

# Bird's Eye View

A BirdLife Malta members' magazine

Issue 83 • March 2025







## The fight goes on

Many people ask why we persist in our legal battles against the government over spring hunting, especially given that we have lost all prohibitory injunctions so far. The answer is simple: we have no choice. We must challenge an illegal state action that threatens a vulnerable species.

BirdLife Malta feels a duty to take a stand. We are faced with two options: allow the government to break the law unopposed, or fight back. Turning a blind eye would only enable further inaction, especially given Malta's chronic lack of enforcement. It is clear that institutions such as Ornis, the Malta Police Force, ERA and WBRU serve their political masters rather than the law. Accepting this is not an option.

This leaves us with one path: the legal route, which takes time but remains essential. Alongside our prohibitory injunctions, we have an ongoing court case addressing this issue.

While we are confident that the European Commission will eventually hold Malta accountable, we also feel duty bound to take action ourselves.

Unfortunately, spring hunting is just one of many environmental challenges we face. Illegal finch trapping continues, and BirdLife Malta – together with other environmental NGOs – is fighting against rampant overdevelopment that's turning our islands into a concrete wasteland. But these challenges do not weaken our resolve. On the contrary, they strengthen our determination to defend nature.

**Darryl Grima**  
President



### CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

The culprits in this list were brought to justice after being observed and reported by BirdLife Malta.

**Dec 2024:** CRIME: Woman sending threatening messages to BirdLife Malta online (Oct 2023) PUNISHMENT: Woman fined €1000.

**Dec 2024:** CRIME: Trapper trapping for finches closed season at Santa Katerina (March 2024) PUNISHMENT: Trapper fined €2000 + lifetime trapping ban.

**Jan 2025:** CRIME: Hunter hunting within 150m of residential area in Kalkara (April 2024) PUNISHMENT: Hunter fined €500.

**Feb 2025:** CRIME: Trapper trapping finches on unregistered site at L-Ahrax (Nov 2023) PUNISHMENT: Trapper fined €1200 + ban on trapping for two years.

**Feb 2025:** CRIME: Hunter shooting and killing protected European bee-eater at Ta' Lippija (Sept 2024). PUNISHMENT: Hunter fined €1000 + ban on hunting for two years.

### Richard's Pipit

The Richard's Pipit is a small bird with an upright stance and distinctive high-pitched call. It prefers open habitats like grasslands and farmland, where it forages for insects and seeds. Its streaked brown plumage and darting movements make it a challenge to spot. Seeing a Richard's Pipit in Malta is a rare treat, even for seasoned birdwatchers. This winter, two individuals were seen in southern Malta.



Avon Tanti

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INFRINGEMENT DECISIONS | Feb 12, 2025 | Brussels | 29 min read

## February infringements package: key decisions

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Letter of formal notice post-judgment (under Article 260 TFEU)

**Commission calls on MALTA to comply with the Court judgment on finch trapping**

The European Commission decided to send a letter of formal notice under Article 260 TFEU to **Malta** (INFR(2020)2346) for failing to comply with the judgment of the Court of Justice of the European Union of 19 September 2024 (C-23/23). In this ruling, the Court of Justice found that Malta had not fulfilled its obligations under the Birds Directive (Directive 2009/147/EC) by adopting a derogation scheme allowing the live capturing of seven species of wild finches. On 20 October 2024, Malta adopted a new derogation scheme, nearly identical to the derogation rejected by the Court. The Commission considers that the new derogation fails again to provide a precise and adequate statement of reasons to explain its deviation from standard scientific means of research in the ornithological field, needed to justify the proportionality of the derogation. The Commission also considers that Malta has failed to explain the lack of other satisfactory solutions. The Commission is therefore sending a letter of formal notice to Malta, which now has two months to respond and address the shortcomings raised by the Commission. In the absence of a satisfactory response, the Commission may decide to refer Malta back to the Court of Justice of the European Union, with a request to impose financial sanctions.



BirdLife Malta

# Malta faces EU sanctions... again

The European Commission (EC) has sent a formal notice warning Malta for failing to comply with the European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruling of 19 September 2024. The ECJ had ruled that Malta's derogation allowing trappers to catch seven finch species violated the EU Birds Directive. Despite this, the government introduced a similar derogation, now rejected by the Commission. On 12 February 2025, the EC criticised Malta's justification and trapping methods. The government now has two months to respond or risk financial sanctions. BirdLife Malta urges Prime Minister Robert Abela to stop Hunting Minister Clint Camilleri from prioritising hunters and trappers over nature and start protecting wildlife for a change.

