

Bird's Eye View

FLAMINGO Aron Tanti



Nature days
for sun, sand and sea
daffodils



Late summer wildlife
what to keep an eye out for



Walk the Talk
catch up with the news and
see what's coming up...



Flamingo in the salt pans

Find out more about Salina as a bird haven

contents

news page 3

Updates from BirdLife Malta

bird profile page 4

Learn more about swifts

what to spot page 5

Late summer wildlife

in focus page 6

White gold from the sea

nature days page 8

Wildlife at Ramla Bay

bird lives page 10

Falko's new swift project

what's on page 11

Events and activities

get involved page 12

Ways to help



New look for the Bird's Eye View



Steve Micklewright
Executive Director

Welcome to the new-look Bird's Eye View. Based on the feedback you gave in the recent membership survey, we're now including a seasonal nature feature, wildlife to look out for and more ways you can get involved. We hope there's something for everyone.

One of the biggest problems we're still facing is the illegal shooting of protected birds, especially birds of prey. Each year more than 100 injured birds are brought to us by members of the public. With the right treatment and care some of these birds can be rehabilitated and set free. We now have a unique opportunity to set up a wild bird rehabilitation centre to do just that. We need your help to make this a reality. **Please print this letter and help us if you can**

And I'd like to say thank you to Victor and Desiree Falzon for their amazing work for many years designing and editing Bird's Eye view, making it the great magazine it is today.

We hope you enjoy the new Bird's Eye View. If you have any ideas or suggestions for our new team, please email holly.forsyth@birdlifemalta.org

say NO to finch trapping
write to your MEP



Stand up for songbirds, say "no" to finch trapping



Geoffrey Saliba
President

These are difficult times for bird conservation in Malta. Since it was elected last year, the Maltese government has been giving the hunting and trapping lobby ever more privileges. Their latest plan is to allow the return of 'legal' finch trapping for two months from October. The European Union Bird's Directive expressly forbids the trapping of birds, except in very special circumstances. When Malta joined the EU, the treaty of accession included the phasing out of finch trapping and it was made illegal in 2008. However, the European Commission seems reluctant to act against Malta at this time. This could mean we see the return of finch trapping with thousands of song birds caught every autumn. We need to stop this before it happens.

We know that pressure from MEPs could make a difference and this is where you can help too. **Please send a letter to your MEP asking them to get involved in our campaign to stop finch trapping on Malta forever.** We would like as many MEPs as possible to get involved, so whether you live in Malta, Germany, the UK or anywhere else in the EU, your letter could help make a difference.

Look at our "Get involved" section on page 12 for more information.



BirdLife Malta is an environmental organisation working to protect Malta's wildlife by managing natural spaces, inspiring the new generation, opposing illegal hunting and undertaking research.

BEV production team:
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It's been an eventful few months since the last Bird's Eye View. During this time we have launched our monthly members' email newsletter to keep you up-to-date with the latest developments in our campaigns, events and activities. If you would like to receive the newsletter, please send an email to events@birdlifemalta.org

YELKOUAN SHEARWATER CHICK Ben Metzger

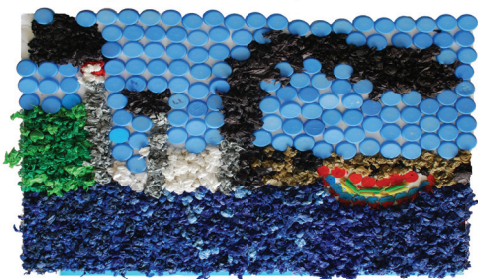


Jack-in-the-box

the first Yelkouan chick to hatch in a nestbox in Malta

Reducing Pollution

Can your activities help reduce this?



We all need to protect our environment



WINNING POSTER Marsaxlokk Primary School

EU LIFE+ Malta Seabird Project: researchers have recorded the first ever successful breeding in an artificial nest box of both Storm Petrels and Yelkouan Shearwaters in Malta. For more updates on the project visit the blog maltaseabirdproject.wordpress.com

Black-winged Stilts bred for the second successive year at Ghadira Nature Reserve and for the first time ever at Is-Simar! Read more in the breeding birds blog post here...

223 people, young and old, raised €1,200 at the **Walk for Nature** in March. Read more about the hike through the countryside and the wildlife seen along the way on our blog birdlifemalta.blogspot.com

Stop spring hunting campaign update: The Electoral Commission has completed vetting the 44,000 signatures on the petition for a referendum on spring hunting. Malta's Constitutional Court now has three months to listen to objections and make a final decision about whether the referendum can take place.

