

## Help from the RSPB

Much of the work carried out by BirdLife Malta would not be possible without the valuable help we receive from foreign partners. Late last year, for example, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds sent over Mr Norman Holton to act as a consultant in an exercise that BirdLife Malta was carrying out. This was a project in relation to the nature reserves and to the possibility that BirdLife will soon be legally recognised as the entity responsible for managing the reserves. We hope to have more news about this in the coming weeks but meanwhile, thanks to Mr Holton's help, both Ghadira and Simar now have proper management plans that set out their aims and the ways that these will be achieved.

On behalf of all BirdLife Malta members we heartily thank Mr Holton for his assistance and the RSPB for sending him over to Malta.



Norman Holton being shown around Ghadira by the warden Charles Gauci.

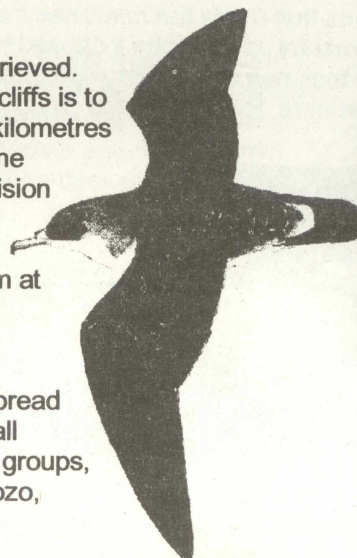
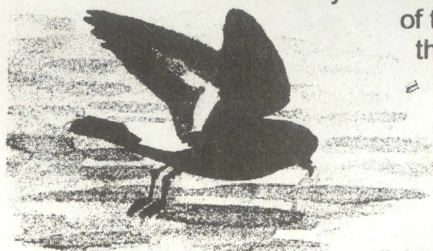


## Tuna-penning

The Ta' Ċenċ seabird colonies have been once again reprieved. The proposal to set up a tuna-penning station just off the cliffs is to be changed so that the fish cages will be placed several kilometres off the Ghadira coast and will not interfere so much with the shearwaters and petrels that still breed in Gozo. This decision was taken in view of the reluctance of the Planning

Authority to sanction the setting-up of the tuna-penning farm at the site where it was originally planned.

This project had attracted widespread criticism from all environmental groups, Local Councils in Gozo, diving schools and tourist



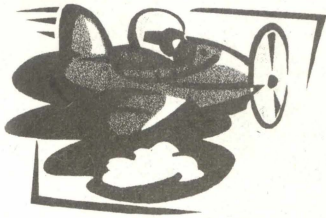
## Outing

An outing for BirdLife adult members is planned for

Saturday  
18th March

at the  
Simar  
Nature Reserve

Details may be obtained by calling the BirdLife offices on 347646.



## Gozo airstrip

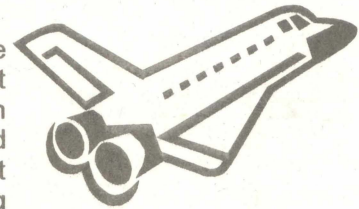
Before the last elections, the Secretary of the Nationalist Party had solemnly informed BirdLife that the project to build an airstrip in Gozo had been definitely shelved. It was therefore with surprise and dismay that we recently learnt of the possibility that this project might soon be revived. Although nothing

is yet official, it seems that there is a lobby group seeking to pressure Government into enlarging the existing heliport to make it suitable for fixed-wing aircraft to use.

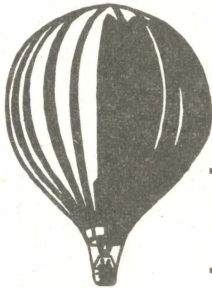
Although an aeroplane might be economically more feasible than a helicopter, the environmental damage that would be caused should not be under-estimated. Moreover there are rumours that, in future, even chartered flights from Gozo to other countries might be organised from this

***Surely, some alternative form of transportation could be devised.***

airport. This would involve a much bigger piece of land than the 150 metres of land presently being mentioned. As far as we know there is no real need for this "development".