BirdLife Malta



One of the casualties – a black-crowned night-heron

A total of 77 protected birds were confirmed shot by hunters since the hunting season opened on 1 September 2024. BirdLife Malta recovered 41 birds with shotgun injuries, while police handled another 36 cases. Casualties included a short-eared owl recovered from Għar Lapsi on Christmas day. The hunting season ended on 31 January 2025 – supposedly a brief respite for wintering birds and those beginning their spring migration – but hunting has persisted even beyond January.

## Seventy-seven in five months

A total of 77 protected birds were confirmed shot by hunters since the hunting season opened on 1 September 2024. BirdLife Malta recovered 41 birds with shotgun injuries, while police handled another 36 cases. Casualties included a short-eared owl recovered from Għar Lapsi on Christmas day. The hunting season ended on 31 January 2025 – supposedly a brief respite for wintering birds and those beginning their spring migration – but hunting has persisted even beyond January.

## Slap on the wrist for attacking BirdLife team

Two trappers were sentenced to a one-year conditional discharge after being found guilty of assaulting and injuring two BirdLife Malta staff members in Magħtab in 2022. The team was reporting illegal trapping when the men followed, verbally abused, and attacked them. Despite evidence, the court acquitted them of some charges due to a legal time lapse. BirdLife Malta CEO Mark Sultana criticised the failure to ensure justice and will address concerns with the Commissioner of Police. BirdLife Malta thanks legal representatives Dr Stephen Tonna Lowell and Dr Ana Thomas for their support in the case.



The two trappers shortly before attacking the BirdLife team

BirdLife Malta

## Campaigning to ban toxic lead

The European Commission has proposed a ban on lead ammunition and fishing weights to protect human health and wildlife. Lead is highly toxic, yet 44,000 tonnes still pollute Europe's environment every year, poisoning wildlife and contaminating water and soil. BirdLife Malta has joined the #BanLeadNow campaign calling for a full ban. The proposal is a step forward but there are loopholes that can weaken its impact. We urge decision-makers to close these gaps and ensure a science-based ban. The proposal will now be discussed by the REACH Committee, followed by review by the European Parliament and Council.



BirdLife Europe and Central Asia



## Symbolic tree planting at Ħal Luqa

BirdLife Malta donated three native trees – two mediterranean buckthorns and one lentisk – to the Ħal Luqa community. The initiative was in collaboration with the Ħal Luqa Local Council and the Primary School, and aimed to replace a hazardous tree removed last October. Students planted the young trees at Misraħ iż-Żgħażaġħ, alongside Mayor John Schembri who praised the project. BirdLife Malta CEO Mark Sultana highlighted the importance of restoring urban biodiversity. The event reflected our mission to protect nature while engaging the community, especially the young generation.



Yusuf Gamal



Osprey hunting fish at Ghadira nature reserve

## Birds on the move

In 2024, BirdLife Malta ringers recorded 46 foreign-ringed birds. The birds were of 22 species and hailed from 20 countries. The oldest was a 26-year-old greater flamingo that had been ringed as a chick in Spain, and spotted at Salina nature reserve. The fastest was an osprey that flew from Norway to Ghadira in nine days. From a Finnish sedge warbler to a Swedish willow warbler, these extraordinary travellers yearly confirm how vital Malta is as a stopover for migrating birds.



Alice Tribe

Over 17,100 wagtails at three roosts

## Annual wagtail count

On 11 January 2025 volunteers gathered to count white wagtails at three key roosting sites in Malta. Wintering white wagtails like to gather for sleep in large numbers in selected sites with sheltered trees. Every evening at sunset they fly in from the countryside to roost. Malta's largest wagtail roost by far is in Pjazza Assedju in Valletta. During this year's event – an annual tradition in Valletta since 1985 – our volunteers counted 14,780 wagtails in the capital. Numbers were lower than last year's record-breaking count, likely due to birds returning to other sites. The Pjazza Rotunda wagtail roost in Mosta showed signs of recovery, with an eightfold increase on last year's count. Meanwhile, Qawra's roost grew by 69%.

