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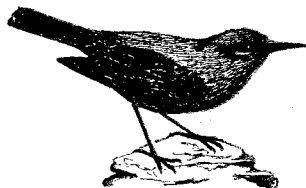
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IL-MERILL — publication of the Ornithological Society  
P.O. Box. 498 Valletta, Malta.

# IL-MERILL

BULLETIN OF THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY



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JULY 1977 — DECEMBER 1978

**No. 19**

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# THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 498, Valletta, Malta.

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The Editor welcomes contributions treating any aspect of the Ornithology of the Maltese Islands and the Mediterranean for publication in this Bulletin.

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The Ornithological Society was founded in 1962 to promote the scientific study of ornithology and bird conservation in the Maltese Islands. It organises a variety of scientific and social activities. It has its own ringing scheme, its own publications and a young members section.

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SOME ASPECTS OF HOBBY (*FALCO SUBBUTEO*) MIGRATION  
OVER BUSKETT

Martin A. Thake

The Hobby *Falco subbuteo* is a long distance migrant, the western palaeartic population of which winters south of the Sahara. As there is little evidence of major concentrations at either end of the Mediterranean, it is generally held that in this species migration takes place on a broad front (Moreau 1972).

Although a very few birds have been recorded in Malta during the breeding season, breeding has never been proved to occur nor is it likely to occur at the present time. The species' status in the Maltese islands has recently been reviewed (Galea 1971, Beaman and Galea 1974, Sultana, Gauci and Beaman 1975, Bannerman and Vella-Gaffero 1976). This paper deals with some aspects of the species' migration over Buskett.

*Observations*

Most Hobbys seen at Buskett in autumn show no obvious directional tendency and may spend an hour or more in the vicinity of Buskett. Generally sightings involved single birds, but on a few occasions Hobbys approached Buskett in parties of 2 — 5 birds.

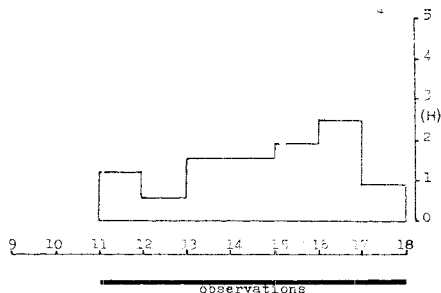
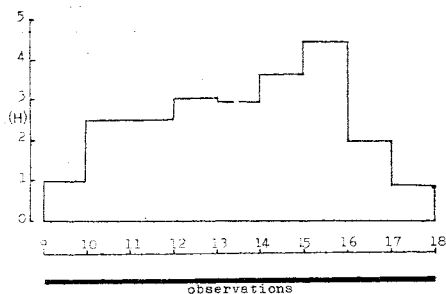
At Buskett the Hobby is the most difficult raptor species to count. There are several reasons for this. The birds are relatively small and fast, hence easily overlooked, especially if flying high. Many indulge in slope or thermal soaring and spend long periods in the vicinity of Buskett, disappearing and reappearing frequently. The daily totals of this species are probably less accurate than those of other raptors. In view of the above difficulties it is surprising that annual variation of totals is as small as it is (e.g. Beaman and Galea 1974).

The majority of Hobbys sighted at Buskett were flying low (below 300m) but individual birds changed height repeatedly. In view of the difficulty of sighting high flying members of this species, it seems likely that observations are more biased in favour of low flying birds than is the case with Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*. When cloud base was high (low relative humidity and high air temperature at ground level) Hobbys sometimes soared too high to be seen with the naked eye. The extent to which normal migration of this species takes place above naked eye range is unknown.

*Time of day*

There is a regular influx of Hobbys throughout the day from ca 10.00 to ca 17.00 CET, suggesting that the birds are leaving from an extensive area to the north of the Maltese Islands. An alternative explanation is that birds depart continuously throughout the day from a smaller area. Hybrid interpretations are also conceivable.

The histograms show a peak one to two hours before sunset, followed by a steep drop. This suggests that migration of this species across the Sicilian channel declines considerably in mid-afternoon. The peak at around 16.00 CET could be due to convergence on Buskett for roosting purposes. However this peak occurs somewhat earlier than would be expected on the basis of this assumption and only a few birds are still in the vicinity of Buskett at sunset. These birds are either shot or forced by disturbance to leave the vicinity of Buskett.



Variation of mean number of Hobbys sighted per hour (H) with time of day, Autumn 1976. Observations were made between 9.00 and 18.00 CET. Sample size = 169 birds.

Variation of mean number of Hobbys sighted per hour (H) with time of day, Autumn 1977. Observations were made between 11.00 and 18.00 CET. Sample size = 140 birds.

#### *Correlations with weather variables*

Data obtained in visual watches from 1/9/76 to 12/10/76 were analysed in conjunction with meteorological data obtained from the records of Meteorological Office, Luqa and RAF Qrendi. Similar calculations dealing with Honey Buzzard have already been published (Thake 1977) and these results are compared in Table 1. The various correlations are strikingly similar in the two species. Such results are consistent with the hypothesis that these raptors migrate over Malta chiefly during anticyclonic weather conditions and that they regard low wind strength below 1500m as an indication of favourable weather (Thake 1977).

On the other hand whereas Honey Buzzard numbers observed in 1976 were significantly correlated with intensity of the southerly vector of wind strength at 12.00 CET, Hobby numbers were not (Table 1). Any correlation which might exist in the latter case is very small and not detectable by the methods currently in use or is very variable between years. These results do not support the hypothesis that Hobbys converge on Malta chiefly during headwinds or that headwinds force Hobbys migrating above naked eye range to fly at lower levels where they can be seen.

### Discussion

None of the above correlations can account for the high concentration of Hobbys at Buskett in Autumn. Numbers sighted at Buskett generally exceed those sighted at the Bosphorus and at Gibraltar, although the numbers breeding due North of Malta are probably smaller than those breeding due north of the watch points mentioned. Migration of Hobbys under anticyclonic conditions explains the distribution of migration over an entire season, but not the magnitude of the seasonal total. Channelling by leading lines or convergence on the islands or on Buskett must be invoked in order to explain the high numbers seen.

A small tendency to follow the coast during bad weather might result in more birds being channelled along peninsulas which have a general North-South trend. It is difficult to envisage the effect the configuration of the Italian peninsula has on Hobby migration, in the absence of quantitative data from points north of Malta.

The high concentration of Hobbys at Buskett may also be explained as due to concentration on the islands or on Buskett. Although concentration on the islands is likely to occur in unfavourable weather, the available data do not support the view that sightings of Hobbys at Buskett occur chiefly under such conditions. On the contrary the numbers of Hobbys sighted were greatest under anticyclonic (i.e. settled) conditions.

There is no evidence that large numbers of Hobbys are passing through other places in the islands but few systematic watches have been maintained elsewhere. The few Hobbys which have been sighted during systematic watches elsewhere in the islands were all flying between SSE and SW and there was no tendency to linger in the vicinity of the watch point. It would appear that Hobbys are converging on Buskett alone rather than converging on the entire Maltese archipelago.

Recent observations made at Buskett suggest that at least a minority of Hobbys are hunting successfully (Thake 1978, this issue). Several definite attacks failed and behaviour which could be interpreted as hunting was frequently observed. Thus Hobbys might be converging on Buskett for feeding purposes, i.e. using it as a refuelling stop in autumn. This interpretation accounts for the high seasonal totals as well as the lack of any definite directional tendency in the flight of Hobbys seen over Buskett.

### Summary

The number of Hobbys *Falco subbuteo* seen per day at Buskett (Malta) in autumn was positively correlated with atmospheric pressure and negatively correlated with wind strength below 1500m. This suggests that migration occurs under anticyclonic conditions. Numbers sighted were not greater in headwinds. The seasonal totals are too large to be due to normal broad front migration. The birds must be converging on the islands or on Buskett or being channelled by leading lines.

### Acknowledgements

Many of the 1977 observations were made by E. Curmi who also supplemented my observations in 1976. N. Bonavia and C. Galea also helped with the observations. Thanks are also due to Messrs Wright and Pace for allowing me to examine meteorological records.

