

Malta

Bird Report

2021



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Malta Bird Report 2021

Number 1

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Published by the Malta Rarities and Records Committee (MRRC)

© BirdLife Malta Jun 2023

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Printed at Poultons on sustainably sourced paper

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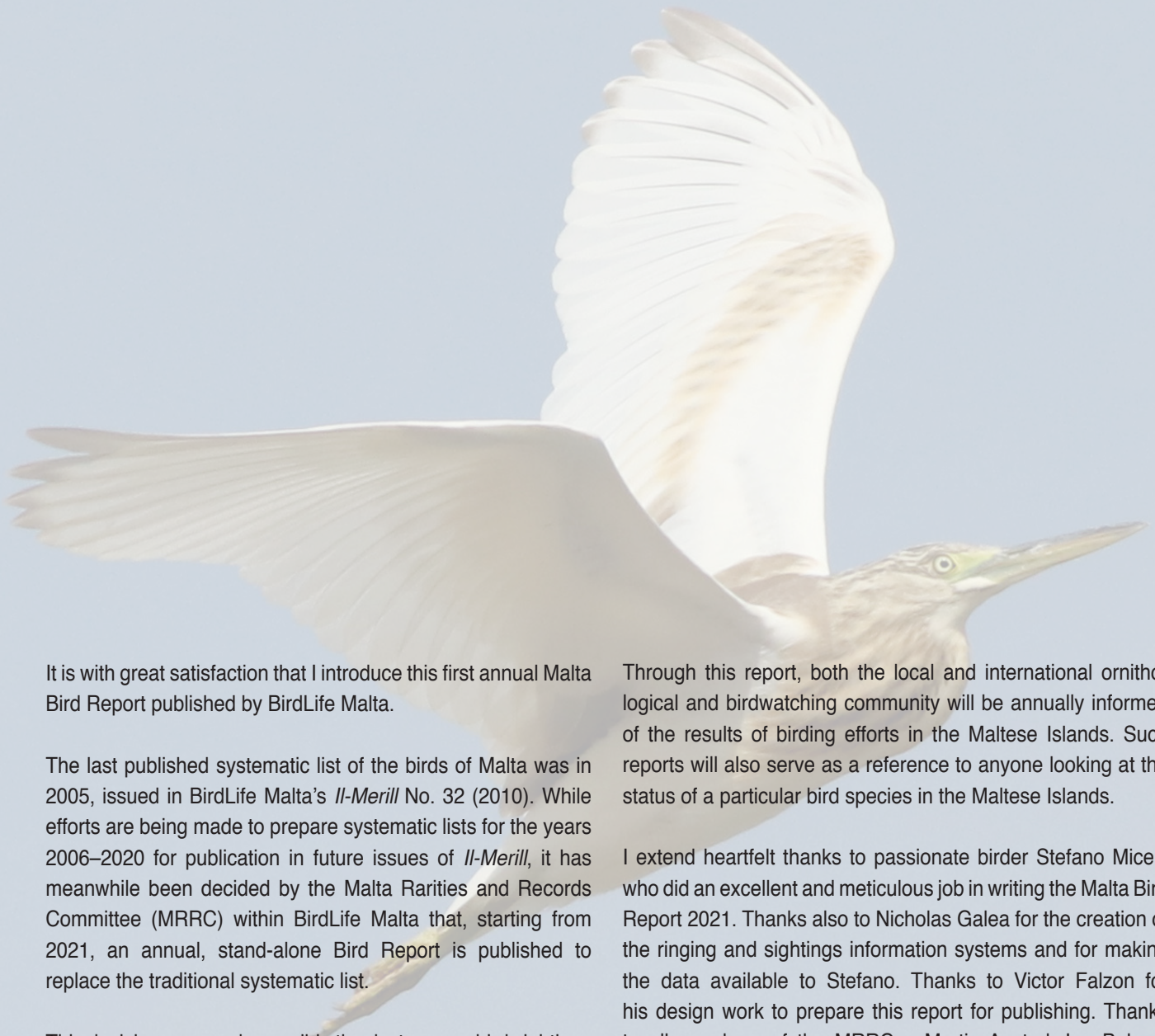
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Reg. Vol. Org. VO/0052

Cover photo: Spanish Sparrow by Denis Cachia

There has been much debate on the origins and taxonomic status of the Maltese sparrow especially given its possible hybrid origins between Spanish and Italian Sparrows (*Passer hispaniolensis* / *Passer italiae*). More taxonomical studies will hopefully determine the exact taxon of our sparrow.

Foreword



It is with great satisfaction that I introduce this first annual Malta Bird Report published by BirdLife Malta.

The last published systematic list of the birds of Malta was in 2005, issued in BirdLife Malta's *Il-Merill* No. 32 (2010). While efforts are being made to prepare systematic lists for the years 2006–2020 for publication in future issues of *Il-Merill*, it has meanwhile been decided by the Malta Rarities and Records Committee (MRRC) within BirdLife Malta that, starting from 2021, an annual, stand-alone Bird Report is published to replace the traditional systematic list.

This decision was made possible thanks to a new bird sightings information system – *Malta Bird Sightings* – that has been used widely by local birders, starting from 2021. Due to the infamous poaching situation in Malta, the use of public bird sightings systems, such as *eBird*, cannot be widely used in Malta, for the safety of the birds and the birders themselves. The new system enables us to input records safely and eventually facilitate the collation and extraction of birding records to compile such a report. Members of the MRRC also record in this system any verified records coming from outside the birding community.

This report will be published in both printed and electronic form and will contain a number of photographs of birds mentioned within. As part of each species account, a concise ringing summary, where applicable, is also included.

Through this report, both the local and international ornithological and birdwatching community will be annually informed of the results of birding efforts in the Maltese Islands. Such reports will also serve as a reference to anyone looking at the status of a particular bird species in the Maltese Islands.

I extend heartfelt thanks to passionate birder Stefano Miceli, who did an excellent and meticulous job in writing the Malta Bird Report 2021. Thanks also to Nicholas Galea for the creation of the ringing and sightings information systems and for making the data available to Stefano. Thanks to Victor Falzon for his design work to prepare this report for publishing. Thanks to all members of the MRRC – Martin Austad, Ian Balzan, Edward Bonavia (secretary), John J. Borg, Denis Cachia and Caldon Mercieca – for their committee work. Thanks also to all photographers whose excellent photos illustrate this report.

Finally, immense gratitude to all birders who contributed to this report by submitting their records in a timely manner. I encourage them to continue sending in their observations so that the publishing of such report will be possible every year for years to come.

Raymond Galea

Chairman

Malta Rarities and Records Committee (MRRC)



State of play of birding in Malta

This general overview of the complicated state of play of birding (*sensu lato*) in Malta is being given since this is the first report of its kind to be published in Malta, both for the benefit of international readers as well as for interested locals who are not familiar with the situation.

The Republic of Malta is an island state of just 316 km² with a population density of 1633/km². In geographic terms, this makes Malta more comparable to a small city than to other sovereign countries. From a population of around half a million, not more than 40 people can be considered “conventional” birders who go out purposely to watch birds more or less regularly. Besides birders, however, various other sub-groups are out in the field regularly “birdwatching” in one way or another. The largest by far is the huge number of bird hunters and trappers. In 2021, 9611 general licences were issued for hunting birds on land while a further 4014 were issued for live-capturing of birds, i.e. trapping. Furthermore, there has been a substantial increase in the number of amateur bird photographers over the past eight years or so, mainly as result of the social media. Finally there is a small scientific bird-ringing community, most of whom are naturally also birders. Between the activities of these sub-groups of “birdwatchers”, it is likely that a significant chunk of the birds present in Malta is “observed” in one way or another. Malta probably has one of the highest bird recording densities anywhere across the globe. There are, however, a number of caveats that merit attention.

The sightings listed in this report are those that have been verified by the Malta Rarities and Records Committee (MRRC),

which is the official body in Malta recognised by the Association of European Records and Rarities Committees (AERC). Therefore, for a sighting to be listed in this report the MRRC must have been made aware of it. This could be by direct communication or indirect notification, such as through the social media. The natural consequence of this is that the vast majority of sightings in this report are those of the small birding community, since this group is most intrinsically linked with the MRRC. That being said, it should be acknowledged that certain rifts exist in the local birding community for various reasons.

Offshoots from the “main” birding community generally do not recognise the role of the MRRC as a centralised repository for bird sightings, and therefore would not make their sightings known. Furthermore, some of these offshoots include known liars and stringers (birding jargon for people who intentionally mislead and falsify bird sightings), whose history of known fraudulent claims has effectively led to the almost complete ostracism of their sightings, possibly at the risk of genuine records also being lost in the process. Apart from their own inventions, such birders often treat (and publish) hearsay records and records of stuffed specimens imported from abroad for taxidermy collections as genuine local records. Another point worth keeping in mind is that the birding community covers comparatively few sites, usually corresponding to nature reserves or bird sanctuaries, apart from a handful of other sites with good habitat.

As stated earlier, there has been a large increase in amateur bird photographers in Malta. Although this is a positive trend at



face value in terms of increasing awareness and appreciation of Malta's avifauna, a considerable fraction of this growing community does not bother to learn what species they are photographing; worse still, many do not give due regard to ethical and responsible fieldcraft. There is an urgent need to foster this community of photographers to ensure that they pursue their hobby while also respecting their subjects and contributing to conservation and science.

The hunting and trapping community is largely unlikely to share their bird observations, mainly because of the prevalent animosity between them and the birding community, but also because many of their records would relate to illegally captured specimens of protected species. In this regard, unless records are heard about through the grapevine or made known on public fora and subsequently verified, bird observations by this sub-group are unlikely to be included in reports such as this. It should also be noted that certain species, both huntable and protected, are hugely under-recorded by birders when compared to hunters and trappers, both due to coverage reasons as well as due to the unique activities of the latter. One such case is the Eurasian Woodcock, which is rarely seen by birders despite several being killed by hunters every autumn. If one were to disregard the conservation aspect, this constitutes a loss of valuable data and genuine records. As a pertinent side-note, because of the aforementioned challenges related to illegal hunting and trapping, many interesting bird occurrences are not usually widely disseminated in the interest of the birds' safety, potentially leading to perceptions of sightings being suppressed for egoistic purposes.

One cannot give an accurate overview of the bird scene in Malta without mentioning scientific bird ringing. There is currently one ringing scheme operating in Malta, with 24 licensed ringers operating in around 15 sites scattered across most of the archipelago. Besides the scientific benefits such as those related to the study of bird movements, ringing provides valuable records that would otherwise go unnoticed or undocumented through conventional birding; this is particularly true when bird ringing is carried out in a standardised manner. Scientific bird ringing constitutes an integral part of how birds are recorded locally.

It goes without saying that this overview is a very simplified reflection of the delicate and complex birding situation in Malta. The intention here was to provide context for the interpretation of this report as well as any other publications related to birds in Malta. In a way this summary can also be considered as a disclaimer on what is and isn't included in the report. Here's hoping that in the not so distant future the situation continues to mature in a direction where increased synergies are sought in the interest of conservation and science.

Stefano Miceli
Editor

Bird systematic list for 2021

The systematic list follows the scientific and vernacular nomenclature accepted and used by the Malta Rarities and Records Committee (MRRC) being the official Malta Bird Checklist (Feb 2022), which follows the HBW-BirdLife International Taxonomic Checklist.

References to seasons mainly refer to the migration periods of birds, which broadly correspond to the meteorological seasons rather than the astronomical seasons. These vary according to the phenology and wintering areas of different taxa, e.g. for many waders autumn migration typically starts at the end of June i.e. in summer.

Records marked with an asterisk (*) refer to records made through 'nocmigg' (i.e. sound-recording of nocturnal migration). These records generally do not refer to the number of individuals but rather to distinct occurrences of the species within an overnight recording.

Where relevant, the species' accounts include information on the total number of new birds ringed and the main site of ringing to give an indication of abundance and preferred habitat. This information is not provided for species for which all or the vast majority of ringed birds were confiscated.

Common Quail (Summiena) *Coturnix coturnix*

In spring, sightings on 27 dates from 28 Feb to 29 Apr always of 1–2 birds. Singles at Simar NR on 28 May and at Miġra l-Ferħa on 13 Jun were late birds. In autumn, 4 at Miġra l-Ferħa and 1 at Tal-Ħamrija on 28 Oct and singles at Majjistral Park on 22 Nov and at Manikata on 13 Dec.

One of those species that are hugely under-recorded by birders in comparison to hunters, especially due to targeted efforts using dogs to find and flush birds.

Chukar (Ċukar) *Alectoris chukar*

This introduced and established species (i.e. Category C) was present on Kemmuna throughout year as usual, where regularly reported in double figures of up to 40.

Greylag Goose (Wiżża Griża) *Anser anser*

2 at Ghadira NR on 27 Oct, 1 at Miġra l-Ferħa on 28 Oct (Fig. 01), and 1 at Nadur (G) on 02 Nov.

Red-breasted Merganser (Serra) *Mergus serrator*

1 at Żonqor on 18 Jan, 4 at Valletta Breakwater on 14 Nov, 1 at Tas-Safra on 04 Dec and 1 at Qbajjar on 08 Dec.

Common Shelduck (Kuluvert tas-Salib) *Tadorna tadorna*

2 at Żonqor on 14 Jan, 5 at Qawra on 17 Jan, 3 at Qbajjar on 17 Jan and singles at Ghadira NR on 21 Jan and 07 Feb.



Fig. 01. Greylag Goose (Miġra l-Ferħa, 28 Oct)

Steve Zammit Lupi



Fig. 02. Marbled Teal (Ghadira, 4 Jul) from Sicily re-introduction project

Then recorded in single and double figures of up to 24 on 10 dates (mainly from Malta-Gozo channel) from 27 Feb to 01 Apr, but 35 on 16 Mar. 1 at Simar NR from 24 Mar to 02 Apr. 1 at Salina NR on 08 Aug. Sightings on 19 dates from 28 Oct to 30 Dec including 15 on 30 Oct and 45 on 20 Nov at Qawra, 55 on Kemmuna on 21 Nov, 26 at Tas-Safra on 21 Dec and 11 at Wied il-Ghasri on 26 Dec.