WORDS **Antonia Micallef** Public Engagement Executive

## BirdLife Malta runner-up at Vuċi għall-Animali

BirdLife Malta is proud to be named runner-up at the Vuċi Għall-Animali Awards 2024. The award celebrates organisations making a transformative impact on animal welfare. BirdLife Malta's advocacy, including the #CitizensAgainstTrapping campaign and efforts to protect European turtle-doves and finches, earned us this recognition. The Association for Abandoned Animals (AAA) won the award for their ongoing work to address Malta's animal abandonment crisis. Fabio Spiteri and Angelique Lofaro were honoured with the Unsung Animal Warrior Award and runner-up recognition, respectively. Congratulations to all finalists, winners and supporters of animal welfare in Malta. The event was held on 18 December 2024.



Althea Galea



# THE PURPLE HERON

The purple heron is one of the largest herons that occur in Malta. It has a slender body and stands tall with a long neck and large bill. The adult plumage is striking, featuring a black crown with two sharp black plumes that can be up to 15cm long. A black stripe extends from the ear to these plumes. Its head and neck have distinctive chestnut to red-orange buff sides, while the chin and front of the neck are white with elongated black and white streaks. The back and upper wings are slate grey, as are the flight feathers. In flight, the leading edges of the wing feathers reveal a dark chestnut hue, while the underwings are dark grey with chestnut forewing feathers. The lower back and breast display chestnut to buff plumes. When at rest, the purple heron has a deep red chestnut "shoulder" patch. Its bill is yellowish.

Juveniles have much paler plumage, with brown upperparts and buff feather edges. Their underparts are buff, and the breast is dark brown with streaks. The crown is black with a short crest, but they lack the distinct stripes on the sides of the head and neck seen in adults. Their bill and legs are dull brown with less yellow than the adults.

The purple heron breeds from central to southern Europe, Africa, and the southern and eastern Palearctic. It nests in colonies in reedbeds or trees near the water's edge, often in large lakes or extensive wetlands. The nest is bulky and consists of dead reeds and small branches. After nesting, the population

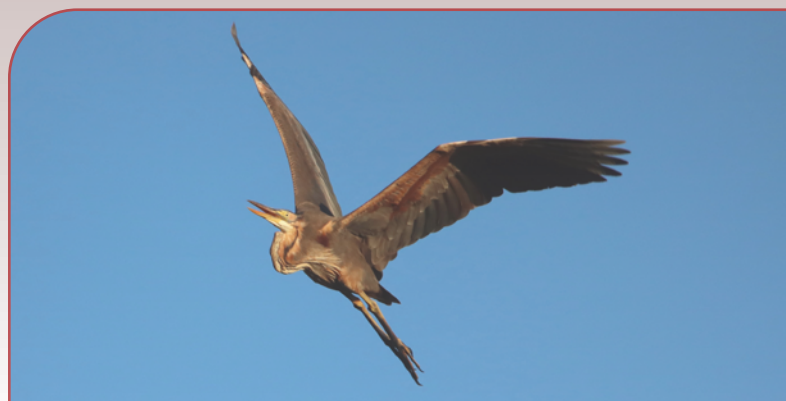
migrates south within its range. Like most herons, the purple heron is carnivorous, feeding mainly on fish, small mammals and amphibians. It also eats nestling birds, snakes, lizards, crustaceans, water snails, insects and spiders.

In Malta, the purple heron appears during spring (early March to May) and autumn (August to late October) migrations. It is fairly common and can be seen across the country, migrating alone, in small groups or in larger flocks, often mixing with grey herons. The best places to spot this species are Simar and Ġħadira nature reserves. Unlike the grey heron, the purple heron rarely ventures into open spaces, preferring to hide among reeds in shallow waters, where its plumage blends seamlessly with the vegetation, making it nearly invisible.



**MALTESE NAME:** Russett Aħmar  
**SCIENTIFIC NAME:** *Ardea purpurea*  
**LENGTH:** 70–97 cm  
**WINGSPAN:** 120–152 cm  
**CONSERVATION STATUS:** Least concern (IUCN 2020)  
**LOCAL STATUS:** Common spring and autumn migrant  
**CALL:** Short, hoarse 'krrek'  
**BEHAVIOUR:** Normally shy, hides among vegetation  
**HABITAT:** Wetlands surrounded by dense vegetation

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHS **Mario V Gauci** BirdLife Malta  
 licenced bird ringer, birdwatcher and nature photographer.