Table 1		
<i>Correlation of sightings with weather variables</i>		
Simple Correlation coefficients	<i>Pernis apivorus</i> 30/8/76-10/10/76	<i>Falco subbuteo</i> 1/9/76-12/10/76
With Atmospheric pressure (Qrendi 12.00)	$r = .2697$ .01 < P < .05	$r = .2944$ .01 < P < .05
With Atmospheric pressure (Luqa 19.00)	$r = .357$ P < .01	$r = .289$ .01 < P < .05
With ground wind strength (Qrendi 12.00)	$r = -.1934$ .05 < P < .10	$r = -.1909$ .05 < P < .10
With mean scalar wind strength below 1500m (Qrendi 6.00)	$r = -.4969$ P < .01	$r = -.4662$ P < .01
With strength of Southerly vector (Qrendi 12.00)	$r = .3270$ .01 < P < .05	$r = .05620$ .10 < P

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# DIPTERA HIPPOBOSCIDAE PARASITISING BIRDS FROM THE MALTESE ISLANDS

Stephen P. Schembri

The *Hippoboscidae* is a small family of blood-sucking diptera ectoparasitic on birds and some large mammals. Vertebrate blood is the only food taken and consequently the *Hippoboscidae* have become highly specialised for their particular mode of life. Their body is dorso-ventrally flattened and provided with a tough cuticle which is difficult to rupture. The legs are armed with powerful claws, enabling the flies to cling with great tenacity to the hairs or plumage of their host.

Both sexes take blood. The mouth parts are adapted for piercing the skin and sucking blood. The *Hippoboscidae* share with some other flies, the peculiar habit of larviposition. The free larval stage is dispensed with and the female retains the egg, and later the larva in her uterus. On completion of the larval stage, the female deposits a fully grown larva, which immediately pupates.

The *Hippoboscidae* of the Maltese Islands have not been studied. Falcoz (1926) records *Lynchia falcinelli* (Rondani) from Malta, but does not give the host species. *L. falcinelli* is now regarded as a synonym of *Pseudolynchia canariensis* Macquart (A.M. Hutson, personal communication).

The following is a list of *Hippoboscidae* collected by ringers of the Ornithological Society during ringing activities and once by the author. The birds were caught by means of mist nets.

*Ornithomya avicularia* (Linnaeus)

1 female Gozo : Lunzjata 16/10/76

Host : *Locustella luscinioides* (Savi's Warbler)

Leg. J. Sultana

*Ornithomya biloba* Dufor

1 male Malta : Rabat 14/10/77

Host : *Hirundo rustica* (Swallow)

Leg. M.V. Gauci

*Icosta (Ornithoponus) minor* (Bigot)

1 female Gozo : Ramla Valley 1/9/76

Host : *Sylvia melanocephala* (Sardinian Warbler)

Leg. J. Sultana/J. Grech

1 male Gozo : Lunzjata 27/11/76

Host : *Erithacus rubecula* (Robin)

Leg. J. Sultana

1 female Malta : Salina 7/1/77

Host : *Passer hispaniolensis* (Spanish Sparrow)

Leg. J. Sultana/C. Gauci



*Pseudolynchia canariensis* Macquart

1 female Malta: B'Kara 16/5/77

(No host data is available; specimen caught while at rest)

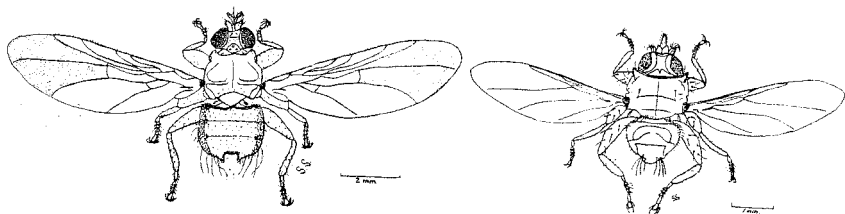
Leg. S. Schembri

*Acknowledgements*

The author would like to thank Dr. A.H. Parker Ag. Director of the Commonwealth Institute of Entomology and Mr. A.M. Hutson of the British Museum (Natural History) for determination of the insects. Thanks are also due to Messrs J. Sultana, C. Gauci, M.V. Gauci and J. Grech for collecting the specimens and providing the relevant data, and to Mr. P.J. Schembri for commenting on the paper.

*Reference*

Falcoz, L. (1926) Diptera Pupipares. *Faune De France* Vol. 14, Paris, 64pp.



Hippoboscid Diptera from the Maltese Islands. *Ornithomya avicularia* (L.) female from Lunzjata, Gozo, 16/10/76 (left); and *Icosta* (*Ornithoponus*) *minor* (Bigot) female from Ramla Valley, Gozo 1/9/76. Diagrams show the flies in dorsal view.

## RAPTORS FEEDING WHILE ON MIGRATION OVER BUSKETT

Martin A. Thake

In the course of systematic raptor watches made at Buskett in autumn 1976 five species of *Falconiformes* displayed behaviour patterns which could be interpreted as hunting. This behaviour is described below.

In autumn the concentration of many small birds, chiefly *Passeriformes*, is greater at Buskett than elsewhere in the islands. There is evidence that at least some species use the area to build up a fuel store (Gauci and Sultana 1976) and a large number of passerines have been observed feeding at Buskett. Avian food available to raptors here belongs to three main categories: aerial feeders, tree-dwelling species and birds which converge on Buskett to roost. Birds skulking in the dense vegetation at the bottom of the valley are rarely taken. The mammalian and reptilian fauna is rich by Maltese standards. The insect fauna is diverse and profuse. The largest insect taken by raptors to date was a large grasshopper *Locusta* sp. There are usually a number of large dragonflies flying just above the canopy. All the species observed hunting (except *F. tinnunculus*) habitually capture prey in flight. *Passeriformes*, particularly Hirundines, frequently display escape responses associated with the approach of a hunting raptor. The birds uttered short, high-frequency calls and generally flew away from the raptor. These responses were most pronounced with approaching *Falco eleonora* and *F. peregrinus*.

Although many of the Hobbies sighted displayed behaviour patterns strongly suggestive of hunting, these data were not recorded quantitatively. Two types of hunting behaviour were observed. Generally birds glided slowly around 10 m above the canopy making mock swoops at the trees. Birds breaking cover were chased. This method was observed to be successful on three occasions. Within seconds of capture, prey was taken to a prominent perch for plucking and eating. The successful bird was on each occasion mobbed by another Hobby, the assault being short-lived (approximately 3 seconds). This method appears to have been used when the prey were already alarmed by the presence of other raptors or when several Hobbies were hunting together. Up to nine Hobbies have been observed hunting together. On one occasion success was achieved in a different way. A single Hobby flying fast, low over the deciduous coppice in the upper reaches of Wied il-Luq, surprised a flock of Hirundines feeding in the valley and took a single swallow. It immediately flew to a perch and proceeded to pluck its victim. Only one insect was taken. A juvenile Hobby was observed taking a dragon-fly (*Anax* sp.) while in an apparently leisurely glide. Although Hobbies were observed stooping at flocks of Hirundines, no successes were observed.

A single male *Falco peregrinus* was observed stooping at a flock of mixed Hirundines. It could not be ascertained whether prey was taken. *Falco eleonora* was observed hunting on three occasions but no successes were observed.

Although greater numbers of *Falco tinnunculus* were observed than of any other raptor mentioned here, hunting behaviour was only observed infrequently. Success was observed on one occasion but prey could not be identified. On two occasions birds flying overhead were carrying prey (mammalian unidentified). Towards dusk one Kestrel was observed attempting to catch a bat in flight. The attempt was unsuccessful.

The only member of the family *Accipitridae* observed hunting at Buskett was *Accipiter nisus*. A single female was observed hunting but the attack was unsuccessful. A juvenile male was observed carrying avian prey in its talons.

Aggression between raptors was frequently observed. *Falco subbuteo* was the most aggressive species observed and birds were observed threatening *Pernis apivorus*, *F. naumanni*, *F. tinnunculus* as well as other *F. subbuteo*. *F. naumanni* was also observed threatening *F. cherrug*. Mobbing by smaller birds was less easy to observe but a single *F. tinnunculus* was observed being mobbed by about thirty House Martins. It is difficult to detect interactions between raptors at distances of more than five hundred metres and hunting behaviour could not be followed to advantage at distances of less than a hundred and fifty metres from the bird. Successful hunts in particular, may have been more frequent than was recorded.

#### References

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Species	Time of Day (C.E.T.)	Date	Notes
<i>A. nisus</i>	15.55	6/10/76	Observed carrying avian prey. Disturbed while feeding.
<i>F. subbuteo</i>	12.55	21/ 9/76	Observed catching a swallow in flight, plucking and eating it.
" "	15.55	2/10/76	Observed catching a Hirundine in flight. Feeding was observed.
" "	13.40	3/10/76	" "
" "	15.50	3/10/76	Spanish Sparrow taken in flight. Feeding was not observed.
" " (juv.)	12.42	23/ 9/76	Caught a dragon-fly in flight. Prey discarded immediately.
<i>F. tinnunculus</i>	10.35	24/10/76	Observed carrying mammalian prey while flying overhead.
" "	14.25	7/11/76	Observed taking unidentified prey on the ground.
" "	16.40	8/11/76	Observed carrying mammalian prey while flying overhead.