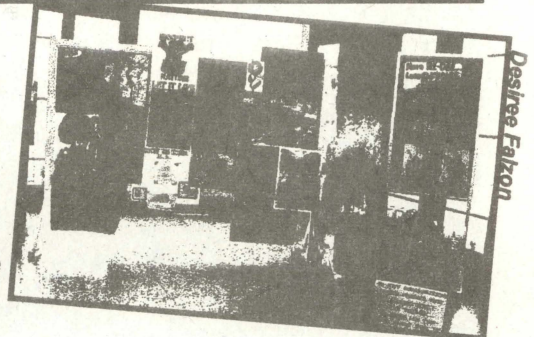


***There are fears that the "airstrip" might gradually grow into something catering for more than small air-taxis.***

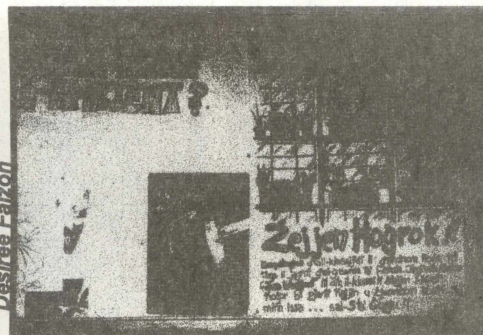


## Press Conference

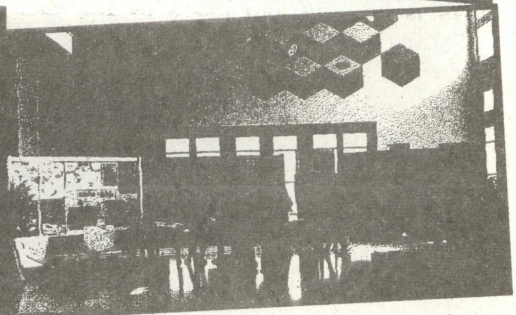
Dinja Wahda, the award scheme for schools is proceeding well, with an encouraging number of private and Government schools that are participating. In January, a press conference was held to gather feedback from heads and teachers and to suggest other ways by which points can be gained by the schools. This press conference was held at the Mriehel Girls' Junior Lyceum where a number of items and activities suitable for the competition were on show. These included exhibitions, posters and separation of waste.



Desiree Falzon



Desiree Falzon



D. Falzon

## Erika Disaster

One of the major events that made the headlines these past months has doubtless been the wreckage of the Erika and the environmental catastrophe it caused to the North-western coast of France. A small contingent of Maltese volunteers took part in the clean-up that followed the disaster and among these volunteers were two BirdLife Malta members: Ray Galea and Graziella Grech

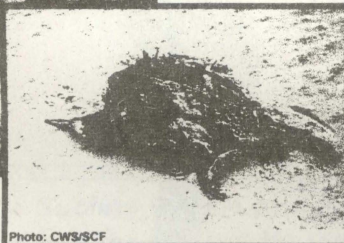
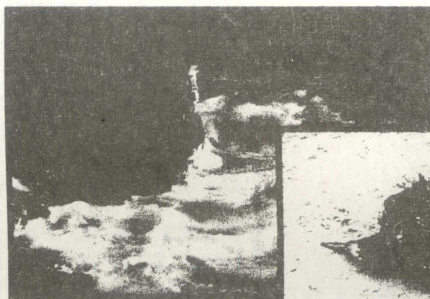


Photo: CWS/SCF



Raymond Galea



## Hope for Buskett

The Buskett Gardens are one of the most important bird areas on the Maltese islands. This is the only sizeable woodland and is crucial for many migratory birds – especially raptors – who find refuge and roosting places among the mature trees.

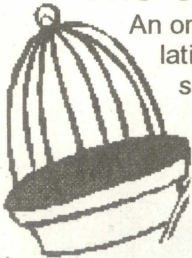
Unfortunately the whole area is rather unkempt and suffering from over-use by picnickers and lack of proper maintenance. BirdLife has long been asking for a body of wardens to, at least keep Buskett from degenerating further.

It is with pleasure that we now see the

Planning Authority issuing a conservation order for Buskett and calling for the appointment of a specialised team to restore, rehabilitate, conserve and maintain the site.



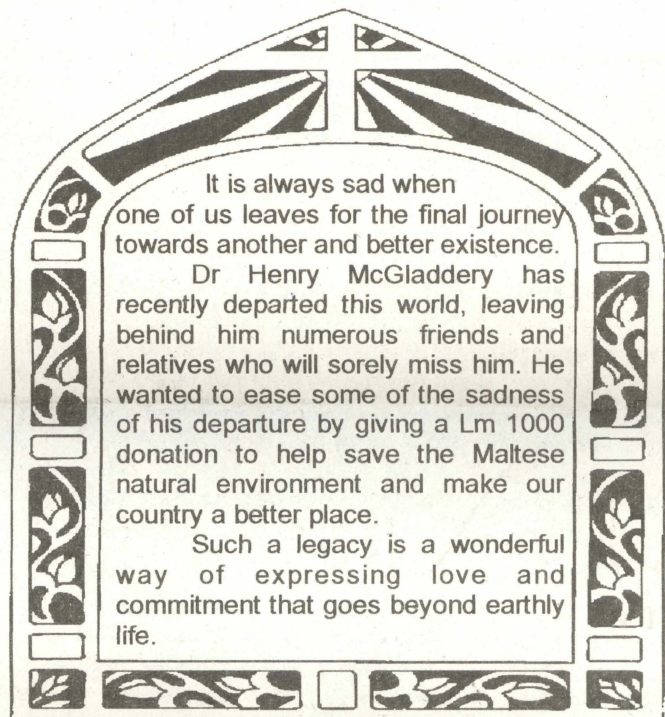
## The Cage



An original display, known as an installation, will be on show at the Museum of Fine Arts, Valletta from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 27<sup>th</sup> of March 2000.

