Point, then swerves around Wied il-Għasri and concludes in Wied il-Mielaf. This walk can take around two hours, with another 30-min hike to the village of Għarb where public transport is available.

Qolla I-Bajda

This relatively easy trek begins near Qolla I-Bajda, a conical formation which is result of sub-aerial erosion that has acted on the island for the past five million years. Another prominent feature of the area is the Qolla I-Bajda battery, a coastal fortification built in 1716 but used through different times, including as an observation post in WWII and also a discotheque in the 1980s! This spot is a very good sea-watching spot from late summer till mid-winter for various migrating birds. This is the place to spot birds like Grey Heron, incoming raptors like Western Marsh-harrier, various waders, and species like Great Cormorant are also frequent in the autumn months. Spectacled Warbler tends to occur around the low vegetation around these landmarks, while Black-necked Grebe and, in less numbers, Great Crested Grebe and Little Grebe can turn up in Qbajjar and Xwejni bays at this time of year. If left unmolested such birds can occur more frequently.

Qolla I-Bajda to Reqqa Point

This is a proper road shared by both trekkers and vehicles, so be on your alert while enjoying the scenic coast which in these parts is a checkerboard of rock-cut saltpans, which extend right up to the shore. For the past 350 years, these saltpans have been worked by generations of different families, and are still producing salt today! Please avoid stepping onto them as they are private property. But while out of bounds for humans, the saltpans attract an array of bird species, mostly waders like Dunlin and scarcer species like Ruddy Turnstone, Kentish Plover and Sanderling, recorded annually here from summer to mid-October. On your left side vegetation consists mainly of salt-tolerant trees such as African Tamarisk and low-lying shrubs like Golden Samphire. In autumn these areas are frequently patrolled by hovering Common Kestrel and Lesser Kestrel, which peak in numbers from early to mid-October.

Reqqa Point to Wied il-Għasri

From land, Reqqa Point is merely a small pointed headland, but it's apparently the most popular dive site on Gozo's north coast due to its stunning underwater topography and plenitude of marine biodiversity. Here you can stop for a short break and scan the open sea where Scopoli's Shearwater, Yellow-legged Gull and

Sandwich Tern are guaranteed. Back on the trek, the route now turns inland with open fields dominating the scene, where autumn migrants like Eurasian Skylark and Common Stonechat can be encountered. One can opt to walk down the steep stairway to the idyllic Wied il-Għasri beach for a quick photo of this most “Instagrammable” location.

On to Wied il-Mielaf

After the short inland walk, the route swerves round the upper part of the valley and takes you back towards the coast, but what was previously low shoreline has now given way to steep seacliff. This spot is great for watching raptors as they come in low from the sea, soaring once they reach land and then heading inland over Ġordan Lighthouse, visible on your left side. From early to mid-October species like European Honey-buzzard, Western Marsh-harrier, Osprey and various falcons like Eurasian Hobby, Eleonora's Falcon, Common Kestrel and Lesser Kestrel can be easily spotted by the attentive birdwatcher from this spot.



Wied il-Mielaf

After the collapse of the 28m Azure Window in nearby Dwejra, the natural arch at Wied il-Mielaf has become more and more frequented by tourists. Walking inland from the “window” is a small rugged valley that in a good rainy season can hold water and attract birds like Common Sandpiper and Common Kingfisher, while White Wagtail and Grey Wagtail patrol the area for small flying insects. The natural pools attract Painted Frog, the only native amphibian in the Maltese Islands.

Ending the Walk in Għarb

A short yet steep hilly road takes you to the centre of Għarb which is the westernmost village of Gozo and indeed of the Maltese archipelago. From here you can take public transport to other parts of the island.

WORDS **Adin Vella** BirdLife Malta licensed bird ringer

Giada Lampitelli



11 Jun 2022 Our LIFE PanPuffinus! and education teams participated in the World Oceans Day event at the Malta National Aquarium. We raised awareness for ocean conservation and the protection of endemic seabird species with an activity where families got to weigh, measure and ring a toy gull.

Annie Simons



12 Jun 2022 Our Falko youth group met up at Foresta 2000 as part of the Erasmus+ It's Time! project and helped map diseased Aleppo Pines. We had a great time engaging in some citizen science while walking through the panoramic nature reserve.

Xavier Neg



27 Jun 2022 BirdLife Malta participated in the Academy of Givers' Impact Fair which aimed to create a dialogue around Corporate Responsibility and Philanthropy. We interacted with guests and showcased some inspiring work. The event was held at the Westin Dragonara Resort.

MOAS



28 Jun 2022 BirdLife Malta, in collaboration with MOAS, led a walk in support of refugees. People of all ages enjoyed the delightful sunset view from the luscious Foresta 2000 Nature Reserve.

Lewis Collins



30 Jun 2022 An important morning for increasing accessibility of nature spacing and birdwatching to the Deaf community. Environmental NGOs including BirdLife Malta and many other interested parties gathered at Salina Nature Reserve to premier 60 new signs for bird species. The event was part of the Birds And Nature Open For Full Fruition, Empowering Everyone (BANOFFEE) project.