## THE SPANISH SPARROW IN MALTA

Denis Summers-Smith

The House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* and Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* are a fascinating species pair. Over most of the range where both occur, they exist as good species, the House Sparrow living in towns and villages in close association with man, the Spanish Sparrow in the country, particularly associated with damper localities. However, in certain parts of the Mediterranean basin, particularly northern Algeria and western Tunisia, the two species interbreed freely forming a complete range of hybrids of intermediate plumage. The birds in Italy form a stable hybrid population and are now recognised by most authorities as a subspecies of *Passer domesticus*. To a lesser extent hybridisation occurs on a small scale in other parts; for example, I found a small hybrid population beside Lake Scutari in southern Yugoslavia some years ago and others are reported from time to time.

During many years intensive study of the House Sparrow I have taken every opportunity that has arisen of watching other members of the genus *Passer*. Although I have seen Spanish Sparrows in many countries — notably Yugoslavia, Greece, Afghanistan, Algeria, Madeira and the Canary Islands — I have found it a most elusive species to get into close contact with. In contrast to other *Passer* species, I have always found it to be a relatively shy bird, particularly in those parts of its range it shares with House Sparrows.

In the Canary Islands, where Spanish Sparrows first appeared in the early part of the 19th century and where like Malta the House Sparrow is also absent, it is mainly a bird of cultivated land nesting to some extent in urban area, but using palm trees as nesting sites in preference to holes in houses. The situation is somewhat similar in Madeira, though the Spanish Sparrow only arrived there in 1935 and is so far restricted to part of the south coast extending on either side of Funchal and the island of Porto Santo. In both the Canaries and Madeira its main competitor is the Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia* from the same sub-family *Passerinae*; the Rock Sparrow tends to occupy the more arid country with the Spanish Sparrow occupying the cultivated land, but even with this competitive pressure the Spanish Sparrow in both the Canaries and Madeira is by no means the complete 'house sparrow' that it is in Malta, though it shares the habit of forming large roosts in trees in the towns and villages.

A visit to Malta in October 1977 provided my first real opportunity of watching Spanish Sparrows closely. It is somewhat risky to make comments on the Maltese birds after only two weeks' observations, but as so little attention is usually paid to 'sparrows' I hope I may be forgiven for this presumption.

Taxonomists are not agreed on the exact position of the Maltese sparrow. Hartert (1923) gave it the subspecific rank *P. h. maltae*, whereas more recently Vaurie (1959) allied it more closely to *P. domesticus italiae*, the stabilised hybrid between *P. domesticus* and *P. hispaniolensis* that occurs in Italy. My observations in October and photographs I saw of spring birds suggest that it does not have the full plumage characteristics of European and African *hispaniolensis*,

lacking the extent of the bib and flank streaking. The presence of the birds in the towns and villages, their attendance at the nest sites in October, and the display in which one female is courted by a number of males (which I have not seen in other Spanish Sparrow populations) made it difficult for me to realise that I was not watching House Sparrows. In contrast, the small parties of sparrows I encountered on the cliffs and rocky uncultivated land, which on disturbance were inclined to fly away some considerable distance, seemed like true Spanish Sparrows. The Spanish Sparrow character of the Maltese birds is supported by the ringing recoveries of the Ornithological Society in Malta. No less than five of the 64 recoveries of ringed Spanish Sparrows (*Il-Merill* Nos. 6, 14 and 16) refer to birds that had moved more than 5 km., with one individual having moved 6 km. in less than 24 hours. This type of behaviour would be quite exceptional in European House Sparrows. The sparrows in Malta, as indeed those in the eastern Tunisian towns, show much that is reminiscent of House Sparrows that was not apparent in the Spanish Sparrow populations in Madeira and the Canary Islands.

A brief visit to Malta only served to raise more questions than provide answers: what is the catchment area of the noisy tree roosts in the villages; do the 'town' and 'country' birds maintain separate lives or is there interchange between them; is there some instability in the plumage characteristics, as some earlier writers have claimed, suggesting a hybrid population?

My impression is that although the Maltese sparrows are rightly classified as *P. hispaniolensis*, they nevertheless contain some element of *domesticus* 'blood'. A thorough investigation of the behaviour of Maltese sparrows, in line with the modern approach to systematics, which is concerned not only with morphological characteristics, would be of considerable value in providing new evidence for our understanding of the inter-relationship of these Palearctic sparrows. This bird would thus be an excellent subject of study for a resident Maltese ornithologist using the techniques of colour-ringing and patient observation.

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## SHORT NOTES

### Olive-backed Tree Pipit — an addition to the list of the birds of Malta

While bird-ringing at Ghadira on 30th October 1977 a strange looking pipit was trapped by the author. On further examination the bird turned out to be the Olive-backed Tree Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* which had not been previously recorded in Malta. The bird was also examined by J. Azzopardi and G. Bonett, as well as by C. Gauci who made a detailed description of the bird.

Its general size was nearer to the Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis* than to the Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*. Its back and rump were brownish olive; the back was very finely and rather faintly streaked blackish while the rump was unstreaked. The wings and tail were dark brown with the feathers edged greenish. The greater and median coverts were broadly tipped dull buff forming two distinct bars on the closed wing. It had a broad buffish-white supercilium (darker buff in front of eye) and a thinner dark line above. Its throat and breast were light buffish-chestnut (similar colour to Redwing *Turdus iliacus* but lighter); the throat with two black streaks forming a moustache and the breast with bold black blotches (taking the form of streaking). The flanks had the same colour as breast but were finely streaked. The belly was white while the under-tail coverts were dirty white. The under-wing coverts were sooty grey (as in the Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala*) and the axillaries were lighter grey tinged and conspicuously fringed yellow. The legs were a very deep flesh-pink. The upper mandible was very dark horn while the lower had a pink base and underside, except for the tip.

When the bird was released it uttered a single call which was similar to the Tree Pipit's but sounded higher pitched and less hoarse. In the hand it repeatedly uttered a soft 'sip'.

The following are the measurements, in mm.  
Wing — 83; tail — 61; bill (from skull) — 16; tarsus — 21; hind claw — 8.5.  
Its weight was 21.9 g.

The following is the wing formula; the primaries were counted ascendantly. It was emarginated on the 3rd, 4th and 5th primaries. The wing point was 2nd=3rd=4th. 5th was 1 mm less; 6th was 11 mm less; 7th was 15 mm less; 8th was 18 mm less and 9th was 21 mm less.

Victor Gilla.

## The occurrence of the White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* in Malta

It was reported that a large 'eagle' was shot at Xaghjra, limits of Zabbar, on 25th November 1977, while resting in a tree. V. Sammut, J. Sultana and the author saw the specimen at a taxidermist and found it to be an immature White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*. This is the first documented record of this species in Malta. The following is a description and biometrics of the specimen.

The feathers of the crown, cheeks, lores, nape and neck were of a small lanceolate shape and dark chocolate brown in colour, becoming lighter near the tips. When gently lifted they showed white bases; the white was totally concealed when the feathers were resting in the normal position. The chin was light in colour, speckled with brown. The mantle was also of a chocolate brown colour, the individual feathers having paler edges. The lower back was lighter. The upper wing coverts were very pale, and being a heavily mottled brown, produced a blotchy effect. The remiges were dark chocolate brown. The under-tail coverts were all white with brown tips and a tinge of brown along the central shafts. The light area thus produced, gradually merged into darker brown on the lower belly, becoming darker towards the breast. The rectrices had a white inner web, mottled brown and ending in a brown tip. A narrow brown fringe also bordered the white vane on the distal side of the feather shaft. The outer webs were of a uniform chocolate brown.

The upper mandible was very dark grey (almost black), the lower mandible being slightly lighter especially at the base. The cere was similar in colour to the beak. This could have turned into such a colour because the bird had been dead for some days. Immatures should have a greenish cere. The tarsus and talons were yellow in colour the latter having black claws. The feathering reached half way down the tarsus.

Biometrics (in mm): wing — 610; tail — 330 (tail graduation — ca. 60); tarsus — 90 (approx. as the ankle could not be located properly due to the way the bird was mounted); longest claws — 38 (inner right) and 39 (inner left); beak — 46 from cere to tip) and 59 (from feathering to tip).