This installation, called The Cage is the work of US-Maltese artist David Camilleri and represents the plight of birds confined in cages. It consists of a two-hour video of a man who has spent 24 hours living in a "bird-cage" and who speaks about his ordeal and the stress that such a condition causes him. The dramatic reversal of roles that this installation portrays is brought into focus by the fact that the both birdsong and a human voice are heard but while the human speech is coming from inside the cage, the bird "speech" is outside the metal bars.

This installation may be viewed during the opening hours of the Museum, daily (including weekends) from 8.30 am to 4.30 pm (4.00pm during weekends).



It is always sad when one of us leaves for the final journey towards another and better existence.

Dr Henry McGladdery has recently departed this world, leaving behind him numerous friends and relatives who will sorely miss him. He wanted to ease some of the sadness of his departure by giving a Lm 1000 donation to help save the Maltese natural environment and make our country a better place.

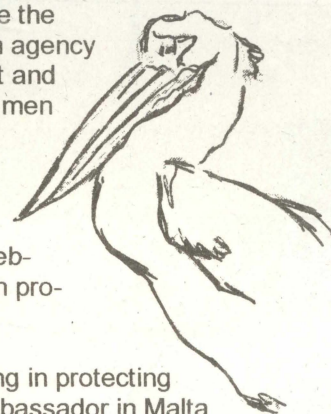
Such a legacy is a wonderful way of expressing love and commitment that goes beyond earthly life.

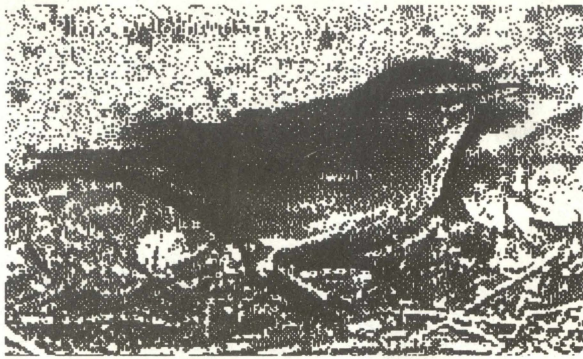
## Egyptian Misadventures

Once again, the hunting escapades of our fellow Maltese in Egypt have made the headlines. A number of hunters - at least five - who travelled to Egypt with an agency well-known for its amateur safaris along the Nile have been arrested in Egypt and taken to court on charges that they had killed several protected birds. These men were later allowed to return to Malta on condition that they go back to Egypt when their case is bound to be heard in Court.

One hopes that, this time, the Maltese authorities will be more alert and cooperate with their Egyptian counterparts. We all remember the case of the Zebbug trader who was supposed to go to the UK to face charges of trafficking in protected finches and how this person managed to elude justice.

In any case the Government of Egypt deserves praise for the effort it is putting in protecting the wildlife heritage of its country and BirdLife has written to the Egyptian ambassador in Malta to convey its congratulations.





## Exotic bird at Ghadira

The Ghadira reserve hosted a distinguished Russian visitor early on February. This bird - the dusky warbler - breeds in Siberia and is an extremely rare species in the Mediterranean. It superficially resembles a common chaffinch at this time of the year but can be distinguished from the latter by its darker colour and its call.

Other birds that were observed in Ghadira these last couple of months included coots, black-necked grebes and moorhens as well as various ducks: teals, shelduck and shovellers.

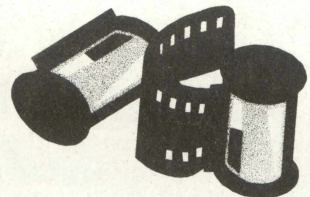
## Bird smuggling

Several dead birds - including woodpeckers - and a racoon have been intercepted as they were being smuggled into Malta from the USA. The Customs Officers who managed to spot these birds and arrest the smuggler deserve our full praise and encouragement.

## Lost and Found

An exposed roll of camera film has been found at the Ghadira reserve some weeks ago.

Whoever has lost this film may reclaim it from the BirdLife offices (tel. 347646)



## Annual General Meeting and Members' Day

The BirdLife Annual General Meeting is this year being held in conjunction with a Members' Day. This is being held on

**Sunday the 26th of March at Mount St. Joseph, Targa Gap**


The event will start at 9.00 a.m. and during the morning there will be various talks and discussions in Maltese about environmental issues while the General Meeting itself will be held in the afternoon between 2.30 p.m. and 4.00pm. All proceedings of the AGM will be in English.

Lunch is available at Lm 5 per person and members intending to stay for lunch are requested to book at least a week in advance. Bookings can be made at the BirdLife offices.

Volunteers are needed to help in the Ghadira nature reserve on Saturdays and Sundays. Their main job would be to accompany visitors round the reserve but no special knowledge about birds or nature is required as training will be provided by the Society. More information about this interesting work may be obtained from the BirdLife offices.



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**BirdLife Malta is the Society for the protection of birds and the natural environment**  
**BirdLife Malta is the partner of BirdLife International in the Maltese Islands**