Marbled Teal (Sarsella mnaqqa) *Marmaronetta angustirostris*
1 at Ghadira NR on 04 Jul (Fig. 03) was a ringed bird originating from re-introduction project in Longarini in Sicily. It was released in Sicily in May 2021. Although it cannot be considered wild, the fact that it migrated to Malta following release in Sicily is important to be logged. Other Marbled Teals reported in 2021 were all escapees or of unknown origin.

Common Pochard (Brajmla) *Aythya ferina*
6 at Ċirkewwa on 24 Mar and 1 at Salina NR from 23–29 Nov.

Ferruginous Duck (Brajmla Ħamra) *Aythya nyroca*
In spring flocks of 19 on 27 Feb, 25 on 19 Mar, and 8 on 21 Mar all in Malta-Gozo channel, followed by singles at Ghadira NR from 04–10 Apr and at Salina NR on 26 Apr and 04 May. Then 1 at Simar NR on 12 Jul, 16 at Smart City on 24 Aug, 3 at Salina NR on 18 Oct and singles at Salina NR from 20–21 Oct and on 01 Nov and at Simar NR from 01–08 Nov.

Tufted Duck (Brajmla tat-Toppu) *Aythya fuligula*
1 of unknown origin at Simar NR on 22 Jun.

Garganey (Sarsella Ħamra) *Spatula querquedula*
In spring, up to 100 recorded on 12 dates from 14–31 Mar, but 390 on 29 Mar and 320 on 31 Mar both in Malta-Gozo channel. In autumn, sightings on 8 dates from 26 Aug to 27 Oct in single or double figures, with max. 20 at Tas-Safra on 03 Sep and 12 on 19 Sep and 43 on 21 Sep at Qawra.

Northern Shoveler (Palettuna) *Spatula clypeata*
In spring, 37 on 28 Feb, 18 on 15 Mar, 7 on 24 Mar and 11 on 25 Mar all in Malta-Gozo channel. In autumn, 12 at Qawra on 23 Sep, 1 at Manoel Island on 03 Oct, 6 at Kemmuna on 20 Oct, 2 at Miġra l-Ferħa and 1 at Ghadira NR on 28 Oct, 1 at Salina NR on 29 Oct, 5 on 09 Nov and 2 on 11 Nov at Ghadira NR, and 1 at Salina NR on 27 Nov.

Gadwall (Kuluvert Griż) *Mareca strepera*
3 at Simar NR from 29 Oct to 01 Nov, 1 of which stayed until 16 Nov.

Eurasian Wigeon (Silfjun Ewropew) *Mareca penelope*
Very poor year with only 2 sightings: 2 at Ċirkewwa on 23 Mar and 1 at Salina NR on 24 Nov.

Northern Pintail (Silfjun) *Anas acuta*
In spring, sightings on 9 dates from 24 Feb to 30 Mar in single or double figures up to 37, but 58 on 24 Feb, 49 on 18 Mar, and 52 on 19 Mar, all in Malta-Gozo channel. In autumn, in single or double figures up to 18 on 7 dates from 18 Oct to 24 Nov, but 30 over Ghadira NR on the first date.

Common Teal (Sarsella) *Anas crecca*
In spring, singles at Ghadira NR on 07 Feb and at Simar NR from 15–16 Feb and again on 19 Feb. In autumn, 2 from 05–06 Sep, 3 on 15 Sep and 1 on 16 Sep at Simar NR and 8 at Qawra on 23 Sep. Then single figures on most dates at Simar NR and Ghadira NR, from 10 Oct to 07 Dec with max. 7 from 29–30 Oct and on 05 Nov at Simar NR. Outside Simar NR and Ghadira NR, recorded in singles on 12 Oct and 29 Oct and 2 on 12 Nov, all at Salina NR, and 2–3 at Marsa from 11 Nov to 12 Dec.

Little Grebe (Blonġun Żgħir) *Tachybaptus ruficollis*
Only reported from Ghadira NR and Simar NR. At Ghadira NR, singles present almost daily from 03 Jan to 10 Feb but 2 on 07 Jan. At Simar NR 2 almost daily from 04 Jan to 22 Feb. Then 1–2 again at Ghadira NR almost daily from 24 Aug to 29 Dec, and single almost daily at Simar NR from 21 Oct to 30 Dec.

Great Crested Grebe (Blonġun Prim) *Podiceps cristatus*
In winter, 2 at Birżebbuġa on 03 Jan, one of which still present on 04 Jan, and 1 also at Marsaxlokk on 03 Jan. Spring migrants included 4 on 27 Feb and 3 on 26 Mar at Ċirkewwa. Then in autumn, singles at Marsaxlokk on 29 Oct, at Salina NR on 31 Oct, at Marsaxlokk from 06–24 Nov and at St Paul's Bay on 13 Nov, 3 at Qawra on 01 Dec and 1 at Simar NR from 07–21 Dec.

Black-necked Grebe (Blonġun Sekond) *Podiceps nigricollis*
Wintering birds present at Salina NR on most dates from 01 Jan to 09 Feb with max. 5 present. Sightings at other sites included singles at Smart City and at Birżebbuġa on 03 Jan. 8 at Salina NR on 18 Mar and 3 at Ghajn Tuffieħa on 20 Mar were

probably spring migrants. Then in autumn, 1 at Smart City on 18 Oct and 25 Oct, 1 on 22 Oct then 1–2 almost daily from 28 Nov to 31 Dec at Salina NR, 1 almost daily from 04 Nov to 04 Dec and 2 on 16 Dec at Ghadira NR, and 1 at Simar NR almost daily from 01–31 Dec.

Greater Flamingo (Fjamingu) *Phoenicopterus roseus*

In late spring, 47 at L-Aħrax on 19 May and 27 at Qala on 26 Jun. In autumn, sightings on 41 dates from 10 Aug to 30 Oct. Flocks included 40 at Tas-Safra on 13 Aug, 15 on 14 Aug, 72 on 15 Aug (Fig. 03), 72 on 14 Sep and 5 on 02 Oct at Qawra and 27 at Valletta Breakwater on 10 Oct. Alighted birds, mostly stranded juveniles, included singles at Simar NR from 12 Aug to 15 Sep, and at Salina NR from 10–11 Aug and from 25 Aug to 03 Sep. Other sightings included singles at Ramla tal-Mixquqa on 12 Aug, at Kemmuna on 23 Oct, at Xrobb l-Għaġin on 30 Oct and at Delimara on 12 Nov.

1 ringed and released after rehabilitation.

Stock Dove (Tudun tas-Siġar) *Columba oenas*

1 at Ċirkewwa on 28 Feb.

Common Woodpigeon (Tudun) *Columba palumbus*

Singles at Buskett on 20 Feb and at Ġebel Ciantar on 21 Feb, at Buskett on 25 Mar, at Kemmuna on 26th, 28th and 29 Mar, at Luqa Airport on 29 Mar and at Salina NR on 02 Nov.

European Turtle-dove (Gamiema) *Streptopelia turtur*

In spring, early singles seen on 19th, 27th and 29 Mar. Then sightings almost daily from 06 Apr to 10 Jun, mostly single figures with max. 15 at Kemmuna on 22 Apr. Then regular sightings in late Jun and Jul of a pair that nested at Ghadira NR, but successful breeding not confirmed. In autumn, sightings almost daily from 21 Aug to 01 Oct, mostly low single figures with max. 8 at Salina NR on 10 Sep and 8 at Buskett on 13

Sep. Late singles on 22nd, 26th and 29 Oct and on 05 Nov. 21 ringed.

Eurasian Collared-dove (Gamiema tal-Kullar) *Streptopelia decaocto*

Common resident breeder, observed throughout most of the Islands but mainly at this species' strongholds e.g. at Ghadira NR area, Kemmuna and Ta' Qali, with counts of up to 100.

15 ringed, all at Ghadira NR.

European Nightjar (Buqrajq) *Caprimulgus europaeus*

In spring, sightings on most days from 08 Apr to 06 May, mostly low single figures with max. 5 at Buskett on 13 Apr. In autumn, sightings on most days from 28 Aug to 20 Oct, mostly low single figures with max. 14 at Buskett on 01 Oct. 1 late bird at Ghadira NR on 30 Oct.

46 ringed (7 in spring, 39 in autumn), most (36) at Buskett.

Alpine Swift (Rundun Żaqqu Bajda) *Tachymarptis melba*

In spring, sightings on 20 dates from 16 Mar to 25 May, mostly single figures but single flock of 15 birds at Qammieħ on 05 Apr. In summer, singles at Ghadira NR on 17 Jun and 29 Jun, 5 at Baħar iċ-Ċagħaq on 29 Jun, 1 at Salina NR on 30 Jun and 2 at Ġirgenti on 13 Jul. In autumn, sightings on 10 dates from 06 Sep to 31 Oct, mainly low single figures but 16 on 15 Sep and exceptional flock of 42 on 18 Sep at Buskett.

Pallid Swift (Rundun Kannelli) *Apus pallidus*

In spring and summer, seen regularly from 17 Mar to 06 Aug, with highest counts related to breeding colonies including 21 at Gżira on 21 Apr and 40 at Dwejra (G) on 14 May and 04 Jun. In autumn, singles at Ghadira NR on 11 and 12 Sep and 2 at Buskett on 13 Sep and 17 Oct, then late singles at Ghadira NR on 06 Nov and at Smart City on 03 Dec (found exhausted).

3 ringed and released after rehabilitation.



Steve Zammit Lupo

Fig. 03. Part of a 72-strong flock of Greater Flamingoes (Ċirkewwa, 15 Aug)



Fig. 04. European Storm-petrel (Marsaskala offshore, 28 Aug)

Common Swift (Rundun) *Apus apus*

First bird on 11 Mar then almost daily from 16 Mar to 06 Oct. Triple figures frequent with max. 500 on 14 Apr, 07 May and 21 May, all at Dwejra (M). Breeding birds present throughout summer in usual strongholds, including Mosta, Mdina and Tas-Sliema. Late birds included singles at Buskett on 18 Oct and on 07 Nov, 2 at Miġra l-Ferħa on 28 Oct and 1 at Għadira NR on 09 Nov.

221 ringed (of which 217 from mid-May to mid-Jul), most (198) at Wied il-Għasel.

Common Cuckoo (Daqquqa Kaħla) *Cuculus canorus*

In spring, sightings on 22 dates from 19 Mar to 14 May always in low single figures with max. 5 at Dwejra (M) on 17 Apr. In autumn, singles at Għadira NR on 12 Sep and at Kemmuna on 19 Oct.

6 ringed (of which 5 in spring), most (5) at Kemmuna.

Western Water Rail (Gallozz tax-Xitwa) *Rallus aquaticus*

Sightings on most days from 02 Jan to 15 Apr and from 12 Sep to 31 Dec, mainly low single figures at Għadira NR and Simar NR, with max. 5 at each site. Outside Għadira NR and Simar NR recorded sporadically in singles from various valleys.

1 ringed.

Corncrake (Gallozz Aħmar) *Crex crex*

1 found stranded at Sliema on 13 Oct.

Spotted Crane (Gallozz tat-Tikek) *Porzana porzana*

Sightings at Wied Għajn Rihana on 14 dates from 08 Mar to 12 Apr, with max. 4 on 25 Mar and 02 Apr.

1 ringed and released after rescue.

Little Crane (Gallozz Żgħir) *Zapornia parva*

1–2 at Wied Għajn Rihana on 8 dates from 04–21 Apr, then one at same site on 4 dates from 14–22 May. In autumn, singles at

Birgu (found stranded) on 26 Oct and at Simar NR on 14 Nov. 2 ringed and released after rescue.

Baillon's Crane (Gallozz tal-Faxxi) *Zapornia pusilla*

1 found dead at Victoria (G) on 17 May.

Common Moorhen (Gallozz Iswed) *Gallinula chloropus*

Present as breeding resident throughout year at Għadira NR and Simar NR, with max. 20 at both sites. 1–3 birds also recorded regularly in most months at Salina NR. Outside nature reserves, sightings throughout year at Wied Għajn Rihana with max. 13 (including chicks), while breeding also noted at other sites including Wied Sara and Żejtun. 12 noted at Ħal Kirkop on 14 Oct. Otherwise single figures of migrants or wintering birds regularly recorded from various sites.

3 ringed, of which 2 rescued and released birds.

Common Coot (Tigieġa tal-Baħar) *Fulica atra*

Single bird at Għadira NR from 01 Jan to 01 Mar and from 28 Oct to 11 Nov. 1–2 birds at Simar NR from 05 Jan to 23 Apr, then daily in single figures at Simar NR from 21 Oct to 31 Dec with max. 8 on 12 Nov. Outside nature reserves, singles at Birkirkara on 17 Oct* and at Marsa on 11 Nov increasing to 2 until 08 Dec.

Common Crane (Grawwa) *Grus grus*

In spring, 2 seen from several sites on 16 Mar. In autumn, 6 at Mqabba on 21 Nov, 3 at Simar NR and 5 at Gianpula on 02 Dec, 1 at Luqa Airport on 06 Dec, 7 at Simar NR on 07 Dec and 8 at Ballut ta' Marsaxlokk on 08 Dec.

European Storm-petrel (Kangu ta' Filfla) *Hydrobates pelagicus*

Sightings on 24 dates from 04 May to 28 Aug (Fig. 4). Breeding as usual on Filfla with up to 500 noted on 21 Jul. Regularly sighted at offshore fish farms, with max. 350 at the South-East Aquaculture Zone on 13 Aug. Low double figures recorded

from land included 60 at Ta' Ċenċ on 30 Jun, and 50 on 25 Jul and 16 Aug at Qawra.

3875 ringed (from end May to end Jul), most (3859) on Filfla. 1 ringed in Italy controlled.

Scopoli's Shearwater (Ċiefa) *Calonectris diomedea*

First bird seen at Għar Lapsi on 15 Feb, then regular sightings until 27 Oct with max. on 17 Aug including 2000 at South-East Aquaculture Zone and 1000 at Jerma Point. 1000 also recorded on 18 Aug and 19 Aug at Jerma Point and Tas-Safra. 8 late birds at Jerma Point on 29 Nov. Localised breeder in colonies, monitored as part of BirdLife Malta seabird monitoring work.

147 ringed (mainly from end May to mid-Sep), most (46) on Filfla.