According to Brown and Amadon (Eagles, Hawks and Falcons of the World — 1968), the tails of immatures are longer than in adults. In fact the specimen's tail exceeded that of an adult female (the longest) by 10 mm. The specimen belongs to the nominate race.

Sultana, Gauci, Beaman (A Guide to the Birds of Malta — 1975) included the White-tailed Eagle (with the Maltese name "Ajkla tad-denk abjad") in the list of rejected species stating that there are no documented records. Giglioli (Avifauna Italica — 1886) had given the species a Maltese name, for which reason it was included by Blasius (Ornis von Malta und Gozo und den umliegenden Inseln — 1895). Ardoino (Gli Uccelli di Malta — Elenco sinottico — 1928) had listed it as accidental in October, but gave no documented records. All other local ornithological works omitted it without any mention.

John Azzopardi

## An addition to the list of the breeding birds of Malta — the Reed Warbler

### *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

While bird-watching at Salina on 26th July 1977, we heard frequent calls of young birds coming from a cluster of reeds *Phragmites communis* growing at the fringes of the water. These calls resembled those of young birds begging for food. On further investigation we saw a Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* carrying food and observed it feeding a fully fledged young. This was later confirmed by J. Sultana who visited the area at our request. He also heard and observed the same calls and behaviour.

Next morning we accompanied J. Sultana and C. Gauci to the area and after setting up a mist-net trapped (for ringing) the adult male (still holding a small white spider in its beak) and four fully fledged young. The adult had a small brood patch and its wing and tail were 65 mm and 53 mm long respectively. The wing-length of the four young birds ranged from 57-60.5 mm and their short tails ranged from 35-43 mm. These measurements suggested that they couldn't have moved far from their nesting area.

The young were again seen being fed by the adult male (carrying a ring) on the 28th and 29th July in the same area. On four other dates from 8th to 17th August only the adult male was observed and heard. It was not seen or heard when the area was visited again on the 19th and 23rd August. It is worth mentioning that at no time was the adult female observed.

This is the first known breeding record of this species in Malta, where it is a fairly common autumn migrant, though generally very scarce in spring.

Richard Cachia Zammit & Raymond Testa.

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### The Barbary Falcon in Malta

In 'A Guide to the Birds of Malta' (1975) the authors (Sultana, Gauci & Beaman) put the Barbary Falcon *Falco peregrinoides*, which following Vaurie, was treated as a species, in Appendix I — Rejected Species — as it was felt that its inclusion in the list of the birds of Malta required proper confirmation (see page 153). Due to the confused nomenclature at that time of the *Falco peregrinus brookei* the authors stated that the 2 examples of *Falco barbarus* (= *Falco peregrinoides*) listed as occurring in Malta in 1850 and 1885 by E.H. Giglioli (Avifauna Italica — 1907) could have been the *brookei* subspecies of the Peregrine.

Writing on the 'Ornithology of Northern Africa' in Ibis (1859) Vol. 1 Tristram stated that the "*Falco punicus* is said to have gained a claim to the European list, having been shot in Malta by Col. H.M. Drummond". Wright (List of the birds observed in the Islands of Malta and Gozo — Ibis (1) 6 — 1864) included *Falco barbarus* (Syn. *F. punicus*) with a query mentioning Tristram's statement. Wright wrote that Mr. Tristram had informed him "that Colonel Drummond-Hay fancied the bird shot by him was a small Peregrine" but Mr. Tristram



thought that he was mistaken. In the second appendix Wright (Ibis (2) 1 — 1865) mentions an immature *Falco peregrinus* obtained on 4th May 1864 which seemed to approach *Falco barbarus* in the ruddy colouring of the under surface.

The only two documented records were listed by Giglioli in his 'Avifauna Italia' (1907) as *Falco barbarus* (= *Falco pelegrinoides*). The first was an adult male obtained by Gulia in 1850 and was at the Natural History Museum of Florence and the second was picked up at the Valletta Market on 22nd March 1885 and was in Dresser's Collection.

Knowing that the Manchester Museum houses Dresser's Collection, one of us wrote to Dr. M.V. Hounscome, Keeper of Zoology, of this Museum enquiring about the birds collected in Malta which were in Dresser's Collection. Dr. Hounscome was kind enough to send us a comprehensive detailed list which included a specimen of *Falco pelegrinoides*. The specimen was found by Dr. D. Bruce at the Valletta Market on 22nd April 1885. In his correspondence Dr. Hounscome confirmed that the specimen was an immature Barbary Falcon, probably a male, with the following measurements: Wing — 262 mm; Bill with a worn tip) 15 mm; Tarsus — 44 mm; and Tail very worn) — 140 mm. Dr. Hounscome added that the plumage of the specimen is very worn, possibly suggesting it was a captive bird, but that this could equally well be due to abrasion in its north African habitat.

This specimen is undoubtedly the same one mentioned by Giglioli, though this author gave the month as March and not April as labelled at the Manchester Museum.

In view of the above information we think that this species should be reinstated in the list of the birds of Malta.

We owe much to Dr. M.V. Hounscome for the information which he unhesitatingly communicated to us.

Joe Sultana, Charles Gauci & Mark Beaman.

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### **The occurrence of an American Purple Gallinule in Malta — *Porphyryula martinica* a possibly escaped bird**

Vagrants from North America are recorded annually in Europe mainly on the Atlantic coast and for obvious reasons few are recorded further inland or in the Mediterranean.

On 2nd February 1978 the author was informed by Mr. C. Galea of Msida that he had mounted a bird which he believed was an Allen's Gallinule *Porphyryula alleni*. However on examining the specimen I found that it was an American Purple Gallinule *Porphyryula martinica*. It had been shot at Salina in the autumn of 1977.

The breeding range of this species is from the Southern United States of America southward to Northern Argentina. It has however been recorded in Europe as a vagrant to Britain and Norway (J. Gooders — Edit. Birds of the World — 1969). The European records have been of immature birds. The Malta specimen is that of an adult.

The following is a description of the specimen. The beak was red with a yellow tip with a frontal plate that was dark, almost black (due to post mortem darkening). The head was purple and the wings and back were green while the shoulders were blue. The under-tail coverts were white. The belly was black while the breast and neck were purple. The legs were yellowish green and the feet yellow.

The measurements (in mm) were: wing 180; tarsus 62; bill 42 (feathering to tip, i.e. top of frontal plate to tip) and 28 (from base of frontal plate to tip); toes 53 (inside), 68 (middle), 58 (outside) and 41 (back).

There were no fat deposits in the body and the plumage and feet were in perfect condition. This suggests that if the bird was not wild it had either been long escaped or it had been kept in a large well conditioned aviary. When the contents of the stomach were examined apart from a few tiny pebbles, contained Canary grass seeds *Phalaris canariensis*, seeds of one of the sedges *Carex* and an unidentified composite. The latter is one often associated with canary-grass. The presence of Canary grass may indicate captivity. *Carex* is a plant of wet places and the bird may have ingested it after its escape.

Thanks are due to Mr. E. Lanfranco for his comments on the stomach contents and to Mr. J. Sultana for examining the specimen and commenting on the above notes.

John Attard Montalto.

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#### Copulation in the Fan-Tailed Warbler

From 0630 to 0700 hours on 10th June, 1978 a female Fan-tailed Warbler *Cisticola juncidis* was regularly observed close to a partly built nest at Wied il-Luq, Buskett. A male was singing intermittently on another part of its rather large territory (ca. 2.43 hectares), where at least another two females (one feeding newly fledged young) were present. At one time, the male came over to the partly built nest we were watching and started 'dive-bombing' the female, which was skulking in nearby vines. The male uttered its 'zip . . . zip . . .' song rapidly as it dived to within a foot of the ground. It would then rise, circle round, and repeat the process. After about twelve such dives, the female flew up to the top of a 1 m high fennel stalk and started quivering her wings. The male instantly alighted near her and the birds then copulated. Immediately after copulation, which lasted about 2 seconds, the female seemed to topple over, but held on to the twig and hung upside down. The male continued clinging to her wings and dangled upside down as well. Both birds stayed motionless in this position for about two minutes before their combined weight was finally too much for the female. They then fell down, the male still clinging to the female. From our position we could not see the birds on the ground, as they were hidden by vines. After a minute we moved in order to try to locate them. They only flew off when we were within 2 m of them, the male rising first.