Dinja Wahda's Walk the Talk: primary school students presented posters on environmental problems and solutions to Environment Minister, Leo Brincat. The winning poster is being distributed to primary schools throughout Malta and Gozo.

Falko youth group organised Malta's first ever **National Bird Race**, with teams competing to see (or hear) the most different bird species in a set time. Keep an eye out for the next Bird Race, coming this autumn.

Foresta 2000 gets its very own Facebook page, with regular updates and photos from this brilliant habitat restoration project.

Salina flamingo protected by local bird-guard volunteers – a single flamingo that stayed in Salina salt pans for 10 days in June left safely thanks to the volunteers who watched it night and day. Read more

Find out about the news and events as they happen on our social media pages

click below



You can volunteer as a Bird Guard protecting rare visiting species like the flamingo ... turn to page 12 to find out more



Life on the wing

WORDS HOLLY FORSYTH

- > **Body: 17-18cm**
- > **Wingspan: 40-44cm**
- > **Can be seen March - October**
- > **Boomerang shaped wings**
- > **Often flies in flocks**
- > **Seen hunting insects in air**
- > **Fast and frenzied wingbeats**
- > **Tell apart from swallows by the dark underside**



Turn to page 10 to find out about Falko's new EU funded swift project

Swift Rundun

Swifts are one of only a few birds that have adapted to spending most of their lives in the air. Recognisable by their boomerang shape and rapid flight pattern, their bodies have evolved to make them exceptional flyers.

They eat, drink, fight, mate and even sleep whilst flying.

They only take a break from flying when nesting. Swifts breed in the summer, and have established themselves as a regular breeding species in Malta over the last 5 years. Breeding couples have adapted very well to urbanisation and they can often be seen in the towns of Sliema, Paceville and San Gwann.

They are capable of performing rapid, sharp turns and reaching very high speeds. The swift is actually one of the fastest flying birds in the world reaching speeds of more than 110Km/h.

The only downside to their flying prowess is a pair of under-developed legs that make them terribly clumsy. If they fall to the ground, they might not be able to take flight again.

One of the easiest ways to locate swifts is by hearing their loud ringing screams in a monotone "srriiirr" sound. On summer evenings large groups gather and they form "screaming parties" that can become incredibly noisy.

From the beginning of March through to October, the Common Swift can be seen on Malta, either migrating or breeding. To spot a breeding swift, we suggest taking a trip to Mellieħa Church or St Paul's Cathedral in Mdina.

Holly Forsyth is the Events Communications Assistant at BirdLife Malta



Mdina Cathedral Holly Forsyth



WORDS HOLLY FORSYTH

Mediterranean Chameleon Kamaleonte

The Mediterranean Chameleon was introduced to Malta from North Africa in the 19th century, but colonised well and can now be found throughout Malta and Gozo. Growing up to 30cm in length, they can easily remain hidden due to their ability to turn lighter or darker colours when threatened. The chameleon has excellent eye sight, and the rare ability to move each eye independently of the other, helping it to locate prey easily. Good places to look for chameleons are [Dwejra Map](#) and [Kemmuna Map](#)

Scarlet Darter Mazzarel Skarlat

Spotted from spring through to autumn, the Scarlet Darter is one of Malta's more common dragonfly species, and its vivid red colouration makes it easy to identify. Usually they remain close to water, where they will feed on small insects, including mosquitoes. [Foresta 2000 Map](#) is a great place to spot many species of dragonfly because it is just next to the wetlands at Ghadira Nature Reserve.



Scarlet Darter - Charles Gaudi

Maltese Rock Centaury Widnet il-Baħar

The Maltese Rock Centaury is only present on the Maltese Islands and is considered a critically endangered species. Flowering from May to July, this brightly coloured plant grows on coastal limestone cliffs along the south-west of the mainland and also on Gozo. Declared the national plant of Malta in 1971, the Maltese name translates as Ear of the Sea. [Ta Ċenċ, Gozo, and Dingli cliffs Map](#) are good places to look for this rare plant.