Yelkouan Shearwater (Garnija) *Puffinus yelkouan*

Regular sightings from 01 Jan to 09 Sep, mostly single and low double figures with max. 104 at Xatt l-Ahmar on 27 Feb and 450 at Ċirkewwa on 26 Mar. Outside this period, 1 at Qawra on 25 Sep, 4 at Jerma Point on 27 Oct and 3 at Qawra on 09 Dec. Localised breeder in colonies, monitored as part of BirdLife Malta seabird monitoring work.

290 ringed (mainly from end Feb to mid-Jul), most (137) at L-Ahrax.

Black Stork (Ċikonja Sewda) *Ciconia nigra*

Singles at Żurrieq on 12 Apr, at Buskett on 08 Sep, at Buskett and Dwejra (M) on 24 Sep and at Wied Għajn Rihana on 25 Sep.

Eurasian Spoonbill (Paletta) *Platalea leucorodia*

In spring, 1 on 16 Mar at Jerma Point and at St Paul's Bay, 2 on 29 May and 1 on 15 Jun at Salina NR and 1 on 24 Jun at Simar NR. In autumn, 1 at Mqabba on 21 Sep, 1 at Salina NR on 25 Sep and 1 at Simar NR on 27 Sep and 01 Oct (probably same bird), 13 at Dwejra (G) on 02 Oct, 3 at Żonqor on 06 Oct, 1 at Għadira NR on 14 Oct, and 2 at Għadira NR from 03–04 Dec, of which one stayed until 05 Dec and was seen at Simar NR on 06 Dec.

1 ringed in France observed.

Glossy Ibis (Velleran) *Plegadis falcinellus*

In spring, 16 at Majjistral Park, 1 at Għadira NR, and an exceptional 81 at Kemmuna on 31 Mar. Then on 05 Apr 1 at Għadira NR, 2 at Salina NR, 1 at Qammieħ, and a flock of 7 seen from various locations before settling at Simar NR. 10 at Simar NR on 06 Apr included the flock of 7 of the previous day and an additional 3 birds, which were also seen on 07 Apr. 1 at Salina NR on 08 May. In autumn, an exceptionally early bird on 18 Jul, followed by 2 at Qawra on 08 Aug, 24 at

Ir-Ramla tal-Mixquqa on 12 Aug, 17 at Kemmuna on 19 Aug, 31 at Smart City on 24 Aug, 20 at Tas-Safra on 25 Aug, 1 at Buskett on 31 Aug, 1 from 16 Sep to 03 Oct at Simar NR, which was occasionally seen at other sites, and 1 at Kemmuna on 24 Oct.

Eurasian Bittern (Kappun) *Botaurus stellaris*

In spring, singles at Salina NR on 25 Feb, at Santa Luċija (M) and Mġarr ix-Xini on 07 Mar, at Mġarr ix-Xini on 09 Mar, 2 at Ċirkewwa on 11 Mar and singles at Kemmuna on 24 Mar and at Mellieħa on 28 Mar*. In autumn, 2 at Salina NR on 17 Sep and singles at Birkirkara on 04 Oct*, at Kemmuna on 18 Oct, at Mġarr ix-Xini on 26 Oct and at Miġra l-Ferħa on 28 Oct.

Common Little Bittern (Russett tas-Siġar) *Ixobrychus minutus*

Mostly seen at Simar NR with sightings of 1–2 birds on 30 dates from 07 Jan to 14 May including 1 bird that exceptionally wintered here. Outside Simar NR, regularly recorded from Birkirkara from 10 Apr to 16 May and from 15 Aug to 07 Nov, including on 10 occasions on 02 May*. 1 late bird at Marsa from 11 Nov to 08 Dec was another exceptional probably wintering bird. Other sightings included 4 at Kemmuna on 01 May, 1 at Wied Għajn Rihana on 05 Jun and 4 at Mġarr ix-Xini on 26 Oct.

5 ringed and released after rescue and/or rehabilitation.

Black-crowned Night-heron (Kwakka) *Nycticorax nycticorax*

In spring, regular sightings from 20 Mar to 28 May, mostly single or low double figures, max. 37 at Kemmuna, 15 at Ħal Far on 24 Apr and 15 at Simar NR on 14 May. Up to 4 present at Simar NR throughout Jun and Jul. In autumn, regular sightings from 12 Aug to 26 Oct, mostly single or low double figures, max. 40 at Valletta on 14 Aug, 23 at Buskett on 30 Aug and 26 at Blata



Fig. 05. Glossy Ibis (Simar NR, 5 Apr)

Maro V. Gauci

I-Bajda on 03 Sep. Late singles at Simar NR on 04 Nov and at Mgarr ix-Xini on 19 Nov.

1 ringed and released after rehabilitation.

Squacco Heron (Agrett Isfar) *Ardeola ralloides*

In spring, sightings on 20 dates from 03 Apr to 02 Jun, mostly single figures including 7 at Ghajn Tuffieħa on 11 Apr, 6 at Tal-Ħamrija on 15 Apr, 8 at Xrobb I-Għaġin on 01 May and 12 at Filfla on 05 May. In autumn, sightings on 5 dates from 03–22 Sep, always low single figures including 4 on 03 Sep, 3 on 05 Sep and 3 on 08 Sep, all at Qawra. 1 late bird at Simar NR on 08 Nov.

Cattle Egret (Agrett tal-Bhejjem) *Bubulcus ibis*

Feral population in Salina area present throughout year with up to 218 birds counted in one day. Apparently wild birds also recorded throughout most of year but mostly in autumn, with sightings including 26 at Simar NR on 24 Sep, 12 at Ghadira NR on 09 Oct, 14 at Simar NR on 12 Oct, 32 at Ghammar Hill on 13 Oct, 31 at Simar NR on 21 Oct, and 30 at Ħas Saptan on 08 Nov.

Grey Heron (Russett Griż) *Ardea cinerea*

First sighting on 11 Feb, then regularly till 25 May, mostly single or low double figures, max. 27 at Kemmuna on 29 Mar, 33 at Jerma Point on 30 Mar, and up to 130 across various sites on 05 Apr. Singles on 21 Jun at Salina NR and on 25 Jun at Simar NR possibly same bird. In autumn, regular sightings from 09 Jul to 15 Dec, with max. 21 at Ghadira NR on 03 Sep, 70 at Qawra on 05 Sep, 22 at Kemmuna on 07 Sep, 21 at Qawra on 09 Sep, 34 at Birkirkara on 23 Sep, and 29 at Simar NR on 29 Sep. The 09 Jul record was an exceptional sighting involving a flock of 6 at Mellieħa Bay. 1 bird stayed at Salina NR till end of year.

Purple Heron (Russett Aħmar) *Ardea purpurea*

In spring, sighting on 25 dates from 18 Mar to 09 May, mostly single figures with notable records including 18 at Majjistral Park on 29 Mar, 71 across several sites on 05 Apr, 8 at Ghadira NR on 06 Apr, and 7 on 15 Apr and 8 on 24 Apr at Manoel Island. In autumn, sightings on 24 dates from 13 Aug to 07 Nov (Fig. 06), mostly single figures with max. including 39 at Tas-Safra on 13 Aug, 16 at Buskett on 26 Aug, 25 at Tas-Safra and 43 at Qbajjar on 02 Sep, and 18 at Buskett and 20 at Qawra on 03 Sep.

Great White Egret (Russett Abjad) *Ardea alba*

In spring, sightings on 8 dates from 16 Mar to 05 Apr included 25 at Jerma Point on 15 Mar, 5 at Ċirkewwa on 19 Mar, 7 at Ġnejna on 20 Mar and 6 at Żonqor on 05 Apr. In autumn, sightings on 9 dates from 20 Aug to 09 Nov included 3 at Salina NR on 14 Sep, 8 at Ghadira NR on 02 Oct, 24 at Qawra on 02 Oct and 2 at Simar NR on 13 Oct. 1 late bird at Xlendi on 19 Dec.

Little Egret (Agrett Abjad) *Egretta garzetta*

Resident population, probably largely of feral origin, present at Salina NR and Simar NR general area throughout year with up to 30 counted at both sites. Migrants in spring noted regularly from 08 Mar to 18 May with max. up to 150 across several sites on 05 Apr, 16 at Ghajn Tuffieħa on 12 Apr, 20 at Manoel Island and 49 at Ċumnija on 15 Apr, 17 at Ċumnija on 25 Apr and 23 at Kemmuna on 29 Apr. Migrants in autumn noted regularly from 13 Aug to 09 Nov with max. 35 at Ramla Valley on 14 Sep and 52 at Salina NR on 22 Sep.

Northern Gannet (Sula) *Morus bassanus*

Sightings on 19 dates from 03 Jan to 28 Mar at various sites, always singles but 2 at Qbajjar on 17 Jan. Then an exceptionally early bird on 03 Oct at Tas-Safra followed by singles on 27 Oct, 29 Nov and 28 Dec at different sites.

Great Cormorant (Margun) *Phalacrocorax carbo*

Regular sightings from 01 Jan to 04 May and from 09 Sep to 31 Dec at various sites mainly around coast. Max. 180 in single flock at Jerma Point on 17 Jan referred to the now annual wintering population.

1 ringed and released after rescue.

Eurasian Thick-knee (Tellerita) *Burhinus oedicnemus*

In spring, sightings on 10 dates from 21 Mar to 04 May, mostly singles but 3 at Dwejra (G) on 21 Mar, 4 at Kemmuna on 04 Apr and 2 at Pembroke on 04 Apr. In autumn, sightings on 9 dates from 03 Oct to 11 Nov, all singles at various sites.

Eurasian Oystercatcher (Gallina tal-Baħar) *Haematopus ostralegus*

In spring, 1 at Mellieħa on 09 Mar*. In autumn, 7 on 17 Jul, 3 on 19 Jul, 9 on 28 Jul, 1 on 29 Jul, 5 on 11 Aug, 1 on 13 Aug, 1 on 16 Aug and 14 on 18 Aug, all at Tas-Safra, 16 at Qawra on 06 Sep, 4 at Pembroke on 28 Sep and 1 at Qbajjar on 02 Oct.

Avon Tanti



Fig. 06. Purple Heron (Ghadira NR, 4 Sep)



Fig. 07. Kentish Plover (Jerma Pt, 18 Aug)

Pied Avocet (Xifa) *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Singles at Salina NR from 05–08 May, at Qbajjar on 13 Oct, and at Għadira NR on 20 Nov.

Black-winged Stilt (Fras-servjent) *Himantopus himantopus*

Migrants in spring noted regularly from 09 Mar to 21 Jun, with max. 11 at Għadira NR on 18 Mar, 10 at Manoel Island on 28 Mar and 13 at Għadira NR on 15 Apr. 1 pair bred at Għadira NR, raising 3 young. Migrants in autumn noted from 03 Aug to 22 Oct with max. 11 at Tas-Safra on 03 Aug and 10 at Salina NR on 20 Aug.

Grey Plover (Pluviera Grīza) *Pluvialis squatarola*

Singles at St Paul's Islands on 04 May, at Birkirkara on 15 May*, at Qawra on 14 Aug, at Simar NR on 24 Aug, and at Għadira NR on 27 Aug.

Eurasian Golden Plover (Pluviera) *Pluvialis apricaria*

In spring, singles at Nadur (G) on 17 Feb, at Xrobb l-Għaġin on 28 Feb, at Mellieħa on 20 Mar* and 3 at Ċirkewwa on 21 Mar. In autumn, sightings on 16 dates from 10 Oct to 26 Dec, mostly singles, with max. 6 at Mtaħleb on 17 Oct, 88 at Gianpula and 8 at Ta' Qali on 11 Nov, 9 at Fiddien on 22 Nov and 7 at Wied il-Għasri on 26 Dec.

A species hugely under-recorded by birders compared with hunters and trappers. No doubt large numbers caught every year, particularly from illegal trapping at night.

Eurasian Dotterel (Birwina) *Eudromias morinellus*

In spring, 2 at Mellieħa on 20 Mar*. In autumn, singles at Dingli Cliffs on 29 Aug, at Tal-Bardan on 31 Aug, at Buskett on 10 Sep, at Dwejra (M) on 20 Sep, at Kemmuna on 25 Oct, 31 Oct

and 03 Nov and at Birkirkara on 07 Nov*, 2 at Buskett on 12 Nov and 1 at Ġebel Ċiantar on 22 Nov.

Common Ringed Plover (Monakella Prima) *Charadrius hiaticula*

In spring, sightings on 54 dates from 09 Mar to 10 Jun mostly at Għadira NR and Salina NR in single figures, with highest single count of 10 birds at Għadira NR on 11 May. In autumn and winter, sightings on 97 dates from 17 Jul to 28 Dec, mostly at Għadira NR and Salina NR in low single figures, with max. 6 at Pwales on 4 Nov.

8 ringed, most (7) at Għadira NR.

Little Ringed Plover (Monakella) *Charadrius dubius*

First sighting on 01 Mar, then recorded almost daily till 03 Nov, mostly low single figures at Għadira NR, Salina NR and Simar NR. Outside nature reserves recorded sporadically in low numbers. Highest single count in spring of 15 birds at Għadira NR on 05 Apr and highest single count in autumn of 10 birds at Salina NR on 01 Sep. Breeding recorded at Għadira NR as usual, with up to 3 pairs noted. 1 at Salina NR on 07 Nov and 1 on 19 Nov and 3 on 14 Dec at Għadira NR were late birds.

14 ringed (of which 12 from early Jul to end Sep, including 2 pulli and 2 fresh juvs), all at Għadira NR.

Kentish Plover (Monakella Żgħira) *Charadrius alexandrinus*

Singles at Għadira NR from 10–14 Apr, at Jerma Point and Żonqor on 13 Aug and at Jerma Point on 18 Aug (Fig. 07), 13 Sep and 29 Sep.

Northern Lapwing (Venewwa) *Vanellus vanellus*

Singles at il-Hofriet on 17 Jan, at Fiddien on 22 Nov, at Sannat on 09 Dec and 2 at Wied il-Għasri on 26 Dec.



Fig. 08. Whimbrels (Ġirkewwa, 26 Mar)

Whimbrel (Gurlin Sekond) *Numenius phaeopus*

In spring, sightings on 6 dates from 14 Mar to 17 Apr included passage of up to 258 birds in six flocks at Ġirkewwa on 26 Mar (Fig. 08), 50 at Ġirkewwa on 27 Mar and 30 at Kemmuna on 28 Mar. In autumn, sightings on 7 dates from 16 Jul to 21 Aug, mostly singles but 3 at Tas-Safra on 16 Jul, 6 at Tas-Safra on 30 Jul and 8 at Simar NR on 13 Aug.