Charles Gauci & Mario V. Gauci

### Abnormal number of feathers

In the course of examining birds for moult or during the taking of biometrics one occasionally meets with birds with abnormal feathering. A first year male Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* trapped for ringing at Lunzjata on 30th October 1976 had 20 remiges on its right wing. The extra feather was between the first tertial (i.e. the outermost tertial) and the sixth secondary and was identical to the latter in size and shape. The left wing had the normal 19 remiges. On taking both wings' formulae the wing point was found to vary. That of the right wing was the fourth primary with the third being .5 mm less and the fifth 1.5 mm less. The wing point of the left was the third primary with the fourth = fifth, both being 1 mm less. (Primaries were counted from the outermost inwards i.e. ascendantly).

An adult male Sardinian Warbler trapped at Ghajn Barrani on 1st September 1977 also had 20 remiges, this time on the left wing. The extra feather was next and identical to the outermost tertial.

Another male Sardinian Warbler had 14 rectrices as against the usual 12. It was trapped at Ghajn Barrani for ringing on 17th August 1977 and retrapped on 28th. Its tail graduation, which was 10 mm., was however within the range of this species.

An adult female Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* was also found to have 14 rectrices when it was being ringed at Lunzjata on 23rd August 1978.

Joe Sultana, Charles Gauci & John Grech.

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### Weasel and Nightjar run over by car

While driving along the road from Wied iz-Zurrieq to Hagar Qim on 28th September 1978 we noticed a freshly killed weasel *Mustela nivalis* on a dead Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* in the middle of the road. Both animals had no sign of having been shot but seemed to have been run over by a vehicle. The weasel which was rather greyish brown in colour was a juvenile male and was presumably carrying its prey across the road when the accident happened. This must have taken place just before our arrival (ca. 1430 hrs) as *rigor mortis* had not set in the weasel, which is usually a nocturnal hunter.

Guido Bonnet & Vincent Sammut.

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### An unusually large influx of Spotted Flycatchers in Spring

Although large influxes (with up to 800+) of the Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* have been recorded occasionally in autumn, only up to 100+ had been previously recorded for any one locality in any single day in spring (Sultana, Gauci, Beaman — *A Guide to the Birds of Malta* — 1975).

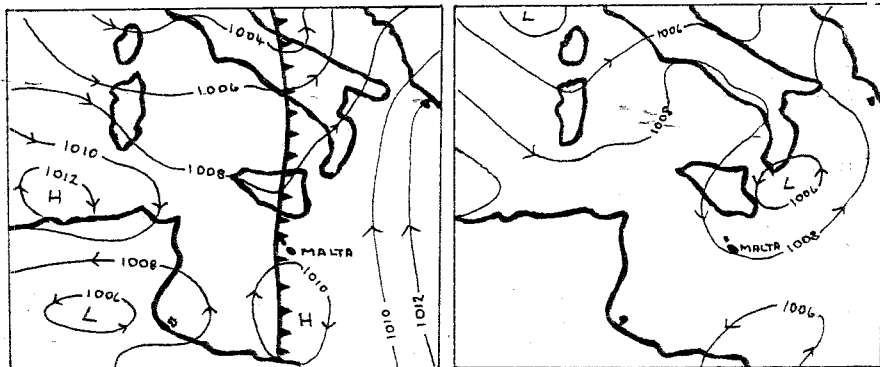
An unusually large influx occurred on 15th May 1977. The fall was mainly concentrated on the south south-east of Malta where 500+ were counted at Wied

Znuber (Hal Far) and 200+ further inland at Marsa, both in the morning. During the same period only 30+ were counted at Xemxija while in Gozo no unusually large numbers were noted.

There was already some movement of Spotted Flycatchers at 0630 hrs. at Wied Znuber and by 0930 hrs. there were 500+ along the valley feeding hungrily on flying insects. After 1100 hrs. there were fewer birds and by noon many had moved inland. In the afternoon 100+ were counted at Santa Lucia area from 1530 hrs. onwards, while 15+ were noted at Ghadira late in the afternoon.

Many had left the islands the following day but 50+ were still present in the Marsa area on the 17th, decreasing to 20+ on the 18th.

Like all other unusual falls this influx can be related to the weather conditions which for that time of the year were unusual. On 14th May there was a shallow high pressure area (1010 mbs.) to the south of Malta resulting in weak winds from a southerly direction. There was fair weather to the south, favouring



Synoptic charts at 0800 hrs on 14th May 1977 (left) on 15th May 1977 (right).

the movement of northward bound migrants. However there was a cold front extending from the north of Italy to the northern tip of Libya causing an overcast over the central Mediterranean. By the night of the 14th and 15th a low pressure area on the northern part of Italy moved south towards the central Mediterranean. This depression, while continuing to cause cloudy and unsettled weather, blocked the migrants' way. The weather on 16th May was once again settled in the central Mediterranean and to the north, allowing birds to continue their journey.

Very few other numbers of birds were involved in this fall. However 7 *Hippolais icterina*, 5 *Sylvia borin*, 5 *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*, 2 *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*, 2 *Sylvia communis* and 2 *Ficedula hypoleuca* were trapped for ringing at Wied Znuber in the morning of 15th May. The total number is slightly above normal for that time of the year.

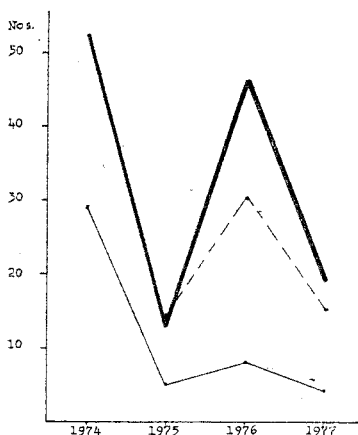
Acknowledgement is due to R.M. Holman and E. Curmi for their records of Hal Far and Marsa respectively and to the staff at the Met. Office for supplying us with a copy of the synoptic charts for the period 13th to 16th May.

Joe Sultana & Charles Gauci.

## Evidence of Spring passage of Sardinian Warblers through Malta

The presence of Sardinian Warblers *Sylvia melanocephala* as autumn migrants/winter visitors in Malta has already been documented (Sultana & Gauci : Influxes of Sardinian Warbler. *Il-Merill*, 15 : 3-4). A similar autumn influx again took place in 1976, but the numbers involved were slightly smaller (see figure and explanation).

Very few of the birds ringed during the autumn 1974 influx were retrapped, and most seemed to have moved on (Sultana & Gauci, *loc. cit.*). An examination of the retrap cards of the Ringing Scheme reveals that the number of Sardinian Warblers retrapped following the 1976 influx was also insignificant. After the 1974 influx, no return movement was discernible the following spring. However, in late February and early March, 1977, three separate incidents pointed directly to a return passage.



Numbers of Sardinian Warblers ringed at Lunzjata (thick lines), Xemxija (thin lines) and Rabat (broken lines) during the periods 15 Oct — 31 Dec, 1974-77. Lunzjata and Xemxija are the only two sites which have received regular coverage throughout the above periods. Rabat was not worked in 1974, but coverage was even during the other three years. A look at the numbers of juvenile Sardinian Warblers ringed in June-September, 1974-77, at Wied il-Luq, Buskett, the only systematically worked area during these four months, shows very little variation, suggesting that breeding success was fairly uniform throughout the four years.

Between 0645 and 0830 hours on 20th February, R.M. Holman trapped six new Sardinian Warblers at Wied Znuber, Hal Far. Three of these were of average weight (12 g). The other three weighed 14 g, 15 g, and 18 g respectively. Weights as high as 14 g are very rarely recorded, and the bird weighing 18 g was exceptionally heavy. One of the birds weighing 12 g was retrapped in February and April, 1978. On 6th March, no fewer than seventeen were trapped at L-Ahrax Pt. by V. Sammut. Their weight ranged from 11.2 g to 14.5 g, mean 12.4 g. Only one was subsequently retrapped — the following February. On the same day, a first year male weighing 18.2 g was trapped at Sta. Lucia by R. Cachia Zammit. Even in the net, the bird struck the ringer as being conspicuously fat. On examination in the hand it was found to be carrying heavy fat deposits.

The two birds weighing 18 g suggest that Sardinian Warblers arriving in Malta in autumn (and subsequently re-passing in spring) originate from the northernmost parts of their breeding range.

Charles Gauci & Joe Sultana.

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### Eleonora's Falcon attacking an Avocet

While sitting below the Tunny Net at Ghadira Bay on 9th July 1978 a large black and white wader was seen flying low towards the Mellieha Bay Hotel about 3 metres above the sea. On viewing it with binoculars it was identified as an Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*. While it was being watched it suddenly 'fell' onto the water where surprisingly it seemed to start swimming. This strange behaviour was soon explained. Flying swiftly towards it was a dark phase Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonorae*, which though diving towards it, swept over it as if it were afraid of the water. After a second similar attempt the Eleonora's Falcon flew off towards L-Ahrax. The Avocet remained on the sea for about 5 minutes before also taking off. All this happened while speedboats and other small sea-craft were passing not far away from the two birds.