Nature at our reserves

# Is-Simar



**Opening hours**

September to May

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday 2pm-7pm

Sunday 10am-4pm

Entrance free (donations welcome!)

**More info at**

<https://birdlifemalta.org/nature-reserves/is-simar/>







Large Carpenter Bee

## Large Carpenter Bee

**Bomblu Iswed** *Xylocopa violacea*

A large hairy black bee buzzing around your head can give you the heeby jeebies. But it's only a carpenter bee! Yes, it does carry a sting but it's not aggressive or bad-tempered. So stop waving your arms and resume your walk – or better still, observe what they're doing. Bees are not interested in us, they'll be either looking for flowers or a nesting place. Unlike the gregarious honey-bee, the carpenter bee is solitary, and nests in hollow stalks such as reed stems. You may even catch her boring a neat round hole in the stalk (hence the reference to joinery) to make a handy hobbit entrance. There are substantial reedbeds at Simar, so plenty desres for this miniature soft toy!

## Common Moorhen

**Gallozz Iswed** *Gallinula chloropus*

Of the dozen or so rail species recorded in Malta, the moorhen is the one you're most likely to see, as this bird is a year-round resident breeding bird. Moorhens only began nesting regularly in the 1980s, basically with the restoration of the wetlands at Ghadira and Is-Simar. Several pairs now breed at these protected sites (now also at Salina) and every year young moorhens leave the areas and disperse to other potential breeding locations, such as damp valleys with seasonal streams. But hunters invariably shoot these birds, so it's hard for moorhens to establish new populations. Naturally, at Simar human persecution is not an issue, so it remains one rare haven for these shy birds.



Common Moorhen



Sweet Alison

## Sweet Alison

**Buttuniera** *Lobularia maritima*

It's very common and grows almost everywhere, flowering profusely. It starts showing up in autumn after a stint of rain, but it's in bloom practically all year. Its explosion of flowers, arranged in spherical clusters of florets like miniature ortensias are among its main attractions. The plant is very short and delicate but those scores of white pompoms that give the plant its Maltese name will still catch your attention. And if their appearance doesn't, their scent will: a stand of Alison will mildly sweeten the air around it. Wild flowers are considered sacred at our nature reserves, as they provide sustenance to myriad insects, and are therefore vital links in the food web.



# A SUPERPOWER TO DEFEND NATURE

Daniah Grazi, Silvia Margotta

## Empowering every child to connect with the environment

A vision for inclusive environmental education

Imagine a world where every child, regardless of ability, can explore the wonders of nature, feel the crunch of leaves underfoot, listen to birdsong, and understand their role in protecting the environment. **A Superpower to Defend Nature (ASDN)**, an Erasmus+ funded project, is turning this vision into reality.

This initiative seeks to ensure that children with learning and developmental disabilities not only experience nature but also become active in environmental conservation. By making outdoor education more inclusive, the project fosters a sense of belonging and empowers these children to take part in climate action.

By creating adapted learning materials, the project strengthens the participation of children with disabilities in environmental activities. These resources are designed not only to educate but also to inspire a lifelong connection with nature, fostering environmental responsibility from an early age.



Murat Geir

Educational resource focused on colours

### Nature closer

One of the most effective aspects of ASDN is the creation of specialised educational resources that make nature-based learning accessible to everyone.

### Manual for educators

This resource provides practical strategies for engaging children with cognitive disabilities in outdoor learning experiences, ensuring that nature becomes a place of discovery for all.

By equipping educators with the knowledge and tools to create more inclusive programmes, the manual expands educational opportunities and fosters a deeper connection between children and the environment. It also encourages organisations to rethink traditional teaching methods, making them more adaptable to diverse learning needs.



Yusuf Gamal

Sensory ASDN activity used during the 2024 Dinja Wahda Ceremony



## Nature in class

Recognising that not all children have easy access to nature, the Green Adventures manual offers a wealth of activities that teachers and Learning Support Educators can implement in school playgrounds and other accessible outdoor spaces.