Maltese Rock Centaury - Aron Tanti

Grey Long-eared Bat Farfett il-Lejl Widnejh Kbar Griz

Summer is a great time to see bats in Malta. With this being their most active time of year, about half an hour before sunset is the time to raise your eyes to the skies, particularly in urban areas. The Grey Long-eared Bat, however, is a more difficult species to spot as it prefers wooded areas and valleys with running water. If you fancy a challenge, places to look for this bat include [Buskett Map](#), [Girgenti Map](#) and [Wied il-Lunzjata Map](#)



Grey Long-eared Bat - John Borg



White Gold

WORDS STEVE MICKLEWRIGHT

In order to stay alive, you need up to 10 grams of salt each day. Salt was once so valuable that Roman soldiers could be paid in it – the word ‘salary’ comes from this tradition. Wars and revolutions have taken place because of the need for salt to preserve food and to survive. No wonder salt is also known as ‘white gold’.



PURE SEA SALT Ella Beeson

Preserving the past

The Mediterranean has always been important for salt production. Over 7,000 years ago the Egyptians had created coastal salt pans (or Salini) where the natural evaporation of sea water would leave behind crystals of salt. The process was refined by the Arabs who invented the way of evaporating water through successive pools and large salt pans were built across the Mediterranean.

By the time the Knights of Saint John occupied Malta, the creation of very large salt pans was widespread and they began the construction of the salt pans that we can still see at Salina, on the coast road near Qawra. They were so important that Malta became an important exporter of salt during the 1600s. They produced salt for hundreds of years, employing close to forty people during the peak production time in August.

However they fell in to disuse, but have recently been renovated thanks to EU funding.

Salty birds

Salini can be very important for wildlife, especially birds. This is because they are usually created from natural salt marshes and wetlands, but also because the process of making salt creates ideal conditions for huge populations of the brine shrimp, the favourite food of flamingos. Some salini such as the one at Molentargius in Sardinia, attract 10,000 mating pairs of flamingos each year.

The salt pans at Salina have always been important for birds in Malta. So much so, that the area is a designated bird sanctuary, which is regularly visited by Flamingos on their migration. There is huge potential to improve the salt pans for birds now that they have been renovated. Stony areas could be provided for nesting terns, while managing the water levels in the pools would help to provide the right sort of conditions for Black-winged Stilts. BirdLife Malta is keen to ensure that this happens.

Crystal world

The salt pans were once a hive of industry during the summer. Sea water was taken in to the salt pans and channelled through a series of shallow ponds where the water gradually evaporated to leave salt crystals. This is the most natural way of making salt and there are still many older Maltese who remember harvesting the salt. By all accounts it was back-breaking work in harsh conditions.

In Malta, salt was used to preserve food such as the famous salty Maltese sausage and Gozitan cheeses. Capers were traditionally preserved in salt too. The preservation of food was very important to ensure there was something to eat during the very hot dry summers.

Language of SALT

Salt has been so important to us that many words have been derived from their association with it including:

**Salsa Salad Salary
Sausage Salami**



Preserve your own capers

Now is a great time to collect and preserve capers using salt. Just follow these simple instructions:

- Collect small caper buds from plants in the countryside
- Sift capers, picking off long stems
- Rinse and pat dry using a paper towel
- Place the capers in a jar with alternate layers of fine sea salt
- Cover jar and shake it to distribute the salt among the capers
- Remove lid, but cover the jar with a single layer of a paper napkin or tight netting. Use an elastic band to close
- Store out of direct sunlight in a place where air circulates
- Drain off any liquid that forms each day and add another spoonful of salt
- When the capers stop giving off liquid (about one week), transfer to a clean jar and cover with a lid
- The capers can be kept on a shelf for up to one year.

***Look out for the Large White butterfly, as the caper is its foodplant - turn to page 12**

Salina future

The renovation of the salt pans should enable up to 700 - 1000 tonnes of salt to be produced each year at Salina. It is hoped that it will be used for flavouring food and to create an interesting souvenir when people visit.

It will be completed by September 2014 and it is planned that as well as salt production and wildlife conservation, the site will become an important educational centre and tourist attraction. BirdLife Malta is in active discussion with the government to ensure that in the future birds will be able to safely rest and nest there.

Steve Micklewright is the Executive Director of BirdLife Malta

You can volunteer as a Bird Guard protecting rare visiting species, turn to page 12 for more info

SALINA Aron Tanti



Ir-Ramla








WORDS ELLA BEESON

To enjoy the hot summer days on the Maltese islands it's a good idea to have water close by. Everyone enjoys a day trip to the beach, but while you're there why not make the most of the wildlife too?

One of the best beaches the islands have to offer is Ramla Bay in Gozo. If travelling there from Malta, the ferry offers great views of the islands and an opportunity to look out for the Scopoli's Shearwater (Ċiefa). These birds are called shearwaters because they fly very close to the sea looking for fish, skimming the surface with their wings.