Raymond Vella.

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### Aggressive behaviour of the Fan-tailed Warbler

The continuous territorial flights of the male Fan-tailed Warbler *Cisticola juncidis* during the breeding season are one of this species' characteristics. This strange behaviour is only matched by its aggressiveness to intruders which the authors often had the chance to witness during their investigations into the breeding biology of this species. The male can be frequently seen not only chasing away other males or first year birds which enter its territory but also other larger species such as *Passer hispaniolensis* and *Miliaria calandra* which venture near one of its nests, as was frequently noted at Ghadira. It also indulges in diving attacks on the intruders while calling incessantly. Its sharp scolding notes 'pitz, pitz, pitz', unlike the rasping 'dzeep, dzeep, dzeep,' or 'zip, zip, zip' which it utters during its song flight, are uttered without any pause between each call.

While going round checking nests at Wied Ghajn Rihana on 25 June 1977 a male Fan-tailed Warbler attracted attention by its scolding notes and behaviour while flying low over a rubble wall on one side of the valley. Below the wall the female too was uttering scolding notes while settling on a heap of dead vine twigs. It seemed as if it was attacking something. To our amazement a snake *Coluber viridiflavus*, which was about 75 cm in length, was seen attempting to strike at the bird. In turn the female was quickly retreating at each of the snake's attempts, however boldly persisting in mobbing and chasing the snake.

On another occasion at Xemxija a male Fan-tailed Warbler was furious at the presence of a mist-net to the extent that it even dive bombed into it from high above.

Joe Sultana & Charles Gauci.

## Predation on nests by the Western Whip Snake

The Western Whip Snake *Coluber viridiflavus* is abundant in Malta and is found in a wide variety of habitats preferring the drier areas. Quite a number of birds' nests are preyed upon by this snake. The worst sufferers are the ground nesting birds namely the Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* and the Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*. However, nests of low-nesting species such as the Fan-tailed Warbler *Cisticola juncidis*, Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata* and Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* are also frequently taken. The percentage of predated nests is highest amongst the second broods which coincide generally with late spring or early summer and due to the higher temperature then, the *Coluber viridiflavus* is more active.

20% of 351 nests of the above mentioned species which were under investigation were presumed to have been taken by this snake. This could only be an underestimation as not all the nest record cards of the other 80% were complete and therefore nests could have been preyed on during the last stages of the fledging period. The percentage of nests taken by this snake varies according to the species as follows:

Species	No. of nests under observation	% predated
Short-toed Lark	14	50%
Corn Bunting	25	36%
Spectacled Warbler	95	20%
Sardinian Warbler	142	12%
Fan-tailed Warbler	75	21%

There are reasons why there is such a difference among the predated species' nests. The Short-toed Lark, which has the highest percentage, builds the nest usually on bare ground with little or no cover and its breeding season is relatively late, nest building starting in late April. The second highest is that of the Corn Bunting. This species also builds its nests on the ground or just above it but usually amongst the vegetation. The Fan-tailed Warbler and the Spectacled Warbler, which have the next higher percentage, both build the nest generally within 30 cm above the ground. The Spectacled Warbler nests in dry localities in the open countryside. The Fan-tailed Warbler prefers damper localities but as its breeding season runs well into early summer its preferred areas such as Xem-xija and Ghadira are quite dry by then. It is not surprising that the lowest percentage is that of the Sardinian Warbler. This species builds its nest in shrubs or trees within 1½ metres (sometimes higher) of the ground in a wide variety of habitats.

One may mention that on one occasion in early September an adult *Coluber viridiflavus* which was about 140 cm. in length was seen at Ghajn Barrani under a *Ficus carica* holding a live male Sardinian Warbler in its mouth. On another occasion in July one was seen high up in a concrete electric pylon in Marsalforn Valley by the Victoria/Marsalforn Road, 7 metres above the ground, taking the contents of a *Passer hispaniolensis* nest.

Joe Sultana & Charles Gauci.

## Ectoparasites (other than Hippoboscidae) collected from birds

The following is a list of ectoparasites which were collected from birds during ringing activities.

- (a) *Halipeurus abnormis* (Piaget 1885) (feather lice)

Host: *Calonectris diomedea* (Cory's Shearwater)

Filfla, 10th June 1976

Leg. J. Sultana/C. Gauci

(This ectoparasite species is normally found on this host).

- (b) *Penenirmus* sp.

Host: *Sylvia borin* (Garden Warbler)

Sarraflu (Gozo), 12th September 1976

Leg. J. Sultana

(All the specimens collected were females. Males are necessary for identification and therefore they must stand only under the genus *Penenirmus* (family *Philopteridae*).

- (c) *Ixodes ricinus* L.

Host: *Phylloscopus trochilus* (Willow Warbler)

Ramla Valley (Gozo), 9th October 1977

Leg. J. Sultana/J. Grech.

- (d) *Ixodes pari* Leach

Host: *Sylvia atricapilla* (Blackcap)

Buskett, 15th October 1977

Leg. J. Sultana/C. Gauci.

We would like to thank Miss Bernice Brewster, Miss Theresa Clay, Mr. C. Moreby and Dr. W.R.P. Bourne for their help in the identification of the above ectoparasites.

Joe Sultana & Charles Gauci.



# SYSTEMATIC LIST FOR 1975 AND 1976

compiled by Joe Sultana & Charles Gauci

The systematic list of species occurring during the two-year period 1975-76 was compiled from the notes submitted by recorders whose numbers have been on the increase during the past few years. This increase has resulted in a better coverage of the bird-life of the Maltese Islands there being very few days with no entries in the daily log for at least one main locality during this two-year period. However, there is still a lot more to be covered — sea-bird watching, to mention one example, is almost non-existent. On the other hand the migration of raptors is relatively extensively covered, as is the passage of the small passerines.

Such a comprehensive systematic list could not have been compiled were it not for the regular contributions during both years made by R. Cachia Zammit, V. Cilia, C. Galea Bonavia, C. Gauci, M.V. Gauci, J. Grech, F. Smith, J. Sultana, M. Thake, A. Vassallo and R. Vella. Other main recorders were J. Attard Montalto, J. Azzopardi, N. Bonavia, J. Buttigieg, D. Cachia, E. Curmi, J. Curmi, L. Ellul Mercer, C. Fenech, F. Fenech, R.M. Holman, E. Mackrill and R. Testa. Other contributions were submitted by J.M. Attard, J. Azzopardi, A.E. Baldacchino, J. Bajada, G. Bonett, S. Borg, R. Evison, H. Frendo, J. Gandy, T. Gauci, B.K. German, M. Grima, J.A. Hardman, G. Robinson and F. Vassallo. Thanks are also due to other members who occasionally reported an occurrence.

All the records submitted are first entered into the daily log sheets then transferred to species log sheets. This job was carried out by C. Gauci for 1975 and part of 1976, then continued by J. Attard Montalto, D. Cachia, R. Cachia Zammit, E. Curmi and R. Testa.

This list follows the 'List of Recent Holarctic Bird Species' by K.H. Voous, both in the sequence of bird families and in scientific nomenclature. There are good reasons for introducing this new sequence in *Il-Merill*: it is being officially adopted by the main ornithological bodies and it is also being used in the new handbook 'Birds of the Western Palearctic'. The English nomenclature used, however, is the one found in the popular European Guides.

Following the adoption of Voous order, it should be noted that *Ficedula albicollis semitorquata* is treated as a full species *Ficedula semitorquata*.

In the following list the years 1975 and 1976 have been treated separately for each species; where no records occurred for a particular year, that year, is omitted. All species have been included except for the Rock Dove *Columbia livia* of which there were no positive records of birds of a purely wild strain.

## LITTLE GREBE *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

1975: 1 at M'Xlokk on 26 Sep.

1976: 1 at Targa Gap on 23 Apr.

## GREAT CRESTED GREBE *Podiceps cristatus*

1975: Single birds at Marsa and at M'Xlokk on 26 Nov.

1976: 1 at M'Xlokk on 6 Nov. (in summer plumage!).

BLACK-NECKED GREBE *Podiceps nigricollis*

1975: 1-2 on 7 dates from 23 Oct.-23 Dec.; most records from Salina and M'Xlokk.

1976: 1 in Jan., 1 on 15 Oct., a small influx (5 birds in 3 localities) on 6 Nov. and 1-3 on 7 dates from 9 Nov.-11 Dec.