Annie Simons



3 Jul 2022 To celebrate World Seabirds Day, after enjoying a tour of the historical White Tower, members of our LIFE PanPuffinus! project team accompanied participants on a night walk along the cliffs of Rđum I-Ahmar from where we admired the sunset and listened for the distinctive calls of shearwaters as they flew to their cliff nests after sundown.

BANOFFEE



15 Jul 2022 BirdLife Malta, in collaboration with the Deaf People Association (Malta) celebrated, with a closing event, the Erasmus+ BANOFFEE project. After being presented with the signs identifying 60 species of birds, attendees enjoyed a complimentary dinner at The Meeting Place, Marsa.



15-16, 25 & 29-30 Jul 2022 Our shearwater boat trips for this year were a big success, with five fully-booked tours. Participants admired flocks of Scopoli's Shearwaters rafting on the surface of the sea before heading to their nests in the cliffs after sunset. On one of our trips we were also lucky to spot Yelkouan Shearwaters. One trip was organised exclusively for members of our Young Birders Club.



23 Jul 2022 BirdLife Malta and other organisations celebrated science in the community at Esplora's Esperimentata Tikka Xjenza festival at Cuvre Porte, Birgu. Our LIFE PanPuffinus! team entertained children and adults with a curious exercise about shearwater calls. We also shared actions to protect this vulnerable species and let kids have fun with colouring.



28 Jul 2022 The EUPA Malta *Whatsup!* event at the National Aquarium in Qawra was a great opportunity to promote youth organisations and entice young people to join. BirdLife Malta was the largest organisation attending and worked hard to involve the younger generation in the environmental agenda.



13 Aug 2022 BirdLife Malta participated in the protest *Kemmuna ta' Kulhadd* and joined Moviment Graffiti and other organisations to stop the over-commercialisation of Blue Lagoon in Kemmuna. For a few hours, we occupied the shore to avoid the invasion of deckchairs and umbrellas and we requested immediate action by the government.



20 Aug 2022 Our Blooming Minds team led a peaceful and mindful Walk & Talk event. We met at the Malta National Aquarium and walked along the beautiful promenade before enjoying refreshments together while admiring a breathtaking sunset.



3 Sep 2022 We had a productive Raptor Camp Training Day at Salina Nature Reserve where attendees learnt about the birds that migrate through Malta, why Malta is important for migration, and how they can help prevent these beautiful birds from being killed by hunters during this autumn hunting season.

Upcoming Events

25 Sep 2022

Walk and Talk event with Richmond Foundation. Starting from Selmun Chapel and walking down to Mġiebah. Perfect ambience for attendees to connect with each other and with people who understand them. Refreshments provided.

30 Sep & 1 Oct 2022

BirdLife Malta at Science in the City. Showcasing biodiversity plus educational activities about birds and food sources.

1-2 Oct 2022

It's EuroBirdwatch22 weekend! Day 1. Open day at Ghadira Nature Reserve. Birdwatching and bird ringing demonstrations. Day 2. Picnic at Buskett followed by raptor watching at the observatory.

1-2 Oct 2022

Our LIFE PanPuffinus! team at Eco Market's Marine Life Fair. Raising awareness about ocean plastics, beach pollution, endangered marine species and the fragile underwater ecosystem. Plus fun activities for kids.

8 Oct 2022

Day trip to Sicily (fully-booked). An 8km circular trek at Cavagrande del Cassibile, one of Europe's biggest canyons. Greenery, natural pools, waterfalls, steep limestone cliffs, birds and lizards. Lunch at Agriturismo Leone (Noto Province).

Want to join an event?

Get more details at <http://bit.ly/joinanevent> or email events@birdlifemalta.org or call +356 2134 7646

Want to help us continue our work?

Join at <https://birdlifemalta.org/become-member/>
Donate at <https://birdlifemalta.org/donate/>
Support at <http://bit.ly/Becomeasupporter>
Volunteer at <http://bit.ly/volunteerwithBLM>

Special release

Lipu Sicily

BirdLife Malta



Lipu and regional officers were present for the release of the BirdLife Malta-rehabbed Marsh-harrier



In June, a bird of prey we rehabbed in Malta was released back into the wild in Sicily. A Western Marsh-harrier, which had been illegally shot in April during the Delimara massacre, was released at the Saline di Priolo Nature Reserve in collaboration with Lipu, our BirdLife Partner in Italy. The female bird was named Denyer in honour of Adam Denyer, a long-time UK volunteer. Adam was a passionate birdwatcher who regularly joined our Spring Watch and Raptor Camps for more than 15 years. We received the sad news of his demise while preparing for the Marsh-harrier's release. We are grateful for the time Adam spent at our camps, helping us keep tabs on illegal hunting.

Fly high, Adam, and keep watching over us and our birds!



Ilana Merchori