Eurasian Curlew (Gurlin) *Numenius arquata*

1 on 15 Mar at Mellieħa*, 2 at Luqa Airport on 18 Apr, 3 on 21 Sep and an exceptional flock of 22 on 23 Nov at Qawra.

Black-tailed Godwit (Girwiel Prim) *Limosa limosa*

20 on 21 Mar and 25 on 28 Mar at Ġirkewwa, and 1 at Għadira NR from 11–12 Jul.

1 ringed and released after rehabilitation.

Ruddy Turnstone (Monakella Imperjali) *Arenaria interpres*

In spring, singles at St Paul's Islands on 04 May, at Birkirkara on 12 May* and at Jerma Point on 13 May. In autumn, singles at Għadira NR on 06 Aug, at Qawra on 13 Aug, at Qbajjar on 31 Aug and at Għadira NR on 03 Sep.

Ruff (Girwiel) *Calidris pugnax*

In spring, sightings on 39 dates from 09 Mar to 09 Jun, all single figures with max. 4 at Għadira NR from 01–05 Apr and 4–5 from 25–28 Apr. In autumn, sightings on 24 dates from 27 Jul to 08 Nov, mostly singles but 11 at Wied Għajj Rihana on 07 Nov.

Curlew Sandpiper (Pispisella Hamra) *Calidris ferruginea*

In spring, sightings on 19 dates from 17 Apr to 23 May all at Għadira NR in low single figures with max. 5 on 01 May. In autumn, sightings on 29 dates from 12 Jul to 02 Oct, mainly at Għadira NR and Salina NR in low single figures with max. 4 at

Salina NR on the last date.

2 ringed, both in Jul at Għadira NR.

Temminck's Stint

(Tertuxa Griza) *Calidris temmincki*

In spring, sightings on 17 dates from 25 Apr to 30 Jun mostly 1–2 with max. 4 at Għadira NR on 11 May. In autumn, sightings on 7 dates from 20 Jul to 09 Sep, always singles but 2 at Salina NR on 30 Aug.

2 ringed, both in summer at Għadira NR.

Sanderling

(Pispisella Bajda) *Calidris alba*

Singles at Tas-Safra on 11th, 18th and 19 Aug, at Wied il-Mielah on 07 Sep and at Qbajjar on 05 Oct.

Dunlin (Pispisella tad-Dabra) *Calidris alpina*

In winter, singles at Għadira NR from 03 Jan to 15 Feb and at Salina NR on 04 Jan. In spring, 1–2 at Għadira NR from 16 to 20 Mar and 2 at Salina NR on 23 Apr. 1 at Għadira NR on 24 Jun was probably a late spring migrant. Then sightings on 121 dates from 27 Jul to 31 Dec included flock of 13 at Qawra on 25 Sep and 12 on 04 Oct, 9 on 19 Oct and 8 from 25–26 Oct at Salina NR. Up to 6 at Salina NR throughout Nov of which 2–3 stayed throughout Dec.

17 ringed (all in autumn), most (14) at Għadira NR.

Little Stint (Tertuxa) *Calidris minuta*

In spring, sightings on 75 dates from 04 Mar to 08 Jun mainly at Għadira NR and Salina NR with max. 16 from 01–02 May, 25 on 04 May, 20 from 05–08 May, all at Għadira NR. In autumn and winter, sightings almost daily from 14 Jul to 31 Dec mainly at Għadira NR and Salina NR with max. 12 at Għadira NR on 19 Jul, 14 at Salina NR on 24 Jul, 12 at Għadira NR on 25 Jul and 27 Jul and 14 at Salina NR on 19 Aug. 1–2 birds stayed at Salina NR throughout Nov and Dec.

73 ringed (all in autumn), most (69) at Għadira NR.

Eurasian Woodcock (Gallina) *Scolopax rusticola*

Singles at Buskett on 02 Jan, at Kemmuna on 01 Nov, at Wied Għolliġa on 08 Nov, at Buskett on 17 Nov, at Wied Għolliġa on 18 Nov, at Ta' Ċenċ on 19 Nov, at Wied Għolliġa on 22 Nov, at Buskett on 23 Nov, at Salina NR and Wied Għolliġa on 24 Nov and at Kemmuna on 15 Dec.

A species hugely under-recorded by birders when compared with hunters, especially due to targeted efforts using dogs to find and flush birds.

Great Snipe (Bekkaċ ta' Mejju) *Gallinago media*

1 at Wied Għajj Rihana on 18 May.

Common Snipe (Bekkaċċ) *Gallinago gallinago*

In spring, sightings on 28 dates from 07 Feb to 06 May from various sites, always of 1–2 birds. In autumn and winter, sightings on 29 dates from 03 Sep to 28 Dec, mostly low single figures from various sites with max. 8 at Kemmuna on 19 Oct and 7 at Sannat on 09 Nov.

2 ringed, both in autumn.

Jack Snipe (Ċinkonja) *Limnocyrtus minimus*

Singles at Gudja on 27 Oct, at Pwales on 02 Nov, at Haş Saptan from 05–10 Nov, at Ta' Ċenċ on 06 Nov, at Simar NR on 09 Nov and at Pwales from 23 Nov to 13 Dec (Fig. 09).

Common Sandpiper (Pispisella) *Actitis hypoleucos*

Recorded practically daily throughout year except in Jun, mostly low single figures at various sites but mainly at Salina NR. Highest counts included 19 at Salina NR on 26 Apr, an exceptional 60 at Tas-Safra on 07 Aug, 20 at Salina NR on 07 Sep and 15 at Salina NR on 10 Nov.

65 ringed (of which 47 in autumn), most (40) at Simar NR.

Green Sandpiper (Swejda) *Tringa ochropus*

In spring, sightings on 42 dates from 17 Feb to 06 May mainly low single figures at various sites, with max. 10 at Simar NR on 08 Mar and 8 at Salina NR on 22 Mar. 1 bird at Simar NR on 03 Jun was probably an early autumn migrant. In autumn, sightings on 70 dates from 15 Jun to 04 Nov, mainly low single figures at Ghadira NR with max. 7 on 04 Aug. Late birds on 22 Nov and 15 Dec at Ghadira NR.

19 ringed, all in autumn at Ghadira NR.

Spotted Redshank (Ċuvett) *Tringa erythropus*

Singles at Ghadira NR on 03 Apr, at Jerma Point on 02 Aug, and at Ghadira NR on 24 Aug and 05 Sep.

Common Greenshank (Ċewċewwa) *Tringa nebularia*

In spring, sightings on 31 dates from 21 Mar to 29 Jun mostly, singles at Ghadira NR and Salina NR except 2 at Ghadira NR from 04–06 Apr and 2 at both Salina NR and Ghadira NR on 15 Apr. In autumn, sightings on 31 dates from 11 Jul to 27 Nov, mostly singles at various locations but 2 at Salina NR on 14 Jul, 2–3 at Ghadira NR from 26–28 Jul, an exceptional 11 at Wied Babu on 26 Aug and 4 at Buskett on 04 Sep.

Common Redshank (Pluverott) *Tringa totanus*

In spring, sightings on 8 dates from 02 Mar to 16 May always singles, mostly at Ghadira NR and Salina NR. 1 at Ghadira NR from 28–29 Jun was probably an early autumn migrant. In autumn, sightings on 13 dates from 01 Jul to 23 Nov, mostly singles at Ghadira NR but 2 at both Ghadira NR and Salina NR on 26 Oct.

Wood Sandpiper (Swejda Ċara) *Tringa glareola*

In spring, sightings on 56 dates from 04 Mar to 02 Jun, mainly at Ghadira NR and Salina NR in single figures, but 29 at Salina NR on 15 Apr and 30 at Ghadira NR on 25 Apr. In autumn and winter, sightings on 121 dates from 30 Jun to 27 Dec, mainly at Simar NR, Ghadira NR and Salina NR in low single figures but 16 at Salina NR on 15 Aug and 16 at Ghadira NR and 9 at Tas-Safra on 21 Aug.

33 ringed [of which 16 (excluding confiscated birds) in autumn], most (21) at Ghadira NR.



Fig. 09. Jack Snipe (Pwales, 8 Dec)

Marsh Sandpiper (Ċewċewwa Żgħira) *Tringa stagnatilis*

A poor year, with single sighting of 1 at Għadira NR on 20 Mar.

Collared Pratincole (Perniċjotta) *Glareola pratincola*

A good year with multiple sightings. 5–6 from 22–25 Apr (Fig. 10), 1 on 02 May and 1 on 07 May, all at Luqa Airport, and 1 at Salina NR on 03 May.

Little Gull (Gawwija Żgħira) *Hydrocoloeus minutus*

A poor year with single sighting of 1 at Żonqor on 06 Apr.

Black-legged Kittiwake (Gawwija tal-Ingilterra) *Rissa tridactyla*

1 at Salina NR on 14 Jan and 2 at Ta' Barkat on 19 Dec.

Slender-billed Gull (Gawwija Munqarha Rqiq) *Larus genei*

Sightings on 61 days in first half of the year from 01 Jan to 24 May, mainly singles at Salina NR. Max. included 5 at Jerma Point on 17 Mar and 4 at Ċirkewwa on 24 and 26 Mar. In second half of the year, singles on 16 Jul and 02 Sep then regularly from 03 Oct to 29 Dec mainly at Salina NR. Max. included 6 at Għadira NR on 26 Oct, 5 at Salina NR on 03 Nov and 04 Nov, and 4 at Salina NR on 17 Dec and 24 Dec.

Black-headed Gull (Gawwija Rasha Kannella) *Larus ridibundus*

Sightings almost daily from 01 Jan to 02 Jun. Highest numbers at Salina NR with high triple and quadruple figures regularly with highest single estimated counts of 3000 on 12 Jan and 21 Jan. Numbers dropped to single figures by end Apr with 2–3 birds still regularly at Salina NR until 02 Jun. Then 1 from 14–18 Jun at Simar NR and Salina NR followed by 1 at Simar NR on 25 Jun. Sightings on 7 dates in Jul with up to 4 birds at Salina NR on 18 Jul and at Marsaxlokk on 20 Jul. Then regularly from 13 Aug and daily from 05 Oct till end of year with max. up to 3000 at Salina NR on 10 Dec.

2 ringed and released after rehabilitation. 3 ringed in Croatia, 5 in Hungary, 5 in Poland and 1 in Ukraine observed.

Mediterranean Gull (Gawwija Rasha Sewda) *Larus melanocephalus*

Sightings almost daily from 01 Jan to 08 Aug. Highest numbers at Salina NR with high double and low triple figures regularly, with highest single estimated count of up to 400 birds on 05 Jan. 1–2 birds stayed at Salina NR till 08 Aug, followed by singles on 21 Aug and 07 Sep at Tas-Safra. Then regularly from 01 Oct and daily from 22 Oct till end of year with highest counts at Salina NR of up to 1200 birds on 23 Nov.

Audouin's Gull (Gawwija Munqarha Aħmar) *Larus audouinii*

Up to 16 wintering at Birżebbuġa until 15 Feb. Elsewhere seen regularly in single figures from 03 Jan to 14 May with max. 4 at Salina NR on 18 Mar. Then regularly from 17 Jul to 30 Oct, mainly juvs with highest single count of 7 at Tas-Safra on 16 Aug. Then unusually scarce in winter with sightings on only 7 dates from 14 Nov to 30 Dec, with max. 4 at Birżebbuġa on 29 Dec.

3 ringed in Italy and 1 ringed in Croatia observed.



Fig. 10. Collared Pratincole (Airport, 25 Apr)

Mew Gull (Gawwija Sekonda) *Larus canus*

Singles seen regularly at Salina NR from 21 Jan to 01 Feb and from 18–24 Dec.

Lesser Black-backed Gull (Gawwija Daharha Iswed) *Larus fuscus*

Sightings almost daily from 01 Jan to 22 Mar. Highest numbers at Salina NR with max. 14 birds on 11 Feb. 1 at Dwejra (G) on 16 Apr. Then regularly from 06 Jul till end of year with max. 21 at Salina NR on 28 Dec.

2 ringed in Norway, 1 in Denmark and 1 in Finland observed.

Yellow-legged Gull (Gawwija Prima) *Larus michahellis*

Resident species present throughout year, with highest single counts of up to 500. Breeding mainly on Filfla as usual.

19 ringed, most (11) at Salina NR.

Caspian Gull (Gawwija tal-Kaspju) *Larus cachinnans*

Sightings regularly from 01 Jan to 18 Mar, almost all at Salina NR with max. 7 on 21 Jan. Then regularly from 29 Nov to 30 Dec, almost all at Salina NR with max. 4 on 14 Dec and 29 Dec.

Common Gull-billed Tern (Ċirlewwa Bumunqar) *Gelochelidon nilotica*

2 at Dwejra (G) on 16 Apr, 1 at Simar NR on 30 May, and 1 at Salina NR on 11 Sep.

Caspian Tern (Ċirlewwa Prima) *Hydroprogne caspia*

In spring, 1 at Salina NR on 16 Apr and 3 at Għajn Tuffieħa on 17 Apr. In autumn, sightings on 13 dates from 16 Aug to 24 Oct in single figures with max. 4 at Qawra on 02 Oct, 8 at Kemmuna on 19 Oct and 4 at Għadira NR on 24 Oct.

White-winged Tern (Ċirlewwa tal-Lvant) *Chlidonias leucopterus*

Singles at Simar NR on 30 Apr and from 10–11 Jul (first July record).

Black Tern (Ċirlewwa Sewda) *Chlidonias niger*

Sightings on 25 dates from 17 Jul to 06 Sep, regularly in triple figures mostly far offshore with max. 500 at Tas-Safra on 22 Aug, 700 on 25 Aug, 800 on 28 Aug (Fig. 11) and 500 on 29 Aug, all at Qawra.

Common Tern (Ċirlewwa tal-Baħar) *Sterna hirundo*

Singles on 29 Nov at Qbajjar and from 08–12 Dec at Ghadira NR (Fig. 12), with probably same bird seen from Majjistral Park on 13 Dec.