Ramla Bay is Ir-Ramla l-Ħamra in Maltese, which means the red sandy beach. If you're relaxing on the red sands, it won't be long before you'll want to head into the water. If you take a snorkel, you can cool off by exploring the seabed for colourful fish.

Key

-  Gozo coastline
-  Ramla beach
-  minor roads
-  major roads
-  suggested walking route between Marsalforn and Ramla (uneven path)
-  sites of interest nearby
-  bus stops (322 and 302)

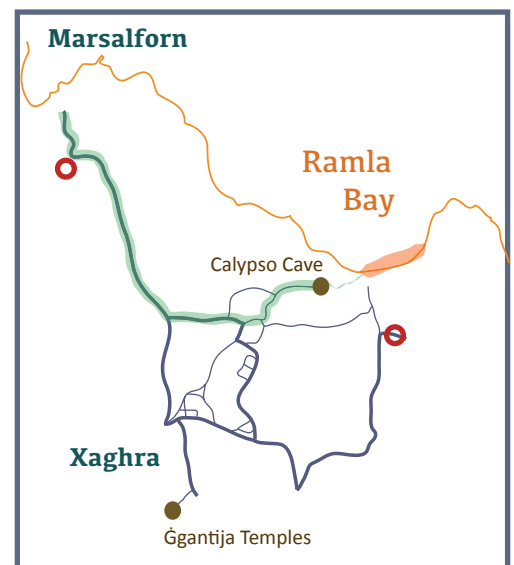


how to get there

During summer, a regular ferry service runs 24 hours from Cirkewwa in Malta to Mgarr in Gozo.

You can get the 322 bus direct from the port of Mgarr, this route also continues to Marsalforn.

From the capital Rabat get the 302 bus
Parking is available close to the beach.





PROTECTED DUNES Ella Beeson

The sand dunes that run alongside the beach are the largest on the Maltese Islands. The Gaia Foundation manage Ramla Bay, including the dunes, preserving the biodiversity of the habitat. Gaia protects the system of dunes by removing invasive species and spreading Sea Daffodil seeds (Ġilju tar-Ramel). This plant is typical of sand dunes and is well adapted to the tough conditions, with a huge bulb buried deep beneath the sand. The Sea Daffodil is a summer treat as it flowers during the hottest and driest months of the year.

A short walk up a sandy path from the beach, leads you to the viewing platform above Calypso Cave, offering stunning views of the bay below and is an ideal wildlife watch point. Here you can look out for Malta’s national bird – the Blue Rock Thrush, named because of the male’s striking blue feathers. Once the Autumn migration starts, a great variety of birds can be spotted from this high vantage point.

Whilst long walks are not recommended during the hot summer months, once it cools down in the evenings, and during early Autumn, just an hour’s walk away is the delightful Marsalforn Bay. The route takes you through Xagħra, offering fantastic views across the valley, as far as the Citadel in Rabat. Marsalforn offers a wide selection of places serving up fresh local fish, providing the perfect setting for a summer’s evening.

Along the way, you can try to detect the smells of the Giant Fennel (Ferla) and the Mediterranean Thyme (Sagħtar). The scent of thyme comes from an oil, which deters nibbling goats, as they don’t like the taste.

The natural cracks in the stone walls around Ramla I-Ħamra provide shelter for many creatures, including Geckos (Wiżgħa). Keen eyes will be able to spot their camouflaged bodies between the rocks, or on a summer’s evening you may hear their mating calls, which sound like tiny barks.



MOORISH GECKO Ella Beeson

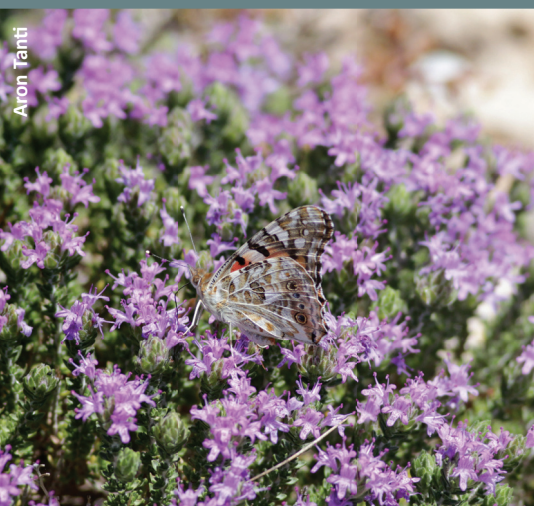
Ella Beeson is the Media Communications Assistant at BirdLife Malta.