CORY'S SHEARWATER *Calonectris diomedea*

1975: First record on 22 April, a very late date. No large movements recorded; max. 800 off Filfla on 7 June.

1976: bred in usual numbers. Seen offshore from Apr., max. 3000+ off Qbajjar on 12 Aug. Last record: 3 off 1-Ahrax on 24 Nov.

MANX SHEARWATER *Puffinus puffinus*

1975: Already visiting colonies in good numbers on 12 Feb. Records of daylight sightings were 4 off Filfla on 7 June, 1 at Ghadira on 8 July and 1 at Fungus Rock on 19 Aug.

1976: Bred at usual colonies. Earliest at a colony on 30 Jan. 8 on 4 Jan. and 43 on 24 Nov. off 1-Ahrax were interesting daylight records.

STORM PETREL *Hydrobates pelagicus*

1975-76: Bred in usual numbers on Filfla.

GANNET *Sula bassana*

1975: Singles off Munxar Pt. on 21st and at Bahar ic-Caghak on 28 Feb., and 4 off Comino on 19 Mar.

1976: 3 on 4 Jan., 1 on 3 Feb., on 3 dates (2 singles and 5) from 12-29 Sep., 1 on 22 Oct., 2 on 24 Nov. and 1 on 29 Dec.

CORMORANT *Phalacrocorax carbo*

1975: 1-4 birds on 6 days from 11 Oct.-23 Nov., but 8 at Bahar ic-Caghak on last date.

1976: 1 on 4 Jan., then 1-2 on 8 days from 9 Oct.-28 Nov.

BITTERN *Botaurus stellaris*

1975: 1 at Bahrija on 16 Apr. and 2 seen shot in the last week of Oct.

LITTLE BITTERN *Ixobrychus minutus*

1975: 1-2 on 13 days from 6 Apr.-24 May, but 20+ at Lunzjata on 5 May and 7 at Bahrija on 23 Apr. In autumn 1-2 on most days at Buskett/Girgenti from 5-14 Sep. and singles on 4th and 24 Oct.

1976: 1-3 on 7 days (13 Apr.-23 May) and on 11 days (26 Aug.-31 Oct.). 9 at Wied il-Luq on 7 Sep.

NIGHT HERON *Nycticorax nycticorax*

1975: Frequently in flocks of up to 30 from 11 Mar.-12 May (most in mid-March to Mid-April). In same numbers in autumn from 7 Aug.-28 Oct., max. flock of 60 at Salina on 18 Sep.

1976: On 14 days from 6 Mar.-6 May with a max. of 64 on 28 Mar. On 34 days in autumn from 1 Aug.-30 Oct. with a max. of 100+ (1 flock) at Xlendi on 22 Aug

SQUACCO HERON *Ardeola ralloides*

1975: 5 spring records of 1-3 birds from 15 Apr.-10 May. 1 at Salina on 1 Nov.

1976: 10 at M'Scala on 7th and singles on 11th and 18 Apr.; then 2 on 14th, 1 on 26th and 9 (flock) on 28 Aug. Singles on 4 other dates in Sep-Oct.

LITTLE EGRET *Egretta garzetta*

1975: 6 spring records from 15 Mar.-29 Apr., max. 10 at Ghadira on 20 Apr. In autumn frequent from 6 Aug.-11 Sep., then on 4 days from 23 Sep.-20 Oct. Usually in flocks of up to 20, but 90 over St. Paul's Bay on 10 Sep. 4 late birds at Salina on 20 Nov.

1976: In spring on 14 days from 24 Mar.-16 May (max. 40 on 26 Mar. and on 6 Apr.); then in autumn on 13 days from 8 Aug.-19 Oct. with a max. of 110+ on 8 Oct. (max. flock 50+ at Salina).

GREAT WHITE HERON *Egretta alba*

1975: singles seen shot at M'Scala and at Marsa during the last week in December.

1976: 2 at Mellieha Bay on 18 July and 1 at Delimara in early December.

GREY HERON *Ardea cinerea*

1975: spring passage from 15 Mar.-4 June, 1-3 recorded on 19 days with no clear peak, except for 16 at Hal Far on 22 Mar. Main autumn passage from 31 July-23 Sep.; up to 20 on several days with a marked passage on 10 Sep. with flocks of 145+ over Buskett and 300+ over St. Paul's Bay. Resumed passage from 17 Oct.-27 Nov., with 1-4 on 6 days.

1976: On 13 days from 4 Mar.-5 May, max. 78 (in 3 flocks) on 28 Mar. 2 at Bubaqra on 8 June, then 1-5 on 8 days from 20 July-30 Aug. and on 19 days from 18 Sep.-7 Nov., max. 53 (in 4 flocks) on 23 Sep.

PURPLE HERON *Ardea purpurea*

1975: 4 on 15 Mar., then 21 records on 12 days from 8 Apr.-8 May, most in mid-April, with a total of 45 in 5 localities on 12 Apr. On 6 days in autumn from 16 Aug.-13 Sep., with a max. of 29 on 11 Sep. Singles on 6th and 16 Oct.

1976: On 15 days from 7 Mar.-26 May, max. 61 (in 3 flocks) on 26 Mar. Then on 25 days from 10 Aug.-31 Oct., max. 31 (1 flock) on 24 Sep.

BLACK STORK *Ciconia nigra*

1975: 1 at Buskett on 23 Sep.

1976: Singles at Buskett on 24 Sep. and over Tarxien on 9 Oct.

WHITE STORK *Ciconia ciconia*

1975: 2 over Ghadira on 29 July and 1 over Salina on 18 Nov.

1976: Singles at Buskett on 2nd and at B'Kara on 6 Sep.

GLOSSY IBIS *Plegadis falcinellus*

- 1975: 1 at Salina on 30 Mar. In autumn 1 on 17 Sep., 7 on 7th and 1 on 25 Oct.  
1976: On 5 days from 27 Mar.-4 Apr. (max. 43 in 1 flock at Comino on last date), and 1 on 18 Apr. 1 at Salina on 30 Aug. and another in Sep.

SPOONBILL *Platalea leucorodia*

- 1975: singles at Mgarr (Gozo) on 14th and at Salina on 31 Aug., 6 at Ghadira on 1 Sep. and 1 over Paola on 27 Nov.  
1976: 3 over Tarxien on 23rd and 1 at Salina on 27 Sep. 1 at Mellieha on 9 Oct.

GREATER FLAMINGO *Phoenicopterus ruber*

- 1975: 1 at Salina on 14th and a flock of 20 over the south Comino Channel on 22 Sep.  
1976: singles at Delimara in March (10th or 13th) and at Qawra on 5 Dec.

WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE *Anser albifrons*

- 1975: Singles at Qawra on 27 Nov. and at Qrejten on 2 Dec.

'GREY' GEESE *Anser sp.*

- 1975: 3 over M'Scala on 19 Oct.  
1976: 1 over Bahar ic-Caghak on 22 Aug.

SHELDUCK *Tadorna tadorna*

- 1975: 1 at Ghadira and 2 at M'Xlokk on 10 Jan., 2 on 7 Aug. and 7 on 7 Sep. ca. 10 km off M'Xlokk and 1 near Filfla on 2 Oct. Then 4 records on 3 days from 21 Nov.-3 Dec.; singles, but 2 at Bahar ic-Caghak on first day.  
1976: 1 at Tas-Safra on 16 Oct., flocks of 19 on 25th and of 9 on 26 Nov. at Mellieha Bay, and 1 at M'Xlokk on 27 Dec. 'Several' were recorded from St. Thomas Bay on 22 Nov.

WIGEON *Anas penelope*

- 1975: early singles on 16 Aug., 25th and 28 Sep., then 1-5 on 8 days from 19 Oct. to 6 Dec. Most records from Salina.  
1976: 17 off 1-Ahrax on 22 Oct., 1 on 12th and 3 on 27 Nov. at M'Xlokk.

GADWALL *Anas strepera*

- 1976: 1 at Ghadira on 1 Nov.

TEAL *Anas crecca*

- 1975: 1 on 5 Jan. Passage on 27 Feb. ('several' reported from M'Xlokk during the afternoon). 1-2 on 4 days from 3 Aug.-20 Sep. and on 12 days from 4 Nov.-1 Dec.  
1976: 2 at Ghadira on 10 Feb and singles at Salina on 9 Sep. and at M'Xlokk on 10 Oct. and 16 Nov.

MALLARD *Anas platyrhynchos*

- 1975: 1-3 on 5 days from 24 Oct.-30 Nov., but 25 off 1-Ahrax on 1 Nov.  
1976: 3 off Ramla on 9 Aug., 5 off 1-Ahrax on 22 Oct. and 1 at Buskett on 7 Nov. 8 others were taken in Sept./Oct.