Sandwich Tern (Ċirlewwa tax-Xitwa) *Thalasseus sandwichensis*

Sightings on most days from 01 Jan to 25 Apr, mostly single figures. Max. included 13 at Salina NR on 02 Feb, 14 at Ċirlewwa on 12 Mar, and 13 at Jerma Point on 16 Mar. 1 on 15 May at Jerma Point was unusual. Then regularly in low single figures from 16 Aug to end of year, with max. 8 at Salina NR on 04 Dec.

Pomarine Jaeger (Skuwa) *Stercorarius pomarinus*

Singles on 14th, 16th, and daily from 22–24 Mar, all at Ċirlewwa.

Great Skua (Skuwa Prima) *Catharacta skua*

1 at Jerma Point on 08 Feb, from 10–11 Mar, from 16–17 Mar and on 21 Mar, 2 at Ċirlewwa on 11 Mar, 1 at Paradise Bay on 16 Mar, singles at Ċirlewwa and Pembroke on 17 Mar and 1 at Ċirlewwa on 24 Mar.

Common Barn-owl (Barbaġann) *Tyto alba*

Singles at Buskett on 13 Aug and 21 Sep were probably released birds from re-introduction project at Buskett.

Eurasian Scops-owl (Kokka) *Otus scops*

In spring, sightings on 15 dates from 25 Feb to 09 May, mostly in singles with max. 5 at Kemmuna on 21 Apr. 1 at Ghajn Tuffieħa from 25–26 Jul was an unusual record. In autumn, sightings on 14 dates from 01 Sep to 01 Dec, mostly singles with max. 3 at Buskett on 04 Oct and at Kemmuna on 01 Nov.

32 ringed (17 in spring, 15 in autumn), most (12) at Kemmuna.

Northern Long-eared Owl (Qattus) *Asio otus*

Singles ringed at Kemmuna on 30 Oct and 02 Nov.

Short-eared Owl (Kokka tax-Xagħri) *Asio flammeus*

Sightings on 38 dates from 20 Feb to 01 May, all of 1–2 birds mostly at Kemmuna. In autumn, sightings on 16 dates from 06 Oct to 15 Dec, with mostly 1–2 birds but 3 at Kemmuna on 03 Nov. 1 pair bred successfully on Kemmuna. 4 unfledged young discovered in March and seen regularly as they gained independence until early May.

13 ringed, most (11) at Kemmuna, including 4 chicks.

Osprey (Arpa) *Pandion haliaetus*

In spring, sightings on 15 dates from 11 Mar to 07 May mostly singles from various sites with max. 7 at Ċirlewwa and 4 at Dwejra (G) on 21 Mar. In autumn, sightings on 25 dates from 27 Aug to 28 Nov, mostly low single figures from Buskett with max. 5 on 15 Sep.

European Honey-buzzard (Kuċċarda) *Pernis apivorus*

In spring, sightings on 22 dates from 17 Apr to 31 May, mostly low single figures from various sites with max. 6 at Bingemma on 20 Apr, 7 at Simar NR on 18 May and 6 at Kemmuna on 25 May. In autumn, sightings on 43 dates from 23 Aug to 03 Nov,

Aron Tanti



Fig. 11. Black Tern (Marsaskala offshore, 28 Aug)

Dennis Cachia



Fig. 12. Common Tern (Ghadira NR, 25 Apr)



Fig. 13. Egyptian Vulture (Buskett, 14 Sep)

mostly at Buskett and regularly in double and triple figures with max. 200 on 16 Sep, 200 on 24 Sep and 180 on 25 Sep.

3 ringed and released after rehabilitation.

Egyptian Vulture (Avultun Abjad) *Neophron percnopterus*

1 satellite-tagged bird from re-introduction project in Basilicata (Italy) on 06–07 Sep in Gozo. 1 apparently untagged bird seen from various locations on 13–14 Sep and another satellite-tagged bird from Italian re-introduction project also seen on 14 Sep in Gozo and at Buskett (Fig. 13).

Short-toed Snake-eagle (Ajkla Bajda) *Circaetus gallicus*

1 at Buskett on 09 Oct.

Lesser Spotted Eagle (Ajkla tat-Tikek) *Clanga pomarina*

Singles at Buskett on 24 Sep and 04 Oct.

Western Marsh-harrier (Baghdan Ahmar) *Circus aeruginosus*

In spring, sightings on most dates from 13 Feb to 14 Jun. A good spring in terms of numbers with exceptional passage from 21–25 Mar with max. counts including 140 at Ċirkewwa on 21 Mar, 145 at Luqa Airport and 100 at Gianpula on 22 Mar, 110 at Salina NR on 23 Mar and 220 at Ċirkewwa on 24 Mar. In autumn, sightings on 72 dates from 04 Aug to 14 Nov, mostly at Buskett and Dwejra (M) with max. 200 on 08 Sep, 175 on 09 Sep, 160 on 15 Sep, and 200 on 16 Sep. 1 late bird at Ghadira NR on 16 Dec.

7 ringed and released after rehabilitation.

Hen Harrier (Baghdan Ikħal) *Circus cyaneus*

An exceptional year with sightings on 11 dates from 16 Oct to 26 Nov, all singles except 3 at Miġra l-Ferħa on 28 Oct (Fig. 14).

Pallid Harrier (Baghdan Abjad) *Circus macrourus*

In spring, sightings on 23 dates from 08 Mar to 07 May, mostly low single figures with max. 3 at Ċirkewwa on 21 Mar. In

autumn, 1 on 24 Sep and 2 on 27 Sep at Buskett, and 1 at Wied Ġħajn Riħana on 10 Oct.

1 ringed and released after rehabilitation.

Montagu's Harrier (Baghdan Griż) *Circus pygargus*

In spring, sightings on 31 dates from 20 Mar to 11 May, mostly low single figures with max. 12 on 14 Apr and 10 on 17 Apr at Dwejra (M). In autumn, sightings on 18 dates from 20 Aug to 06 Oct, mostly low single figures with max. 4 at Buskett on 26 Aug.

2 ringed and released after rehabilitation.

Eurasian Sparrowhawk (Sparvier) *Accipiter nisus*

1 at Kemmuna from 20–24 Feb was an unusual record of a possibly wintering bird. In spring, singles at Kemmuna on 27 Mar, at Ġħajn Tuffieħa on 11 Apr, at Buskett on 25 Apr and at Mosta on 13 May. In autumn, 1 early bird on 01 Sep, then on 45 dates from 12 Sep to 01 Dec, mostly at Buskett with max. single count of 5 on 09 Oct. 2 unusually late birds on 27 Dec at Buskett.

Black Kite (Astun Iswed) *Milvus migrans*

A good spring with sightings on 21 dates from 17 Mar to 24 Apr, mostly low single figures with max. 9 at Ċirkewwa on 23 Mar, 5 at Ċirkewwa on 26 Mar and 7 at Dwejra (M) on 14 Apr. Autumn very poor, with sightings on 9 dates from 22 Aug to 09 Oct, mostly at Buskett with daily totals not exceeding 2 birds. 1 at Magħtab on 02 Dec was exceptionally late.

1 ringed and released after rehabilitation.

Eurasian Buzzard (Kuċċarda Prima) *Buteo buteo*

Singles at Ġebel Ċiantar on 17 Mar, and at Buskett on 03 Oct and 17 Oct.

Common Hoopoe (Daquqa tat-Toppu) *Upupa epops*

Early bird on 11 Feb, then on most dates from 04 Mar to 30 Apr,



Fig. 14. Hen Harrier (Miġra l-Ferħa, 28 Oct)

with max. 10 at Qbajjar on 22 Mar, and 11 at Kemmuna and 20 at Qammieħ on 27 Mar. In autumn, sightings regularly from 05 Aug to 09 Oct, always low single figures not exceeding 3 birds.

36 ringed (28 in spring, 8 in autumn), most (18) at Ghadira NR.

European Bee-eater (Qerd in-Naħal) *Merops apiaster*

In spring, sightings on most dates from 03 Apr to 29 May, regularly in double figures with max. single counts of 324 at Salina NR on 22 Apr, 95 at Salina NR on 26 Apr, 150 at Kemmuna on 29 Apr and 90 at Salina NR on 05 May. In autumn, sightings on most dates from 23 Aug to 05 Oct, with regular triple figures with max. single counts of 300 at Buskett on 08 Sep, 250 at Dingli Cliffs on 09 Sep, 300 at Buskett on 15 Sep, 250 at Dwejra (M) on 15 Sep, 300 at Buskett on 18 Sep and 300 at Dwejra (M) on 20 Sep.

36 ringed (13 in spring, 23 in autumn), most (14) at Buskett.

European Roller (Farruġ) *Coracias garrulus*

In spring, singles at Luqa Airport from 08–14 Apr, at Dwejra (M) on 27 Apr, at Gianpula on 04 May, at Dwejra (M) on 05 May, at Girgenti on 18 May and at Dwejra (M) on 23 May. In autumn, singles at Buskett on 11 and 13 Sep, at Ghadira NR on 18 Sep and at Dwejra (M) on 20 Sep.

Common Kingfisher (Ghasfur ta' San Martin) *Alcedo atthis*

Sightings almost daily from 01 Jan to 03 Apr, mostly at Ghadira NR and Simar NR of 1 or 2 birds. Records outside nature reserves include singles at Wied il-Kappuccini on 17 Jan and at Manoel Island on 31 Jan. The sightings almost daily from 27 Jul to 31 Dec, mostly at Ghadira NR, Simar NR and Salina NR in low single figures with max. single counts including 7 on 08 Sep and 5 on several dates at Salina NR. Records outside nature reserves include singles at Mtaħleb on 14 Sep and 19 Sep and 2 at St Paul's Bay on 13 Nov.

32 ringed (of which 30 in autumn), most (19) at Ghadira NR. 1 ringed in Slovakia controlled.

Eurasian Wryneck (Bulebbiet) *Jynx torquilla*

In winter, sightings on 7 dates from 01 Jan to 21 Feb, mostly singles at Buskett. In spring, sightings on 34 dates from 06 Mar to 05 May, all of 1–2 birds at various sites. In autumn and winter, sightings on 37 dates from 21 Aug to 31 Dec, all of 1 or 2 birds at various sites except 4 at Kemmuna on 08 Sep.

38 ringed (7 in winter, 16 in spring, 15 in autumn), most (11) at Ghadira NR.

Lesser Kestrel (Spanjulett Sekond) *Falco naumanni*

In spring, sightings on 57 dates from 27 Feb to 08 May, mostly single figures from several sites with max. including 60 at Ċirkewwa, 21 at Tas-Silġ, 40 at Luqa Airport on 21 Mar, 15 on 23 Mar at Luqa Airport, 29 at Salina NR on 08 Apr, 15 at Kemmuna and 25 at Ta' Qali on 16 Apr, 15 at Chadwick Lakes on 17 Apr, 19 on 22 Apr at Biżbiżija, and 20 at Ta' Qali on 03 May. In autumn, sightings on 23 dates from 03 Sep to 29 Oct,

mainly at Buskett with max. 27 on 09 Sep, 16 on 16 Sep, 15 on 23 Sep and 15 on 24 Sep.

Common Kestrel (Spanjulett) *Falco tinnunculus*

Sightings on most dates from 01 Jan to 04 Jun, mostly low single figures at various sites. Max. 20 at Ċirkewwa and 11 at Dwejra (G) on 21 Mar, 9 at Salina NR on 22 Mar, 15 at Gianpula on 16 Apr, 14 at Ghajn Tuffieħa on 17 Apr and 10 at Kemmuna on 22 Apr. Sightings in summer included singles on 15 Jun, 10 Jul, 18 Jul and 08 Aug, all in Gozo. 1 pair bred successfully on west coast of Gozo, 3 fledged juvs observed on 16 Jun. In autumn and winter, sightings on most dates from 25 Aug to 31 Dec, with max. 30 at Buskett on 23 Sep, 25 at Dwejra (M) on 24 Sep, 15 at Dwejra (M) on 06 Oct, 16 at Jerma Point on 07 Oct and 17 at Buskett on 26 Oct.

29 ringed, most ringed and released after rehabilitation.

Kestrel sp. *Falco sp.*

Unidentified kestrel species recorded regularly from 08 Mar to 05 May, on 23 Jun and regularly from 16 Sep to 17 Nov. Highest counts included 120 at Ċirkewwa on 21 Mar, 10 at Buskett on 21 Sep, 15 at Buskett on 29 Sep and 10 at Salina NR on 06 Oct.

Red-footed Falcon (Żumbrell) *Falco vespertinus*

In spring, sightings on 32 dates from 06 Apr to 31 May, mainly in low single figures with max. 11 at Ta' Qali on 16 Apr, 8 at Simar NR on 28 Apr, and 8 on 03 May and 6 on 13 May at Gianpula. In autumn, singles on 23rd, 25th and 26 Sep, and 1 late bird on 10 Nov, all at Buskett.

Eleonora's Falcon (Bies tar-Regina) *Falco eleonora*

In spring, sightings on 8 dates from 15 Apr to 25 May, all singles but 2 at Manoel Island on 24 Apr. Sightings on 25 dates in summer and autumn from 12 Jul to 07 Nov, all of 1–2 birds and mostly at Buskett.

1 ringed and released after rehabilitation.

Merlin (Seqer ta' Denbu) *Falco columbarius*

1 unusual record on 17 Feb at Cospicua. Then singles on 8



Fig. 15. Saker Falcon (Buskett, 9 Oct)

Steve Zammit Lupi



Fig. 16. Red-backed Shrike (Kemmuna, 8 Sep)

dates from 30 Sep to 21 Oct mainly at Buskett and 1 on 15 Nov at Salina NR.

Eurasian Hobby (Seqer tal-Ħannieqa) *Falco subbuteo*

In spring, sightings on 29 dates from 05 Apr to 17 Jun, mostly singles at various sites. In autumn, sightings almost daily from 26 Aug to 28 Oct, with max. 12 on 10 Sep, 15 on 23 Sep, 35 on 24 Sep and 15 on 25 Sep, all at Buskett or Dwejra (M).

Saker Falcon (Bies tal-Lvant) *Falco cherrug*

Singles at Buskett on 09 Oct (Fig. 15, p.18) and at Kemmuna on 31 Oct.