Designed for students from age **7–14**, this resource blends hands-on activities with environmental education. Teachers can use the manual to introduce their students to nature, making it a part of their everyday learning experience.

Yusuf Gamal

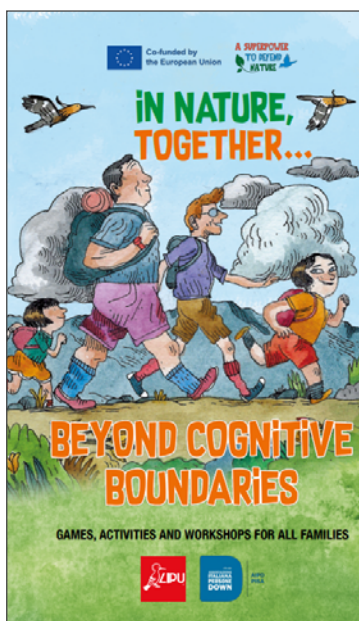


Outdoor activity carried out during the ASDN family multiplier event

## Family engagement

Learning about nature doesn't have to stop at school. The *Beyond Cognitive Boundaries* handbook can also be used by families on urban nature walks and excursions in green areas, with practical advice on how to make the most of outdoor experiences.

It highlights the numerous developmental benefits that nature offers children, helping them build confidence, develop motor skills, enhance their sensory awareness and create family memories.



Cover "Beyond Cognitive Boundaries"

## Inspiring change

Beyond written resources, the project also brings its message to life through the *Together in Nature* video series. These inspiring videos capture the real-life experiences of children with learning and developmental disabilities as they engage in environmental activities.

By showcasing their journeys, achievements and joy in discovering nature, the videos are proof that every child can contribute to environmental protection.

Ellie Xanthopoulos



Bird mask used during a school visit

## Everyone belongs

ASDN is more than just an educational initiative: it is a call to action. By working together, educators, environmentalists and families can create a world where children with disabilities are not just included but celebrated as environmental stewards.

This project envisions a future where nature is a space for everyone, where every child can feel a sense of belonging, and where love for the environment becomes a shared experience across all abilities.

WORDS **Giada Lampitelli** Education Officer

This ambitious project is led by BirdLife Malta in partnership with organisations across Europe that share a commitment to inclusion and environmental sustainability. These include:







# New Ghadira hide

watching hide at Ghadira Nature Reserve brings  
sustainability and accessibility, thereby improving the visitor

A new birdwatching hide at Ghadira Nature Reserve brings more sustainability and accessibility, thereby improving the visitor experience.. just in time for the upcoming spring migration. Built way back in 1981, the old hide had stood proud over Ghadira for over 40 years and provided nature lovers with many memorable experiences.

Sustainability is more than a buzzword to us. All material from the old hide was reused in the new building, and bricks made from recycled material were used. Bat and bird boxes were built into one of the walls and a roof garden will further blend the building with the habitat. Removing the old stairs renders the new hide accessible to all and provides eye-level views of the wetland.

Be sure to visit and enjoy some birdwatching.

This project was made possible with funding under Measure 4.4 of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.





# Fiona – an inspirational story

## Tracking our rehabbed birds - Part 2

Fiona the flamingo at Ghadira Nature Reserve

*Saved from a miserable life in a hunter's aviary, young Fiona the Flamingo was nursed back to health at BirdLife's rehab centre, fitted with a GPS tracker and released at Ghadira nature reserve, where she seemed to be adapting. But more adventure was in store...*

### A wet landing

From her GPS tracker's transmissions, we noticed that Fiona had taken a liking to flying around the nature reserve but we never thought she would extend her flight. On 30 August 2024 she explored a good part of Malta's coastline, and in a few hours she crossed over Red Tower towards Ċirkewwa, then looped

interacting with other flamingoes that migrated in. She was even spotted by a BirdLife Malta group during an excursion to Saline di Priolo some weeks ago.

### Testimonial

We will keep following Fiona's movements in case she ventures back to Malta one day. Flamingoes can live more than 30 years and are known to move between lagoons across the Mediterranean. So we may yet come back with more stories about her adventures!

Fiona's story is a testimonial of how our work in wildlife crime, rehabilitation and education has given this greater flamingo and other birds a second chance.

