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## **The lichens of the Maltese Islands: An ongoing project**

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Lichens are important components of the biodiversity of the Maltese Islands. Yet, locally, their study has been limited. The only comprehensive checklist of lichens was published over a century ago in *Flora Melitensis Nova* in which 183 species were recorded from the Maltese Islands. This list was based on identifications carried out by Italian lichenologist Antonio Jatta.

The present effort to study the lichens of the Maltese Islands was initiated in 2005 and the main objectives are (i) to collect, photograph and identify as many lichens occurring in the Maltese Islands as possible in order to publish an updated checklist of the lichens of the Maltese Islands; (ii) to identify those lichens deemed rare and threatened for possible inclusion in a Red Data List of species of the Maltese Islands and (iii) to conserve collected samples of all lichens in a lichen herbarium for future use by lichenologists.

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