For more information on the Gaia Foundation work and events please visit www.projectgaia.org



what to look out for

Painted Lady (Farfett tax-Xewk) pollinating **Meditarian Thyme (Sagħtar)** which flowers May – Aug



Sea Daffodil (Ġilju tar-Ramel) this beautiful summer bloomer is well adapted to growing in sand dunes



Blue Rock Thrush (Merill) likes remote spots on cliffs and you can see Malta’s national bird all year round



Tim Micallef was 13 years old when he first joined BirdLife Malta as a Klabb Huttaf member in 2008, on a visit he made to Ghadira Nature Reserve with his father, Philip. Tim, now 19, is one of the leaders of Falko, BirdLife's youth activity group and a trainee bird ringer. Now he is launching a Youth in Action project on one of the Maltese Islands' newest breeding birds: the Common Swift (*Apus apus*). This is what Tim had to say about his journey from Klabb Huttaf member to young ornithologist...



Tim Micallef came to the office to answer a few questions from Rupert Masefield, the Communications Officer at BirdLife Malta.

RM: Did you know much about birds when you first joined Klabb Huttaf?

Tim: No, almost nothing in fact. I didn't really join because I was interested in birds. It was more so I could go out on the walks. Then I met some others my own age who were already really into birds. That's when I started to watch birds myself.

RM: How did you know what birds you were looking at?

Tim (laughing): I didn't at first- not a clue! I would take photos of the birds I saw and send them to birdwatchers I had met and ask what they were - a lot of sparrows if I remember rightly. Gradually I got to know the more common birds by sight and sound, such as the Sardinian Warbler or the Blue Rock Thrush. But it's not only knowing what they are, you get to know how they behave, where they live and what they eat. It's much more than just saying, "that's a Hoopoe" and ticking it off in a book.

RM: Why did you choose swifts for your new project?

Tim: They are incredible - one of the best aerial acrobats of any animal. My family used to go to my Grandmother's house in Sliema every weekend for lunch. In the summer of 2009, I remember going up onto the roof and being amazed by all the swifts flying around just above my head. From then on, every weekend I would be up on the roof watching and listening to the swifts.

I don't think my family saw much of me those summers!

RM: So maybe that explains why you are embarking on your current project, which is called APUS?

Tim: Definitely, APUS is actually Appreciating, Protecting and Understanding Swifts, and the name pretty much sums up the aims of the project. We will be monitoring breeding swifts by setting up nest boxes at different breeding sites around the islands. We will use these to create a map of the most important nesting sites so that these new breeding birds can be protected.

RM: So, who will be recording the observations you will be using to create this map?

Tim: For me this is one of the best things about the project. Anyone can submit observations which can then be included to generate the map. We're taking this citizen science approach for a number of reasons.

It will help us to get a more comprehensive picture of where and how many swifts are now breeding in Malta. Swifts in Malta breed almost exclusively in urban areas, making them perfect for this kind of project, because they are easily observed by lots of people. They are right there on our doorsteps.

The project is currently in its development phase, but if you'd like more information please contact Tim on apus@birdlifemalta.org and keep an eye on our facebook pages for updates.

what's on

Shearwater Boat Trip
Saturday 2nd August
6.30pm - 9.30pm
Booking essential, fee

Falko Birdwatching Barbeque
Thursday 21st August
4.30pm – 10pm
Għadira Nature Reserve
Bring your own food

Night Walk
Friday 22nd August
7.00pm – 10.00pm
Verdala Palace, Buskett Map

Klabb Huttaf Snorkelling
Saturday 6th September
9.00am – 11.00am
Ir-Ramla tal-Mixquqa Map

Birdwatching evenings
Weekends during September
Clapham Junction Map
More info to follow in our email newsletter

Euro Birdwatch
Saturday 4th October
2.00pm - 5.00pm
Buskett Woodlands Map

Majjistral photography walk with Johan Siggeesson
19th October
Majjistral Nature & History Park
Booking essential, fee

5 Senses at Għadira
Saturday 25th October
10.00am – 12:30pm
Għadira Nature Reser--ve



CAROLINE AT EURO BIRDWATCH Michela Checchi

KEY
Adult Members
Falko*
Klabb Huttaf
Public**

Also we'll be attending these events, so come say hello at:

Science in the City website
Friday 26th September
6pm onwards
Valletta

UK Bird Fair website
15th – 17th August
Rutland Water Nature Reserve
United Kingdom



BECCY AND HOLLY Ella Beeson

*Check on the Falko facebook page for September and October events, including another Bird Race, due to popular demand!
**Members receive discounted entry

For further information or for bookings please email Holly at events@birdlifemalta.org or call the BirdLife office on +356 21347644

SHEARWATER BOAT TRIP Daniel Cilia



get involved

You, our members, provide vital support for our work through your annual subscriptions, but for those who want to do more here are a few activities you can get involved in...