**Want to support our work with other rehab cases?  
Get in touch!**



A month of Fiona at Saline di Priolo, Sicily where she has happily settled in

around the coast and reached the Majjistral cliffs. She landed at sea, however, and floated there all night. Fearing the worst, we rushed to the area next morning and luckily found her uninjured and still in good shape, though terribly exhausted from her adventure. A rescue ensued, and she was admitted back into rehab to be checked by vets.

### Too risky to stay

With the opening of the hunting season on 1 September, the risk of Fiona being shot down during such exploratory flights was too high. We therefore decided to take Fiona up to Saline di Priolo in Sicily, a nature reserve managed by LIPU (our BirdLife Partner in Italy), who agreed to her release there. A month later, Fiona was released at the Priolo, where several greater flamingoes also often nest. The choice of site seemed to be to her liking, as from her tracks we still see she is happily settled, visiting various parts of the saline lagoon where she has been



Fiona being released at Saline di Priolo on 30 September 2024

WORDS **Nicholas Barbara** Head of Conservation BirdLife Malta



# Step into the beauty of Gozo

## A scenic journey from Mġarr to Xewkija

This beautiful 7 km walk takes you from Mġarr Harbour (Gozo Ferry Terminal) to Xewkija – one of the oldest villages in Gozo. Along the way, you will pass through breathtaking coastal landscapes, historic landmarks, and diverse wildlife. You'll explore salt pans, a 17th-century watchtower, and the stunning inlet of Mġarr ix-Xini before ending at Gozo's largest church, the majestic Rotunda of Xewkija.

This beautiful 7 km walk takes you from **Mġarr Harbour** to Xewkija, one of the oldest villages in Gozo. Along the way, you will pass through breathtaking coastal landscapes, historic landmarks and diverse wildlife. You'll explore salt pans, a 17th-century watchtower, and the stunning inlet of Mġarr ix-Xini before ending at the Xewkija Rotunda.

Following the coastline, you will find **Mġarr ix-Xini Tower**, a 17th-century watchtower built by the Knights of St John to protect Gozo's coast from attacks. The tower is a part of the historical coastal defense system and could communicate with Santa Marija Tower on Kemmuna and later, also with the Santa Ċecilja Tower. Nowadays the tower is managed by volunteers and open on certain days or for group visits by appointment free of charge.

When you walk down the hill, you can enjoy a swim in the **Mġarr ix-Xini inlet**. This secluded bay, one of Gozo's most picturesque spots with its steep limestone cliffs and crystal-clear waters, is popular for snorkelling and swimming. The bay's underwater terrain is home to several caves embedded in the cliff faces, offering opportunities for exploration. Also, thanks to its sheltered position and relatively shallow depths, Mġarr ix-Xini is excellent for a night dive. Fun fact: This location was featured in the 2015 film *By the Sea*, starring Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt.



Mġarr ix-Xini Tower



The starting point of the walk is Mġarr Harbour, Gozo's main port, where the island welcomes visitors with buzzing ferry activity and scenic sea views. Walk uphill on the path parallel to the coast, starting on the left side of the Mġarr police station and make sure not to miss the beautiful views the path offers. When you reach the top, take a breather and enjoy the view before continuing to **Xatt l-Ahmar Salt pans** and the **Fougasse** – this was a type of cannon carved into the rock, with a powder chamber in the bottom, and used to fire large amounts of stones at an enemy trying to land on vulnerable coasts: an innovative coastal defense of past centuries!



Xatt l-Ahmar Salt pans



Finally, the most challenging part of the walk, the steep uphill climb towards **Xewkija**. The hike uphill might take your breath away, but so will the stunning countryside views across Gozo's terraced fields and villages.

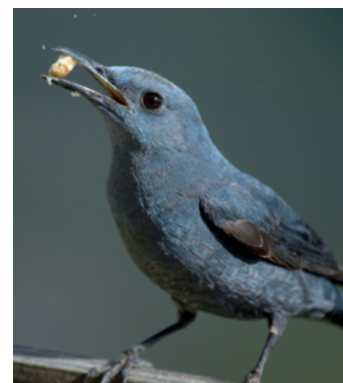
End Point: **Xewkija Rotunda**, the largest church in Gozo with the third largest unsupported dome in the world, offers a 360° panoramic view of the island. The Xewkija Rotunda is a spectacular architectural masterpiece that showcases the fine texture and versatility of local limestone and local craftsmanship. You can explore the church's interior, take the elevator to the top for an unforgettable perspective, and visit the remnants of the old church, the best parts of which were delicately rebuilt next to the new church and is known as The Sculpture Museum.