Peregrine Falcon (Bies) *Falco peregrinus*

Sightings almost throughout year, always of singles away from the one known breeding site. Breeding confirmed at one location where 1 pair fledged 3 young, but 6 birds noted on 20 May.

Eurasian Golden Oriole (Tajra Safra) *Oriolus oriolus*

In spring, sightings almost daily from 10 Apr to 26 May, mostly of single figures with highest counts of 20 on 18 Apr, 10 on 20

Apr, 15 on 24 Apr, 30 on 25 Apr, 10 on 27 Apr, 15 on 28 Apr and 10 on 29 Apr all at Buskett and 10 at Ġirgenti on 13 May. 1 noted at Buskett on 3 dates in Jul. In autumn, sightings on 9 dates from 07 Aug to 14 Sep, mainly singles but 3 on 29 Aug and 4 on 05 Sep at Buskett.

12 ringed (all in spring), most (5) at Buskett.

Red-backed Shrike (Kaċċamendula Ħamra) *Lanius collurio*

Singles on 08 Sep at Kemmuna (Fig. 16), on 22 Oct at Xrobb l-Għaġin and on 31 Oct at Manoel Island, all 1st year birds.

Great Grey Shrike (Kaċċamendula Nordika) *Lanius excubitor*

1 of subspecies *elegans* from 21–22 Mar at Qbajjar.

Woodchat Shrike (Kaċċamendula) *Lanius senator*

First bird on 20 Mar, then regularly from 26 Mar to 25 May mostly single figures with max. 25 on 22 Apr and 20 on 23 Apr at Kemmuna. 1 late bird at Ghadira NR on 19 Jun. In autumn, singles on 5 dates from 03 to 14 Sep at different sites.

39 ringed (all in spring), most (34) at Kemmuna.

Carrion Crow (Ċawlun) *Corvus corone*

Singles at Binġemma on 17 Apr and at Jerma Point on 25 May (both Hooded Crows *C. c. cornix*).

Greater Short-toed Lark (Bilbla) *Calandrella brachydactyla*

Sightings on most days from 19 Mar to 23 Sep, including breeding birds in suitable areas. Max. 50 at Luqa Airport on 24 Apr, 30 at Wied il-Mielah on 11 May and 40 at Mġarr (M) on 05 Sep.

4 ringed.

Temminck's Lark (Alwetta tal-Qrun) *Eremophila bilopha*

1 at Ħal Far from 23–24 Apr (Fig. 17). Fifth record for Malta.

Woodlark (Ċuqlajta) *Lullula arborea*

1 at Xrobb l-Għaġin on 30 Mar (Fig. 18).

Steve Zammit Lupi



Fig. 17. Temminck's Lark (Ħal Far, 24 Apr)

Aron Ħanġi



Fig. 18. Woodlark (Xrobb l-Għaġin, 30 Mar)



Fig. 19. Olivaceous Warbler (Ghadira NR, 16 May)

Eurasian Skylark (Alwetta)

Alauda arvensis

Sightings almost daily from 01 Jan to 12 Apr, mostly single or low double figures with max. 30 on 14 Feb and 20 from 08–10 Mar at Luqa Airport. Then almost daily from 10 Oct to 31 Dec, with max. 112 at Dwejra (G) on 20 Oct, 60 at Kemmuna on 21 Oct, 50 at Migra I-Ferħa on 28 Oct, 150 at Kemmuna on 03 Nov and 50 at Gianpula on 11 Nov.

26 ringed, all in autumn at Kemmuna.

Zitting Cisticola (Bufula tal-Imrewħa)

Cisticola juncidis

Widespread resident breeder recorded daily throughout year in single and low double figures. Highest single counts include 20 at Burmarrad on 07 Jan, 30 at Majjistral Park on 24 Feb, 20 at Majjistral Park on 11 Mar and 28 at Burmarrad on 08 Sep. Interesting record of ♀ with brood patch ringed on Kemmuna (where this species is not known to breed) on 27 Apr.

51 ringed.

Olivaceous Warbler (Bekkafik tal-Lvant) *Iduna pallida*

1 ringed at Ghadira NR on 16 May (Fig. 19).

Isabelline Warbler

(Bekkafik Griz) *Iduna opaca*

Singles ringed at Kemmuna on 29 Apr, and at Simar NR on 07 May and 31 May.

Icterine Warbler

(Bekkafik Isfar) *Hippolais icterina*

In spring, sightings almost daily from 22 Apr to 19 May, always in single figures with max. 6 at Buskett on 04 May. In autumn, early birds ringed on 25 Jul and 13 Aug, followed by singles daily from 07–11 Sep, and 1 late bird ringed on 06 Nov.

80 ringed (69 in spring, 11 in autumn), most (24) at Mtahleb.

Moustached Warbler (Bufula Gastnija) *Acrocephalus melanopogon*

Singles at Salina NR on 09 and 12 Jan, at Ghadira NR on 31 Oct (ringed), at Ballut ta' Marsaxlokk on 13 Nov, and 1 wintering bird at Wied Ghajn Rihana on 08, 14 and 31 Dec.

1 ringed at Ghadira NR.



Fig. 20. Common Grasshopper-warbler (Ghadira NR, 04 Sep)

Sedge Warbler (Bufula tas-Simar) *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

In spring, 1 early bird on 12 Feb, then almost daily from 23 Feb to 27 May, mostly single figures with max. 30 on 13 and 14 Apr at Simar NR, 37 on 28 Apr at Kemmuna, and 20 on 29 Apr at Simar NR. In autumn, sightings on 25 dates from 08 Aug to 08 Nov in low single figures with max. 4 at Wied Ghajn Rihana on 01 Nov.

435 ringed [424 in spring (50 on 28 Apr), 11 in autumn], most (136) at Simar NR. 1 ringed in Slovenia controlled.

Common Reed-warbler (Bufula tal-Qasab) *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

In spring, regular sightings from 31 Mar to 30 May, always in low single figures with max. 6 at Salina NR on 05 May. Sighting regularly from 10 Jul to 18 Nov in summer and autumn, always single figures with max. 6 at Wied Ghajn Rihana on 21 Aug, and 5 at Ghadira NR on 08 Sep, 14 Sep and 05 Oct.

113 ringed (13 in spring, 100 in autumn), most (45) at Ghadira NR.

Great Reed-warbler (Bufula Prima) *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

In spring, regular sightings from 09 Mar to 05 Jun, mostly low single figures with max. 8 on 09 Apr and 10 on 24 Apr at Wied Ghajn Rihana and 20 at Ghadira NR on 28 Apr. In autumn, regular sightings from 13 Aug to 17 Nov, always singles but 4 at Kemmuna on 08 Sep and 2 at Wied Ghajn Rihana on 17 Nov.

110 ringed (84 in spring, 26 in autumn), most (49) at Ghadira NR.

Savi's Warbler (Bufula tal-Buda) *Locustella luscinioides*

Singles ringed at Ghadira NR on 21 Aug and at Buskett on 31 Oct.

Common Grasshopper-warbler (Bufula tal-Ġurati) *Locustella naevia*

Exceptional year with 4 sightings – singles at Ghadira NR on 26 Aug, at Mtahleb on 02 Sep, at Ghadira NR on 04 Sep (Fig. 20) and at Buskett on 07 Sep, all ringed. These constitute the 15th to 18th records for Malta.

Northern House Martin (Hawwief) *Delichon urbicum*

In spring, sightings on most days from 22 Jan to 23 Jun, mostly single or double figures, with triple figure counts including 300 at Salina NR on 22 Apr, 300 at Simar NR and 800 at Salina NR on 05 May, and 300 at Dwejra (M) on 07 May. In autumn, sightings regularly from 19 Aug to 15 Nov with max. 150 at Rabat on 18 Oct and 100 at Buskett on 26 Oct. Sightings on 6



Fig. 21. Dusky Warbler (Ghadira NR, 07 Nov)

dates in Dec including 2 from 25–27 Dec at Xemxija.

31 ringed (of which 30 in spring), most (14) at Simar NR.

Red-rumped Swallow (Regina tal-Futtaf) *Cecropis daurica*

Sightings on 38 dates from 15 Feb to 18 Jun, mostly low single figures with max. 12 at Wied il-Kappuccini on 20 Mar, 20 at Mellieħa on 16 Apr, 15 at Bingemma on 17 Apr, and 30 at Simar on NR on 22 Apr. In autumn, 2 at Xagħra (G) on 19 Sep, 1 at Ghadira NR on 05 Oct, 5 at Ghadira NR on 12 Oct and 1 at Buskett on 14 Oct, followed by 1 late bird at Marsa on 12 Dec.

12 ringed (all in spring), most (8) at Ghadira NR.

Barn Swallow (Futtaf) *Hirundo rustica*

In spring, an early bird on 07 Feb, then almost daily from 26 Feb to 29 Jun, with low to middle triple figures recorded regularly. Exceptional highest count of 5000+ birds recorded at Ċirkewwa on 21 Mar. Breeding birds recorded throughout summer, mainly in Gozo and north of Malta. In autumn and winter, almost daily from 15 Aug to 29 Dec, with regular triple figures, max. 1000 on 19 Sep and 2000 on 18 Oct at Buskett. Single figures recorded throughout Dec.

1492 ringed, most (620) at Ghadira NR. 1 ringed in Slovakia controlled.

Eurasian Crag Martin (Hawwiefat tal-Blat) *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

Singles at Qammieħ on 23 Oct and at Salina NR on 01 Nov, 3 at Dwejra (G) on 18 Nov and 1 at Wied Babu on 12 Dec.

Collared Sand Martin (Hawwiefat tax-Xtut) *Riparia riparia*

In spring, 1 early bird on 16 and 17 Feb at Simar NR, then on most days from 08 Mar to 23 May, mostly single and double figures. Max. include 165 at Salina NR on 22 Apr and 400 at Salina NR on 06 May. 1 late bird at Ghadira NR on 23 Jun. In autumn, sightings regularly from 03 Sep to 15 Nov, mostly low single figures with max. including 15 at Ghadira NR on 09 Sep, 10 at Buskett on 19 Sep and 10 at Salina NR on 23 Sep.

53 ringed (44 in spring, 9 in autumn), most (24) at Ghadira NR.

Eastern Bonelli's Warbler

(Vjolin tal-Lvant) *Phylloscopus orientalis*

Poor year with only 2 sightings – 1 at Buskett on 10 Apr and 1 ringed at Simar NR on 13 Apr.

Western Bonelli's Warbler

(Vjolin Bajdani) *Phylloscopus bonelli*

Singles ringed at Kemmuna on 26 Apr, at Buskett on 04 Sep and at Ghadira NR on 03 Oct.

Wood Warbler

(Vjolin Hadrani) *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

In spring, sightings almost daily from 02 Apr to 21 May, mostly in single and low double figures with max. 38 at Madliena on 10 Apr, 40 at Simar NR on 13 Apr and on 14 Apr and 40 at Ghadira

NR on 24 Apr. In autumn, 1 early bird on 16 Aug, then regularly from 05 Sep to 15 Nov in low single figures followed by 1 late bird at Bidnija on 05 Dec.

749 ringed [710 in spring (50 on 12 Apr), 39 in autumn], most (323) at Ghadira NR.

Yellow-browed Warbler (Vjolin tal-Faxx) *Phylloscopus inornatus*

Up to 2 wintering birds regularly at Buskett from 04 Jan to 19 Feb then again from 01–14 Apr. 1 bird also at Simar NR from 17 Feb to 01 Mar. Autumn relatively poor, with sightings on 10 dates from 09 Oct to 16 Nov, always singles but 3 at Buskett on 16 Nov.

11 ringed (of which 10 in autumn), most (7) at Buskett.

Dusky Warbler (Vjolin Skur) *Phylloscopus fuscatus*

1 ringed at Ghadira NR on 07 Nov (Fig. 21).

Willow Warbler (Vjolin Safrani) *Phylloscopus trochilus*

In spring, sightings on most days from 13 Mar to 22 May, mostly single and low double figures with max. 20 at Tas-Silġ on 21 Mar, 15 at Ghadira NR on 09 Apr and 15 at Buskett on 24 Apr. In autumn, sightings on most days from 21 Aug to 24 Nov, mostly single figures with max. 10 at Simar NR on 25 Sep and 20 at Ghadira NR on 26 Oct.

499 ringed [260 in spring (21 on 17 Apr), 239 in autumn], most (170) at Ghadira NR.

Common Chiffchaff (Vjolin tax-Xitwa) *Phylloscopus collybita*

Sightings on most days from 01 Jan to 19 May, mostly single and low double figures with max. 36 at Wied Għolliġa and 94 at Wied Inċita on 07 Feb. Then daily from 04 Oct to 31 Dec mostly single and double figures with max. 120 at Ghadira NR on 30 Oct, 13 Nov and 21 Nov.

2483 ringed (426 from Jan–mid-May, 2057 from Oct–Dec), most (859) at Ghadira NR. Single birds ringed in Czech Republic, Germany and Italy controlled; single Malta-ringed birds recovered in Czech Republic, Italy and Norway.

Siberian Chiffchaff**(Vjolin Ċar)** *Phylloscopus tristis*

Singles at Simar NR on 29 Jan and at Ghadira NR on 21 Nov and 26 Dec (both ringed).

Cetti's Warbler**(Bufula tal-Għolliq)** *Cettia cetti*

Widespread resident breeder recorded throughout year, usually single and low double figures.

102 ringed, most (28) at Buskett.

Eurasian Blackcap**(Kapinera)** *Sylvia atricapilla*

Sightings almost daily from 01 Jan to 08 May, mostly single and low double figures, with max. including 80 on 06 Jan, 100 on 03 Feb and 120 on 27 Feb, all at Buskett. Singing ♂ present at Buskett throughout May, Jun and Jul. Then sightings almost daily from 12 Sep to 31 Dec, with max. including 50 on 24 Dec and 30 on 26 Dec at Buskett.

1255 ringed [303 from Jan to early May, 952 from mid-Sep to Dec (52 on 14 Nov)], most (434) at Buskett.

Garden Warbler (Bekkafik) *Sylvia borin*

In spring, sightings almost daily from 06 Apr to 31 May, mostly single and low double figures, with max. including 50 at Kemmuna on 28 Apr and on 30 Apr. In autumn, sightings almost daily from 14 Aug to 16 Nov, mostly single and double figures with max. including 250 on 01 Sep, 200 on 02 Sep, 200 on 03 Sep, 150 on 04 Sep and 150 on 07 Sep, all at Buskett.