Say no to finch trapping: write to your MEP

Help us stand up for songbird conservation in Malta by writing to your MEP to say "no to finch trapping". To find out more and for detailed instructions and template letters please visit this page on our website

Become a bird guard

Join local volunteers and the police, to help ensure that protected birds are kept safe from the danger of illegal hunting. In the spring and autumn, international volunteers join locals to help monitor migration and deter illegal hunting. Outside of these periods we rely entirely on local volunteers to help guard protected birds when they come to the islands.

We need you! Please tell us if you would like to sign up to help with bird-guarding duties next time a rare bird needs protecting. Email christian.debono@birdlifemalta.org

To register your interest in volunteering at Raptor Camp 2014 please email raptorcamp@birdlifemalta.org



Share this magazine

When you've read your magazine, share it with someone you know and encourage them to become a member too. More members means more support for our campaigns and helps raise awareness and support for conservation of birds and wildlife in the Maltese Islands.

We offer membership for adults, couples, families and children. To discover the benefits and become a member visit our [Join BirdLife Malta pages](http://www.birdlifemalta.org) on the website www.birdlifemalta.org

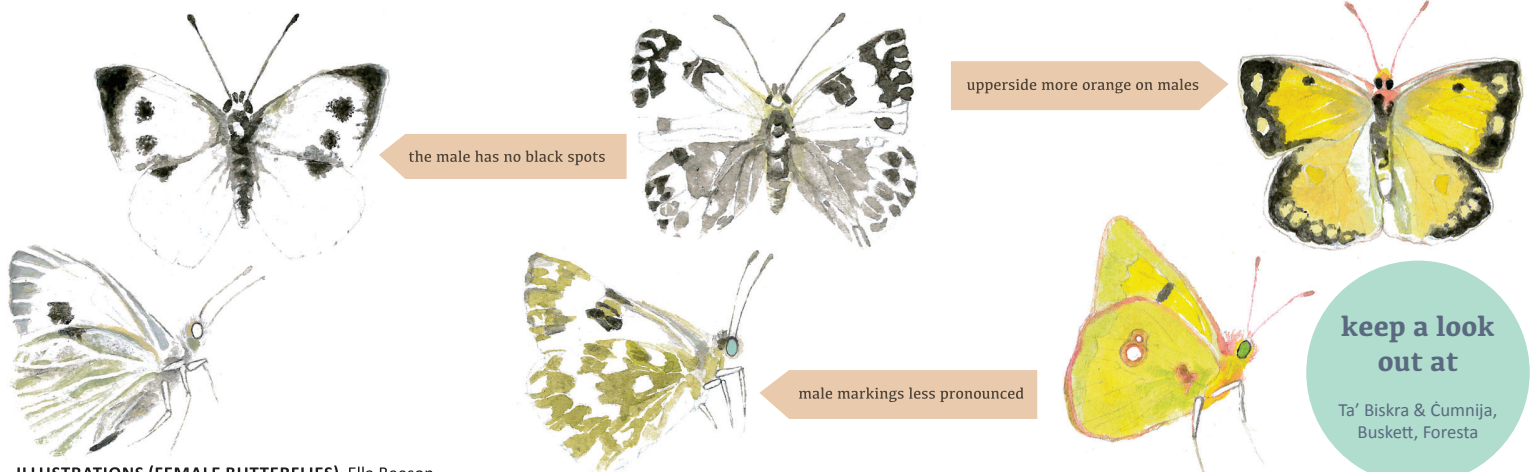
ID: Butterflies

Large White (Farfett tal-Kaboċi)
26-34mm
Feeds on cabbage and caper plants
Very common

Bath White (Farfett tal-Ġargir)
20-25mm
Feeds on rocket
Frequent

Clouded Yellow (Farfett tas-Silla)
22-28mm
Feeds on clover
Common

Family: Pieridae
Whites and Yellows



ILLUSTRATIONS (FEMALE BUTTERFLIES) Ella Beeson

keep a look out at
Ta' Biskra & Ċumnija,
Buskett, Foresta