## Wildlife

This walk offers an array of flora and fauna. In spring keep an eye out for the **crimson pea** (*ġilbiġna tas-serp*) with its deep red blooms, often found along rocky trails, while **sulla** (*silla*) adds colour to the landscape with its rich red flowers. The delicate **common fumitory** (*daħnet l-art*) with its pinkish-purple blooms thrives in rocky and disturbed soils. Also, look out for the **sand crocus** (*żagħfran tal-blatt*), a perennial (lives several years) that



Western Marsh-harrier



Blue Rock-thrush

returns each spring with purple blooms. Meanwhile, soaking up the sun on a rock you may spot the endemic **Maltese wall lizard** (*gremxula*).

Don't forget your binoculars, as you might encounter various birds too. Listen for the calls of breeding species such as **zitting cisticola** (*bufula tal-imrewħa*), **greater short-toed lark** (*bilbla*) and **blue rock-thrush** (*merill*), Malta's national bird. Along the coast you may also spot **yellow-legged gulls** (*gawwija prima*) soaring over the cliffs. In spring you might also see **barn swallow** (*ħuttafa*), **common swift** (*rundun*) and birds of prey such as **common kestrel** (*spanjulett*) and **Western marsh-harrier** (*baġħdan aħmar*), possibly also a flock of **European bee-eater** (*qerd in-naħal*) flashing their vibrant colours as they migrate across the skies.

The walk is of moderate difficulty and should take around 3hr to complete. Wear comfortable shoes and consider that some parts will be slippery if wet. Bring sunscreen and lots of water, and most importantly, please respect nature by staying on marked paths, avoid littering, and observe wildlife from a distance to minimise disturbance.



DETAILED  
ROUTE



Maltese Wall Lizard



Sulla

WORDS **Tamar Antia** Events & Outreach Assistant





Tamar Antia



**14 Dec 2024** BirdLife Malta's Public Engagement team attended the Woodland Christmas Market at Ta' Qali. Visitors took part in our games and festive fun. They learned about wildlife with a spinning-wheel quiz and picked out Christmas gifts from our selection of merchandise which is also available at our nature reserves.

Nicholas Galea



**20 Dec 2024** Christmas Fair at St Michael's Foundation was a wonderful occasion. At our stand, students, parents and staff explored Malta's wintering birds, browsed our merchandise and signed up for membership. The day was lively, filled with interactions and student participation.

Kasia Modrzyńska



**11 Jan 2025** In collaboration with Science in the City, BirdLife Malta had an interactive workshop about the white wagtail roost in Valletta. The event started at the Valletta Design Cluster, where participants learned about our wintering birds and filled out interactive worksheets, followed by a short walk to observe the roost and have a go at counting wagtails.

Bernardette Chircop



**12 Jan 2025** Our Events & Activities Committee explored Żurrieq on a 3-hour walk, visiting landmarks like Il-Mithna tax-Xarolla, Il-Kappella ta' Sant'Andrija, and Wied il-Bassasa. The weather started cloudy but brightened as the participants reached the valley, where they enjoyed stunning views of Filfla and the Blue Grotto.

**16 Jan 2025** With help from enthusiastic volunteers, BirdLife staff cleaned up Salina salt pans. The sea storms had brought in tiny pieces of plastic, requiring meticulous collecting; but the rubbish included larger items too, such as tyres, buoys, flip flops, torches and other objects jetsam and flotsam, along with one surprising find: a shark liver! We are grateful to the volunteers for helping us clean up this vital habitat.



Vera Tokmakova



Yusuf Gannal

**18 Jan 2025** BirdLife Malta organised an event for families with children with learning and developmental disabilities through the A Superpower to Defend Nature project funded by Erasmus +. Over 15 families participated in the event and enjoyed various activities at their own pace. Many expressed their appreciation and interest in our future events, helping build a new community of nature-oriented people. We are grateful to the volunteers from Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) and the Autistic Student Community for helping out at the event.