2119 ringed [585 in spring, 1534 in autumn (86 on 04 Sep)], most (920) at Buskett. Single birds ringed in Czech Republic, Italy, Russia (Kaliningrad) and Slovenia controlled.

African Desert Warbler (Bufula tad-Deżert) *Curruca deserti* / **Asian Desert Warbler (Bufula tal-Isteppa)** *Curruca nana*

One of this species pair seen near Wied il-Mielah on 01 Nov, but exact species could not be ascertained.

Lesser Whitethroat (Bekkafik Irmiedi) *Curruca curruca*

1 ringed at Ghadira NR on 16 Jan was exceptional winter record. Then singles at Xrobb l-Għaġin on 16 and 19 Mar, at Ghadira NR on 17 Apr, at Kemmuna on 02 May, at Simar NR on 04 May, at Buskett on 10 Sep, at Simar NR on 13 Sep, at Buskett on 25 Sep and at Ghadira NR on 20 Oct (Fig. 22).

7 ringed.

Sardinian Warbler (Bufula Sewda) *Curruca melanocephala*

Widespread resident breeder recorded throughout year, usually single and low double figures.

610 ringed, most (214) at Buskett.

Subalpine Warbler (Bufula Passajra) *Curruca cantillans*

In spring, sightings almost daily from 08 Mar to 08 May, mostly



Fig. 22. Lesser Whitethroat (Ghadira NR, 16 Jan)

single and low double figures with max. including 50 at Tal-Famrija on 21 Mar, and 40 at Kemmuna on 27 Mar and on 20 Apr. 2 late birds at Kemmuna on 30 Jun. In autumn, sightings almost daily from 05 Aug to 19 Oct, always single and low double figures with max. 25 at Buskett on 17 Aug and at Ghadira NR on 11 Sep. Late singles at Mtaħleb on 30 Oct and at Kemmuna on 12 Nov.

531 ringed (241 in spring, 290 in autumn), most (169) at Kemmuna.

Rüppell's Warbler (Bufula tal-Pavalor) *Curruca ruppelli*

1 ♂ at Xrobb l-Għaġin on 19 Mar and 1 ♀ at Kemmuna from 17 to 18 Apr (ringed).

Common Whitethroat (Bekkafik Ahmar) *Curruca communis*

In spring, sightings almost daily from 21 Mar to 23 May, mostly single and double figures with max. including 180 on 22 Apr, 100 on 23 Apr, 180 on 28 Apr and 70 on 29 Apr, all at Kemmuna. In autumn, sightings on 7 dates only from 08 Sep to 30 Oct, all singles but 2 at Kemmuna on 08 Sep.

1115 ringed (1110 in spring, 5 in autumn), most (591) at Kemmuna.

1 Malta-ringed bird recovered in Libya.

Spectacled Warbler (Bufula Hamra) *Curruca conspicillata*

Scarce resident breeder recorded throughout year, always in single figures with max. including 8 at Dwejra (G) on 28 Feb and at Tal-Famrija on 08 Mar.

2 ringed.

Dartford Warbler (Bufula tax-Xagħri) *Curruca undata*

Singles at Buskett on 16 Nov (ringed) and at Majjistral Park from 13–27 Dec (Fig. 23, p. 23).

Common Starling (Sturnell) *Sturnus vulgaris*

Sightings almost daily from 01 Jan to 26 Mar, frequently in triple figures with max. 1000 on 8 dates in Jan and Feb. Then sporadically on 8 dates from 30 Mar to 21 Jun. In autumn, 3

Raymond Galea



Fig. 23. Dartford Warbler (Majjistral, 27 Dec)

Raymond Galea



Fig. 24. Spotless Starlings (Kemmuna, 21 Feb)

at Ghadira NR on 08 and 11 Sep then daily from 24 Sep to 31 Dec, frequently in triple figures with regular counts of 1000. Max. 6000 at Marsa on 11 Nov.

9 ringed, most (5) at Ghadira NR.

Spotless Starling (Sturnell Iswed) *Sturnus unicolor*

2 on 21 Feb at Kemmuna (Fig. 24), 1 of which was ringed. This bird was therefore probably a ♀ that had been ringed at Kemmuna in 2019 and had bred with a Common Starling.

Mistle Thrush (Malvizzun Prim) *Turdus viscivorus*

Singles at Buskett on 10 Oct and at Kemmuna on 12 Oct and 05 Nov.

Song Thrush (Malvizz) *Turdus philomelos*

Sightings on most days from 01 Jan to 04 Apr, mostly single

Aron Tanti



Fig. 25. Bluethroat (Ballut ta' Marsaxlokk, 21 Feb)

or low double figures with max. at Buskett of 28 on 01 Jan, 32 on 20 Feb and 29 on 21 Feb, and 25 at Kemmuna on 21 Feb. In summer, 1 of unknown origin at Chadwick Lakes on 31 Jul. Then almost daily from 12 Oct to 31 Dec, mostly single or double figures with max. 100 at Mtaħleb on 18 Oct, 420 at Girgenti, 130 at Majjistral and 100 at Buskett on 19 Oct, 350 at Dwejra (G) on 20 Oct and 250 at Miġra l-Ferħa on 28 Oct.

169 ringed (23 from Jan–Mar, 146 from Oct–Dec), most (59) at Kemmuna. 1 ringed in Romania controlled.

Redwing (Malvizz Aħmar) *Turdus iliacus*

Singles at Buskett on 03 Feb and on 22 Oct, at Kemmuna on 20 Nov and at Birkirkara on 22 Nov.

Eurasian Blackbird (Malvizz Iswed) *Turdus merula*

Sightings on 14 dates from 01 Jan to 28 Feb, mainly 1–2 birds at Buskett. Then sightings on 31 dates from 19 Oct to 31 Dec, mostly singles with max. 3 at Kemmuna on 21 Nov and 4 at Buskett on 31 Dec.

14 ringed (of which 13 in autumn), most (7) at Kemmuna.

Ring Ouzel (Malvizz tas-Sidra) *Turdus torquatus*

Singles at Ghadira NR on 16 Oct and at Salina NR on 30 Nov.

Rufous-tailed Scrub-robin (Rożinjol tax-Xagħri) *Cercotrichas galactotes*

Singles at Hal Far from 24–25 Apr, at sea off Marsaxlokk (on a ship) on 29 Apr and at Kemmuna on 25 May.

Spotted Flycatcher (Żanzarell tat-Tikek) *Muscicapa striata*

Sightings almost daily from 20 Apr to 25 May, mostly single figures with max. 15 at Kemmuna on 02 May, 15 at Dwejra (M) on 05 May, 20 at Kemmuna on 08 May and 20 at Dwejra (M) on 10 May. Breeding birds present throughout June to August, with highest numbers at Ta' Qali and Buskett strongholds. Then regularly from 01 Sep to 13 Nov always in low single figures not exceeding 4 birds. Studies on the taxonomic status of local breeding birds ongoing, with preliminary results indicating presence of subspecies *tyrrhenica*.

114 ringed [77 in spring, 27 in summer (breeding birds and pulli), 10 in autumn], most (31) at Kemmuna.

European Robin

(Pitirross) *Erithacus rubecula*

Sightings almost daily from 01 Jan to 30 May, mostly single and double figures up to 100 at Buskett, decreasing to single figures by end Mar. Low single figures regularly from 18 Jun to 15 Sep, with max. 4 at Rabat on 04 Sep. Then daily from 18 Sep to 31 Dec, regularly in low triple figures with max. 450 at Kemmuna on 19th, 20th and 21 Oct.

3810 ringed [(435 from Jan–May, 6 in summer, 3369 from Sep–Dec (463 ringed on 21 Oct)], most (1598) at Kemmuna.

Bluethroat (Rożinjol Ikħal) *Cyanecula svecica*

3 at Rabat on 01 Jan of which 1 still present on 30 Jan, up to

2 at Wied Ghajn Rihana from 01 Jan to 20 Mar, 1 at Xlendi on 22 Jan, up to 2 at Ghadira NR from 11 Jan to 14 Mar, 1 at Ta' Gajdoru on 20 Feb, up to 5 at Burmarrad from 21 Feb to 13 Mar, 2 at Simar NR on 04 Mar of which 1 stayed until 24 Mar, 1 at Xrobb l-Għaġin on 08 Apr, 1 at Simar NR on 21 Apr, 1 at Salina NR on 05 Nov, 1 at Ballut ta' Marsaxlokk from 11 Nov to 05 Dec (Fig. 25, p. 23), 1 at Ghadira NR on 13 Nov, 1 at Mtaħleb on 20 Nov and 1 at Pwales on 23 Nov and 09 Dec, increasing to 2 on 13 Dec.

8 ringed (3 in winter, 2 in spring, 3 in autumn), most (3) at Rabat. 1 ringed in Czech Republic controlled.

Common Nightingale

(Rożinjol) *Luscinia megarhynchos*

Sightings almost daily from 14 Mar to 06 May, mostly single or low double figures with max. 12 at Għar Lapsi on 05 Apr and at Ghajn Tuffieħa on 15 Apr. In autumn, sightings on 28 dates from 15 Aug to 05 Nov, always low single figures but 10 at Kemmuna on 08 Sep.

90 ringed (76 in spring, 14 in autumn), most (40) at Kemmuna.

Red-breasted Flycatcher (Żanzarell Żgħir) *Ficedula parva*

Singles at Ghadira NR from 11–25 Sep, at H'Attard on 25 Sep, at Buskett on 29 Sep, 02 Oct and 20 Oct, at Kemmuna on 20 Oct, at Manoel Island on 21 Oct, at Kemmuna on 31 Oct, at Mġarr ix-Xini on 03 Nov, at Mtaħleb on 06 Nov, at Pwales on 27 Nov and at Swieqi on 23 Dec.

6 ringed (all in autumn), most (2) at Kemmuna.

Semi-collared Flycatcher (Żanzarell tal-Lvant) *Ficedula semitorquata*

2 at Kemmuna and 1 at Marsalforn on 30 Mar, singles at Kemmuna on 31 Mar, at Buskett and at Rabat on 01 Apr, at Ghadira NR and at Dwejra (M) on 02 Apr and at Ghadira NR on 03 Apr.

6 ringed (all in spring), most (3) at Kemmuna.

European Pied Flycatcher (Żanzarell Iswed) *Ficedula hypoleuca*

In spring, sightings almost daily from 30 Mar to 22 May, mostly single and low double figures with max. 25 on 18 Apr, 15 on 30 Apr and 15 on 01 May at Kemmuna and 20 at Rabat on 02 May. In autumn, singles at Simar NR from 06–09 Sep and on 25 Sep.

257 ringed (255 in spring, 2 in autumn), most (87) at Kemmuna.

Collared Flycatcher (Żanzarell tal-Kullar) *Ficedula albicollis*

Sightings almost daily from 29 Mar to 10 May, mostly single figures with max. 15 on 30 Mar and 12 on 01 May at Kemmuna.

142 ringed (all in spring), most (54) at Kemmuna.



Fig. 26. Moussier's Redstart (Majjistral, 20 Oct)

Black Redstart (Fjamma Sewda) *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Sightings daily from 01 Jan to 31 Mar, usually single or low double figures with max. including 20 at Qammieħ on 04 Mar and at Tal-Ħamrija on 08 Mar. Late birds at Ġebel Ciantar on 08 and 17 Apr, and at Kemmuna on 23 Apr. Then daily from 18 Oct to 31 Dec, usually single or low double figures with max. including 30 on 30 Oct and 28 on 31 Oct at Manoel Island and 33 at Qalet Marku on 07 Nov.

87 ringed (34 from Jan–Mar, 53 from Oct–Dec), most (28) at Buskett.

Common Redstart (Fjamma) *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

In spring, sightings almost daily from 21 Mar to 13 May, always single figures but 10 on 27 Mar, 10 on 22 Apr, 15 on 23 Apr and 10 on 28 Apr at Kemmuna. 1 late bird at Kemmuna on 27 May. In autumn, sightings on most days from 01 Sep to 10 Nov, always single figures but 10 at Ghadira NR on 25 Sep.

229 ringed (117 in spring, 112 in autumn), most (68) at Kemmuna.

1 Malta-ringed bird recovered in France.

Moussier's Redstart (Fjamma tat-Tuneżija) *Phoenicurus moussieri*

1 ♂ at Majjistral Park on 20 Oct (Fig. 26).

Rufous-tailed Rock-thrush (Ġanbublu) *Monticola saxatilis*

1 at Majjistral Park on 30 Mar, 2 at Clapham Junction on 09 Apr, singles at Mellieħa and Majjistral Park on 15 Apr, 2 at Biġemma and 1 at Mistrà on 17 Apr, singles at Ħal Far on 24 Apr and at Mqabba on 15 Sep.

Blue Rock-thrush (Merill) *Monticola solitarius*

Widespread resident breeder recorded throughout year, usually single and low double figures, mostly in coastal cliff areas but also increasingly in urban areas.

20 ringed, most (5) at Ghadira NR.



Fig. 27. White-crowned Wheatear (Dwejra Gozo, 17 Oct)

Whinchat (Buċaqq tas-Silla) *Saxicola rubetra*

In spring, 1 early bird on 21 Mar then almost daily from 05 Apr to 10 May, mostly single or low double figures with max. 40 on 28 Apr and 30 on 01 May at Kemmuna. 3 late birds at Kemmuna on 25 May. In autumn, singles on 11 dates from 08 Sep to 24 Oct.

114 ringed (111 in spring, 3 in autumn), most (85) at Kemmuna.

Common Stonechat (Buċaqq tax-Xitwa) *Saxicola torquatus*

Sightings almost daily from 01 Jan to 27 Mar, usually single figures with max. 13 at Dingli Cliffs on 03 Feb. Then almost daily from 17 Oct to 31 Dec, usually single figures with max. 30 at Pembroke on 25 Oct and 30 at Mtaħleb on 30 Oct.

70 ringed (of which 65 from Oct–Dec), most (25) at Ghadira NR.

