



Il-Merill: guidelines to authors

Scope

Il-Merill is the ornithological journal of BirdLife Malta. It serves as a medium for the publication of articles and short notes dealing with aspects of ornithology that have a bearing on the Maltese Islands and the Mediterranean.

Invitation to contributors

The editorial board welcomes articles and short notes for publication that are in line with the ornithological and regional scope of *Il-Merill*. Submissions should not have been published or be concurrently submitted elsewhere. The editorial board offers assistance to authors who might lack experience in publishing scientific work including on aspects of statistical analysis. All contributions will be reviewed by the editorial board and may be sent for peer-review to experts in the field outside of the editorial board. The editorial board reserves the right to request revisions and reject contributions.

For the latest submission guidelines, authors should visit <https://birdlifemalta.org/il-merill/>. We strongly encourage authors to follow these guidelines carefully. Submissions that significantly deviate from these guidelines may be sent back to the authors.

The Maltese Islands are in an interesting location for ornithological studies, and its avifaunal diversity remains well-documented by a sizeable community of bird-watchers and naturalists. While breeding birds are relatively few, they give the opportunity for insular ecological studies, even in a context of the increasing urbanisation of the islands. Malta is moreover home to globally important breeding seabird populations and, in comparison to its terrestrial area, has a large marine zone. The Maltese Islands lie along the Central Mediterranean Flyway between the continents of Europe and Africa. In the same way that Malta geographically acts a stepping stone for birds migrating between the two continents, *Il-Merill* can be a unifying forum for ornithological research across the Mediterranean region.

Types of papers

All work should be grounded in scientific literature with adequate references (please see section on References format).

Original papers

Original papers should normally not exceed 4000 words of main text, 50 references and eight figures/tables, and should include the following sections: Abstract; Keywords; Introduction; Methods (and Materials); Results; Discussion; Conclusion; References. All original papers should include an abstract (150–250 words) in English and in Maltese. Funding and external support should be declared in an Acknowledgements section. Conflict of Interest; Compliance with Regulations/Ethical Standards should be submitted at the responsibility of the authors.

Short notes

Short notes should not exceed 1500 words, 10 references and two figures/tables. Short notes are not required to follow the sections outlined for original papers, but should include References. If applicable, sections on Funding; Conflict of Interest; Compliance with Regulations/Ethical Standards should be submitted at the responsibility of the authors.

Language

All contributions should be in British English. Original papers should, in addition to an abstract in English, include a translated abstract in Maltese. If none of the authors are Maltese, the editorial board will translate the abstract from English.

Use abbreviations sparingly. Abbreviations and acronyms should be defined at first mention in the Abstract, again in the main body of the text, and in the figure legends.

Submission

Submissions should not have been published or be concurrently submitted elsewhere. The submission should be approved by any co-authors, and by their institutions (tacitly or explicitly), if applicable. *Il-Merill* editorial board and BirdLife Malta will not be held legally responsible should there be any claims for compensation by authors or their institutions.

Authors should seek permission for any material (including figures, images) that have already been published elsewhere from the copyright owner(s) and to include evidence that such permission has been granted during submission. Any material received without such evidence will be assumed to originate from the authors.

Submissions should be made to info@birdlifemalta.org and martin.austad@birdlifemalta.org with the subject line 'Il-Merill submission'.

Files should be submitted in editable versions. Text should be submitted in common word processing formats such as .docx. The text document should include all text, references, and figure/table captions within one document.

The text document should have line numbering that runs throughout the document.

All submitted figures and tables should be numbered consecutively (Figure 1, Figure 2, etc.. and Table 1, Table 2 etc...) and have clear captions, which are included in the main text document. All figures and tables should be referenced in text (Fig. 1, Fig. 2, etc... and Table 1, Table 2, etc...).

On first submission the author(s) are encouraged to present figures within the text document. On acceptance for publication, all figures should be submitted as separate high resolution files in formats such as .jpg or .tiff.

Authors

All submissions should include the following for each author:

- Full Name
- The affiliation(s) or address including institution, city and country
- If available, the 16-digit [ORCID](#)

Names and addresses will be published as provided.

An active e-mail address of the corresponding author(s) should be clearly stated.

Use of AI and Large Language Models

Authors should use these tools with caution and while they might improve text, authors should make sure that changes reflect their original work and style, maintaining correct reference to scientific literature.

Format of citations and references

All published works cited in text should be included in a reference list. Personal communications (e.g.: Smith, J., 2025, personal communication, 31 December) and unpublished works (e.g.: BirdLife Malta, 2025, unpublished data), should only be cited in text, and should be used sparingly.

Published works listed in the reference list should all be cited in text and vice versa.

In text, citations should appear as follows:

One author:

(Sultana, 2001)

Sultana (2021) described the...

Two or three authors:

(Nilsson, Klaassen & Alerstam, 2013)

Nilsson, Klaassen and Alerstram (2013) studied the...

Four or more authors:

(Müller, Massa et al., 2014)

Müller, Massa et al. (2014) report that...

In cases of citations including more than one work they should be ordered chronologically, then alphabetically.

Case with two works of same author in different years: (Sultana, 2001; 2010)

Case of works by different authors: (Sultana, 2001; Nilsson, Klaassen & Alerstam, 2013; Müller, Massa et al., 2014).

In reference lists, cited work should be presented as follows:

Example for a journal article (journal should be italicised and doi link should be provided if available):

Müller, M. S., Massa, B., Phillips, R. A., & Dell’Omo, G. (2014). Individual consistency and sex differences in migration strategies of Scopoli’s shearwaters *Calonectris diomedea* despite year differences. *Current Zoology* 60(5): 631–641. <https://doi.org/10.1093/czoolo/60.5.631>

Example for a book (book title should be italicised):

Sultana, J. (2001). *L-Għasafar ta' Malta*. Pieta, Malta: Pubblikazzjonijiet Indipendenza.

Example of book section:

Young, L. C., & Ballance, L. T. (2023). Ecology of marine birds. In L. C. Young & E. VanderWerf (Eds.), *Conservation of Marine Birds* (pp. 3–32). Elsevier.

Example for a webpage or R package:

Hartig, F. (2022) DHARMA: Residual Diagnostics for Hierarchical (Multi-Level / Mixed) Regression Models. Available at: <https://cran.r-project.org/package=DHARMA>

If applicable, webpages should include the date of access presented after the link: (Accessed: 20 September 2025).

References should be ordered alphabetically by surname of the first author (then by second author if applicable), then chronologically. If more than one work is referenced with the same publication year and same first two authors, a, b, etc... should be used and presented with the year.

Statistics and Units

Statistical analyses are expected where they are necessary to support the research findings and should be reported in sufficient detail.

Report numbers to three decimal places, including p-values. Where p-values are smaller than 0.001, report as $p < 0.001$. Where possible, the reporting of confidence intervals is encouraged.

Report means and standard deviations/errors, including sample size, following these examples:

Mean \pm SD = 55.032 \pm 3.020 mm, N = 60

In case of models and tests, the type of test and the residual degrees of freedom should be included, together with sample size.

GLM parameter estimate \pm SE = -1.030 \pm 0.033, $p = 0.015$, residual d.f. = 58, N = 60

Use SI units where possible.

Supplementary information

Il-Merill is currently a print only journal and does not have the resources to maintain digital supplementary material. However, authors are encouraged to use relevant repositories and public databases to upload data and material from the study.