Sergio Morana

**19 Jan 2025** Our Young Birders Club started the year with an exciting outing to Foresta 2000, Iċ-Ċumnija and Għadira Nature Reserve. Children and parents spotted wintering birds, discovered local flora and fauna, and attended a bird ringing session. The event introduced young nature enthusiasts to club activities. We look forward to more adventures ahead, bringing young birdwatchers together.





**25 Jan 2025** First Gulls Day Out at Salina Nature Reserve was a success. The participants enjoyed four short talks and tours guided by our experienced staff, who helped identify black-headed, Mediterranean, slender-billed and yellow-legged gulls – even a surprise Sandwich tern. Attendees also explored gull migration, GPS tracking and colour-ring schemes. A great day of connecting with nature.



**28, 29 Jan 2025** BirdLife Malta participated in the annual FestAmbjent at Junior College. Students learned about nature conservation and discovered ways to get involved. It was a fantastic opportunity to connect with young people interested in environment protection. We always welcome more students to our initiatives, and hopefully inspire the next generation of nature lovers.



**30 Jan 2025** As part of Science in the City Goes to School, BirdLife Malta joined other researchers to deliver a school workshop to promote careers in STEM. We introduced students to ornithological research, bird ringing and tracking techniques. Together, we analysed the bird ringing process and its aim in fun a way, which sparked great enthusiasm among the students. We are excited to engage with schools and community, raising awareness about our work and inspiring young people to take an interest in wildlife conservation.



**2 Feb 2025** We attended Festa Annimali where people visited our stand and engaged in various educational games, tested their wildlife knowledge and learned ways to help protect birds in Malta. Many supported our work by buying our merchandise (also available at our nature reserves).

**2 Feb 2025** To celebrate World Wetlands Day, BirdLife Malta opened the Salina wetland to the public, offering a chance to explore this newly rewilded habitat and its ecological significance.

Early visitors observed bird ringing and learned about bird conservation efforts firsthand. Thanks to our collaboration with Malta National Aquarium, attendees also discovered more about water ecosystems and marine life.



**10 Feb 2025** At Ghadira Nature Reserve we celebrated World Wetlands Day and the end of the hunting season where participants explored the wetland and our new birdwatching hide. A key moment was the release of rehabilitated birds – a song thrush, a hawfinch, two lapwings and two common kestrels – back into their natural habitat. A memorable experience for all who joined.

## Upcoming events

**5 Apr 2025** Members' Day Trip to Sicily. On this 7–8km trek we will explore Anapo Valley Nature Reserve, home to stunning natural quarries carved by the Anapo River, followed by late lunch at an agrotourism.

**6 Apr 2025** Join us at Festa STEM at St Monica School Gzira from 10am onwards: activities at the stand, a talk about bird migration studies and ways to get involved with BirdLife Malta. Let's celebrate STEM fields together.

**12 Apr 2025** Our annual fundraising Walk for Nature. Schoolchildren, families, and nature enthusiasts gather to celebrate spring and raise awareness and funds for nature conservation. This year's circular route will start and finish at Salina Nature Reserve. Check our website and social media for updates.

**27 Apr 2025** BirdLife Malta at Science in the Citadel in Gozo. Visit our stand, learn about wildlife conservation, explore exciting opportunities with us, and enjoy engaging games and activities.

### Want to help us continue our work?

Join at <http://bit.ly/joinBLM>  
 Donate at <http://bit.ly/donate-to-birdlifemalta>  
 Support at <http://bit.ly/Becomeasupporter>  
 Volunteer at <http://bit.ly/volunteerwithBLM>

### Want to join an event?

Get more details at <http://bit.ly/joinanevent>  
 or email [events@birdlifemalta.org](mailto:events@birdlifemalta.org)  
 or call +356 2134 7645





# Candid Camera



Setting up a bird table is a great treat for hungry birds. And watching our feathered customers pecking away can be very satisfying. San Anton School set up a bird table in their Dinja Waħda Garden but it's far from the classrooms so the students couldn't enjoy the spectacle. So BirdLife lent a magical hand by setting up a live-feed camera for them – right on top of the bird table! Kids can now watch sparrows and robins snacking on their classroom screen. We hear they're super excited about it. Well done!