Northern Wheatear (Kuda) *Oenanthe oenanthe*

In spring, 1 early bird at Majjistral Park on 24 Feb, then almost daily from 08 Mar to 01 May, mostly single or low double figures with max. 23 at Majjistral Park on 15 Apr and 30 at Ġebel Ciantar on 20 Apr. Late singles on 07th, 11th and 23 May. In autumn, sightings on most days from 28 Aug to 15 Nov, always low single figures with max. 5 at Kemmuna on 08 Sep, at Majjistral Park on 21 Sep and Luqa Airport on 07 Oct.

14 ringed (2 in spring, 12 in autumn), most (6) at Mtaħleb.

Isabelline Wheatear (Kuda Ramlija) *Oenanthe isabellina*

In spring, sightings on 20 dates from 28 Feb to 16 Apr, always 1–2 birds.

Black-eared Wheatear (Kuda Dumnikana) *Oenanthe hispanica*

In spring, sightings on 23 dates from 20 Mar to 29 Apr, always single figures with max. 5 at Qammieħ on 15 Apr, and 5 on 16 Apr and 7 on 20 Apr at Kemmuna. In autumn, 1 at Buskett on 07 Sep, 2 at Kemmuna on 08 Sep and 1 at Jerma Point on 22 Sep.

5 ringed, all in spring at Kemmuna.

White-crowned Wheatear

(Kuda Rasha Bajda) *Oenanthe leucopyga*

Singles from 15–20 Apr at Dwejra (G) (Fig. 27) (3rd record for Malta) and from 22–23 Apr at Ħal Far (4th record for Malta), both 2nd-year birds.

Goldcrest (Bufula tal-Qamar) *Regulus regulus*

Sightings regularly from 01 Jan to 25 Feb, always single figures mostly at Buskett and Ta' Qali, with max. 7 at Ta' Qali on 09 Jan. Then regularly from 30 Oct to 30 Dec, mostly single figures mostly at Buskett and Ta' Qali, with max. 10 at Buskett on 07 Nov.

17 ringed (of which 14 from Oct–Dec), most (12) at Buskett.

Common Firecrest

(Bufula tax-Xemx) *Regulus ignicapilla*

Sightings regularly from 01 Jan to 26 Mar, mostly single figures mostly at Ta' Qali, with max. 10 on 08 Jan. Then regularly from 19 Oct to 31 Dec, always single figures with max. 6 at Ta' Qali on 20 Dec.

17 ringed (of which 12 from Oct–Dec), most (5) at Kemmuna.

Dunnock (Żiemel) *Prunella modularis*

Sightings regularly from 01 Jan to 19 Mar, always single figures with max. 5 at Buskett on 16 Jan. Then sightings almost daily from 16 Oct to 31 Dec, mostly single and low double figures with max. 50 on 31 Oct and 40 on 03 Nov at Kemmuna.

406 ringed [17 from Jan–Feb, 389 from Oct–Dec (64 on 31 Oct)], most (115) at Kemmuna.

Spanish Sparrow (Għasfur tal-Bejt) *Passer hispaniolensis*

Widespread resident breeder recorded throughout year, usually double and triple figures.

804 ringed, most (171) at Simar NR.

Eurasian Tree Sparrow (Ġaħġaħ) *Passer montanus*

Widespread resident breeder recorded throughout year, usually single and low double figures, with max. 40 at Bidnija on 22 Mar, 40 at Buskett on 25 Aug and 50 at Foresta 2000 on 23 Aug.

117 ringed, most (36) at Buskett.

Tree Pipit (Dizz) *Anthus trivialis*

In spring, sightings almost daily from 19 Mar to 17 May, usually single and double figures with max. 100 at Mtaħleb on 13 Apr, 300 at Kemmuna and 140 at Salina NR on 22 Apr, and 200 at Kemmuna on 02 May. In autumn, sightings regularly from 03 Sep to 22 Nov, usually single and low double figures with max. 30 at Kemmuna on 08 Sep, 55 at Majjistral Park on 26 Oct, 30 at Miġra l-Ferħa on 28 Oct and 30 at Mtaħleb on 30 Oct.

888 ringed [852 in spring, 36 in autumn (74 on 13 Apr)], most (299) at Mtaħleb. 1 ringed in Greece controlled.

Olive-backed Pipit (Dizz tal-Lvant) *Anthus hodgsoni*

Up to 4 at Ta' Qali from 02 Jan to 14 Mar, and 2 on 31 Jan and 1 on 07 Feb at Buskett. Then 1 at Wied Ghollieqa from 24 Nov to 31 Dec and up to 4 at Ta' Qali from 18–29 Dec.

Red-throated Pipit (Dizz Ahmar) *Anthus cervinus*

Sightings on 34 dates from 15 Jan to 16 May, usually single and low double figures with max. 70 on 24 Apr and 50 on 25 Apr at Luqa Airport. Then sightings on 31 dates from 10 Oct to 12 Dec, always single figures but 15 at Simar NR on 26 Oct.

1 ringed in spring at Mtahleb.

Meadow Pipit (Pespus) *Anthus pratensis*

Sightings almost daily from 01 Jan to 06 Apr, usually single and double figures with max. 100 at Luqa Airport on 08 and 10 Mar. Late birds at Hal Far on 22 and 24 Apr. In autumn, 1 early bird at Salina NR on 28 Sep, then almost daily from 08 Oct to 31 Dec usually single and double figures with max. 200 at Miġra l-Ferħa on 28 Oct and 400 at Luqa Airport on 11 Nov.

511 ringed (62 from Jan–Mar, 449 from Oct–Nov), most (186) at Mġarr ix-Xini.

Water Pipit (Dizz tal-Ilma) *Anthus spinoletta*

1 at Wied Ghajn Rihana from 04 to 19 Mar (Fig. 28) and 1–2 at Il-Ballut ta' Marsaxlokk from 22–24 Nov.

Tawny Pipit (Bilblun) *Anthus campestris*

In spring, sightings on most days from 06 Mar to 04 May, mostly single or low double figures, with exceptional max. 80 at Majjistral Park on 22 Apr. 1 late bird at Dingli Cliffs on 07 Jun.

Sightings on 16 dates from 01 Sep to 28 Oct, always single figures with max. 8 at Luqa Airport on 07 Oct.

1 ringed in spring at Kemmuna.

Western Yellow Wagtail (Isfar) *Motacilla flava*

In spring, sightings almost daily from 05 Mar to 31 May, usually single and double figures with max. 400 at Luqa Airport on 21 Mar, 250 at Kemmuna on 22 Apr and 350 at Burmarrad on 24 Apr. 1 late spring migrant on 10 Jun followed by 1 early autumn migrant on 24 Jul. Then sightings on most days from 11 Aug to 14 Nov, usually single and double figures with max. at Buskett of 100 on 03 Sep, 100 on 10 Sep and 125 on 04 Oct. Late singles at Pwales on 23 Nov and at Salina NR on 27–28 Dec.

93 ringed (63 in spring, 30 in autumn), most (60) at Ghadira NR. 1 ringed in Poland seen.

Grey Wagtail (Zakak tad-Dell) *Motacilla cinerea*

Sightings on most days from 01 Jan to 22 Mar, always 1–2 birds. 1 seen at F'Attard on 09 Jun but no evidence of breeding found. Then sightings on most days from 03 Sep to 31 Dec, mostly low single figures with max. 4 at Simar NR on 21 Oct.

9 ringed, most (4) at Mġarr ix-Xini.

Citrine Wagtail (Zakak tal-Lvant) *Motacilla citreola*

1♂ at Il-Magħluq ta' Marsaskala on 24 Apr.

Eastern Yellow Wagtail (Isfar tas-Siberja) *Motacilla tschutschensis*

1 at Salina NR on 22 Jan, 23 Jan and 03 Feb. These records likely involve same individual that wintered at Salina NR in winter 2019–20, which returned to winter in 2020–21 (first seen on 24 Oct 2020). In second year seen only sporadically, in contrast with first winter when seen almost daily at Salina NR. Wintering record of 2020–21 is 3rd record for Malta.

White Wagtail (Zakak Abjad) *Motacilla alba*

Sightings almost daily from 01 Jan to 22 Apr, usually single and double figures, but highest counts of 10,555 at Valletta on 23 Jan and 200 at Qawra on 08 Feb, both during communal roost counts. 2 birds stayed at Salina NR throughout May to early Oct. Then sightings almost daily again from 08 Oct to 31 Dec, usually single and double figures, but 200 at Valletta on 19 Oct, 286 at Gżira on 27 Oct and 200 at Marsa on 29 Nov, these counts also referring to birds heading to or leaving Valletta roost.

25 ringed (6 from Jan–Mar, 19 from Oct–Dec), most (9) at Ghadira NR. 1 ringed in Poland observed.



Fig. 28. Water Pipit (Wied Ghajn Rihana, 13 Mar)

Note on finches

Due to the widespread habit of keeping and breeding finches in Malta, it is probable that a significant percentage of sightings in the wild refer to escapees, particularly away from autumn and winter. Furthermore, in 2021 hundreds of finches were confiscated from illegal trade or other illegal uses and eventually ringed and released. While an effort was made to remove sightings that obviously pertained to escapees or released birds, the sightings below probably still include a few such records.

Common Chaffinch (Sponsun) *Fringilla coelebs*

Regular sightings from 01 Jan to 30 Apr, usually single figures and mainly at Buskett, with max. 20 on 19 Feb. Sporadic sightings of singles on 6 dates from 13 May to 08 Sep. Then on most dates from 02 Oct to 31 Dec, regularly in double figures with max. 60 at Miġra I-Ferħa on 28 Oct, 60 at Kemmuna and 80 at Buskett on 01 Nov, 100 at Kemmuna on 03 Nov, 100 at Buskett on 07 Nov, and 70 on 08 Nov and 60 on 16 Nov at Buskett.

Hawfinch (Taż-Żebbuġ) *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

5 at Paradise Bay on 19 Oct, 2 on 31 Oct and 1 on 01 Nov at Kemmuna, and 2 at Birkirkara on 11 Nov*.

Common Rosefinch (Bumunqar) *Carpodacus erythrurus*

Singles at Wied il-Għasel on 17 Oct and trapped at Xaghra on 03 Nov

European Greenfinch (Verdun) *Chloris chloris*

Sightings on 16 dates from 17 Jan to 26 Apr, always singles and mostly at Buskett. Then singles on 31 Jul, 19 Aug and 01 Sep in summer. Then sightings on 33 dates from 14 Oct to 26 Dec, always single figures but 10 at Buskett on 18 Nov and 08 Dec.

Common Linnet (Ġojjin) *Linaria cannabina*

Sightings on 29 dates from 06 Jan to 01 May, always low single figures with max. 6 at Ġebel Ciantar on 16 Jan. Then sporadic records on 6 dates from 14 Jul to 03 Oct, including 2 at Foresta 2000 on 14 Jul and 3 at Tal-Qadi on 25 Sep. Then regularly from 16 Oct to 31 Dec, frequently in double figures with max. 53 at Mtahleb on 30 Oct and 150 at Kemmuna on 03 Nov.

European Goldfinch (Gardell) *Carduelis carduelis*

1 at Burmarrad on 27 Mar, 1 at Ghadira NR on 24 Apr, 1 at Mtahleb on 30 Apr, 1 at Salina NR on 20 May, 1 at Simar NR on 10 Jun, 1 at Ta' Ċenċ and 2 at Luqa Airport on 17 Oct, 2 at Salina NR on 28 Oct, 1 at Salina NR on 01 Nov, 1 at Wied Għolliġa on 08 Nov and 1 at Salina NR on 23rd and 26 Nov.

European Serin (Apparell) *Serinus serinus*

1 at Ċirkewwa on 24 Mar, 1 at Simar NR on 29 Mar, 1 at Buskett on 13 May, 1 at Ghadira NR on 03 Jul, 1 at Buskett on 29 Sep, 1 at Kemmuna and 1 at Simar NR on 01 Nov, 1 at Clapham Junction on 07 Nov, 1 at Wied Ghajn Rihana on 17

Nov, 1 at Foresta 2000 and 2 at Manoel Island on 23 Nov and 1 at Buskett on 26 Dec.

Eurasian Siskin (Ekru) *Spinus spinus*

Sightings on 5 dates from 03-26 Feb, including 2 birds at Buskett on 03 Feb and 19 Feb, and 1 at Xlendi on 26 Feb. Singles on 07 Apr and 15 Jun. Then regularly from 03 Oct to 31 Dec, mostly single figures with max. 15 at Kemmuna on 03 Nov, 28 at Kemmuna on 19 Nov and 15 at Buskett on 31 Dec.

Snow Bunting (Durrajsa Bajda) *Plectrophenax nivalis*

1 trapped at Sannat on 18 Nov.

Corn Bunting (Durrajsa) *Emberiza calandra*

Sightings on 27 dates from 07 Jan to 24 Apr, always single figures with max. 8 on 01 Mar and 7 on 18 Mar at Majjistral Park and 7 at Xrobb I-Għaġin on 21 Mar. Then sightings on 17 dates from 19 Oct to 31 Dec, always single figures but 12 at Buskett on 08 Nov. Despite some singing ♂♂ seen in spring, no breeding confirmed. Species probably en route to local extinction as breeding bird.

1 ringed.

Ortolan Bunting (Ortolan) *Emberiza hortulani*

Singles at Ġebel Ciantar and at Benghisa on 17 Apr, at Majjistral Park on 22 Apr, at Hal Far on 24 Apr and at Ġebel Ciantar on 27 Apr.

Cirl Bunting (Ortolan Iswed) *Emberiza cirlus*

1 trapped at Gharghur on 22 Oct.

Reed Bunting (Durrajsa tal-Qasab) *Emberiza schoeniclus*

Singles on 6 dates at Simar NR from 08 Jan to 26 Feb, at Wied Ghajn Rihana on 18 Feb and at Ghadira NR from 23–24 Mar. Then sightings on 16 dates from 29 Oct to 23 Nov mostly at Ghadira NR, always 1–2 birds but 6 at Simar NR on 08 Nov. 1 at Wied Ghajn Rihana on 27 Dec probably wintering bird.

10 ringed (of which 9 in autumn), most (8) at Ghadira NR.

Little Bunting (Durrajsa Qerqniġa) *Emberiza pusilla*

1 ringed at Salina NR on 14 Oct (Fig. 29).



Fig. 29. Little Bunting (Salina NR, 14 Oct)