PINTAIL *Anas acuta*

- 1975: passage on 27 Feb. ('several' recorded from M'Xlokk in the afternoon), and 1 on 19 Mar. 1 on 10 Aug. and 1-2 on 4 days in Sep. Main passage from 18 Oct.-26 Nov., recorded on 13 days with flocks of up to 80 on 2 days.
- 1976: 1 on 10 Feb., 2 in early Mar., 1 in mid-Apr., 15 on 26 Aug and 1 on 12 Sep. Then 1-2 on 4 days from 20 Nov.-1 Dec.

GARGANEY *Anas querquedula*

- 1975: 'several' on 27 Feb. at M'Xlokk in the afternoon. In autumn main passage from 15 Aug.-2 Sep., recorded on 7 days with a max. of 20 at Salina on 18th. Then 20+ on 3rd, 30+ on 18th and 1 on 26 Oct., and 1 on 10 Nov.
- 1976: 1 on 24 Mar. and 250+ off Comino on 4th and 1 on 5 Apr. Then 15 at St. Paul's ay on 25 Aug. and 2-3 on 3 days from 8-15 Sep.

SHOVELER *Anas clypeata*

- 1975: singles at Ta' Qali on 20 Oct. and at Salina on 8 Nov. 22 over Ghadira on 16 Nov.
- 1976: 4 at Salina in the end of Feb. and 1 off l-Ahrax on 22 Oct.

POCHARD *Aythya ferina*

- 1975: single birds at M'Xlokk on 18 Oct., at Salina on 8 Nov. and at Ta' Qali on 29 Nov.
- 1976: 1 at Salina on 13 Sep.

FERRUGINOUS DUCK *Aythya nyroca*

- 1975: 2 on 9th and 1 on 21 Nov. at Salina.
- 1976: singles at Salina on 9th and at M'Xlokk on 13 Nov.

TUFTED DUCK *Aythya fuligula*

- 1975: 1 at M'Xlokk on 24 Nov.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER *Mergus serrator*

- 1975: a good year with 9 records of 1-3 birds on 7 days from 17-28 Nov., mainly along the east and south coasts.

DUCK SP.

- 1975: strong passage off north of Malta on 19 Oct. — 240+ counted in 3 flocks. There were 7 other records of up to 30 in October to December.
- 1976: 60+ off Ghadira on 1st and off Selmun on 28 Nov.

HONEY BUZZARD *Pernis apivorus*

- 1975: In spring recorded on 18 days from 6 Apr.-27 May, usually low single figures but 200+ (in two loose flocks) passed NNW off Cirkewwa on 15 May. 1 over Sannat on 28 June. In autumn first 1 on 19 Aug. then from 25 Aug.-29 Oct., with a peak in mid-late Sep., single or low double figures (up to 40) but 69 on 20th and 95+ on 23 Sep.

1976: 1-4 on 13 days from 4 Apr.-23 May. 1 at Buskett on 24 June. Almost daily from 23 Aug.-24 Oct. with max. of 96-150 on 5 dates from 11-26 Sep.

BLACK KITE *Milvus migrans*

1975: singles on 1st and 4 May. In autumn 1 on 12th, 11 on 19th, 9 on 20th and 2 on 25 Sep., and 2 on 4 Oct. Most records from Buskett.

1976: 1-4 on 7 days from 31 Mar.-18 Apr. Then 1-2 on 3 scattered days in Aug. and on 6 days in Sep., but 8 at Buskett on 11 Sep.

EGYPTIAN VULTURE *Neophron percnopterus*

1975: 1 over Buskett on 22 Sep.

1976: singles over Marsa on 14 Mar. and at Mellieha on 26 Sep.

SHORT-TOED EAGLE *Circaetus gallicus*

1975: A very good year; 1 over Rabat on 16 Aug., then singles on 4 days in Sep. — at Buskett on 23rd, at Buskett and Wardija on 25th, again at Buskett on 28th and at Rabat on 30th. 1 on 4th and 2 on 14 Oct. at Buskett. 2 were seen arriving from the sea at dusk on 30 Dec. at Wied iz-Zurrieq where they roosted on the cliff-face. Both were unfortunately shot down the following morning.

1976: 2 on 22nd, on 23rd and on 25th and 1 on 26 Sep. all at Buskett/Rabat. 2 at tal-Handaq on 22nd Sep. could be same birds seen at Buskett.

MARSH HARRIER *Circus aeruginosus*

1975: spring passage from 10 Mar.-28 Apr., with late singles on 5th and 23 May. Low single figures on 20 days, but 30+ on Gozo on 9 Apr. In autumn 1 on 16th, 1 on 19th, 4 on 20th, 6 on 21st, 1 on 22nd and 1 on 25th Sep., and singles on 4th and 25 Oct., most at Buskett.

1976: 1-2 on 13 dates from 1 Mar.-5 May, but 6 on 28 Mar. and 7 on 29 Apr. Then 2 on 26 Aug. and 1 on 9 Sep. followed by daily records (max. 23) in Sep. from 19th and 1-4 on 11 scattered days in Oct. Autumn records mainly from Buskett.

HEN HARRIER *Circus cyaneus*

1975: singles on 3 days from 19 Mar.-15 April., on 21 Sep. and on 21 Oct.

1976: singles at Delimara on 20 Mar. and at Sta. Lucia on 12 April.

PALLID HARRIER *Circus macrourus*

1975: singles on 22 March, in late March, on 23 April, and on 5th and 20 May.

1976: singles at il-Hemsija on 25th, at Marsa and Hal Far on 28 Mar. and at Chadwick Lakes on 6 Apr.

MONTAGU'S HARRIER *Circus pygargus*

1975: 13 spring records on 11 days from 24 Mar.-15 May, max. 5 at il-Qolla on 9 Apr.

1976: singles at Targa Gap on 15 Apr., at Ghadira on 2nd and at Targa Gap on 17 May, at Buskett on 26 Aug. and at Mtahleb on 8 Sep.

HARRIER SP.

- 1975 : 1 on 22 Feb., passage over Gozo on 26 Mar. and 1-3 on 7 days from 6 Apr.-7 May. In autumn 1 on 10th and 2 on 21 Sep.; and 1 on 4 Nov. (mostly ringtails).  
1976 : up to 15 birds on 15 dates in spring from 22 Mar.-9 May. Singles on 8 days from 8 Sep.-8 Oct.

SPARROWHAWK *Accipiter nisus*

- 1975 : 1 at Buskett on 29 Sep.  
1976 : singles in spring on 3 days (17 Apr. and 15th and 17 May). in autumn 1-4 on 8 days from 11 Sep.-10 Oct. and 1-2 on 4 days from 3-8 Nov. Most records from Buskett.

BUZZARD *Buteo buteo*

- 1975 : 1 on 19th and 2 on 23 Sep. over Buskett and 1 over Rabat on 26 Oct.  
1976 : singles at Buskett on 10th, 11th and 25 Sep. and at Rabat on 8 Oct.

LESSER SPOTTED EAGLE *Aquila pomarina*

- 1975 : singles over Buskett on 23 Sep. and over Hal Far on 8 Nov.

BOOTED EAGLE *Hieraetus pennatus*

- 1975 : 1 over Buskett on 23 Sep.

OSPREY *Pandion haliaetus*

- 1975 : a rather poor year with 2 spring records of singles on 1st and 8 May and 7 autumn records of single birds on 6 days from 11-30 Sep.  
1976 : singles on 7 days from 29 Mar.-3 May and 2 on 8 May. Then 1-2 on 12 days from 22 Sep.-30 Oct.

LESSER KESTREL *Falco naumanni*

- 1975 : singles on 4 days from 28 Mar.-7 May. In autumn singles on 3rd and 10 Sep., then almost daily from 20 Sep.-6 Oct. with a max. of 8 at Buskett on 23 Sep. 1 on 25 Oct.  
1976 : 1-2 on 15 days from 24 Mar.-14 May, but 7 on 4 Apr. In autumn singles on 22nd and 30 Aug., then almost daily from 6 Sep.-4 Nov. with peaks of 8-32 on 8 scattered days from 23 Sep.-12 Oct.

KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*

- 1975 : 1-2 at various localities in Jan. and Feb. Spring passage from 2 Mar.-9 Jun., almost daily from mid-Mar. to late Apr. Single or low double figures but 300+ over Gozo on 9th and 40+ on 23 Apr. 3 at Ghar Ilma (Gozo) on 27 Jul. and singles on 3rd and 21 Aug. In autumn occasional from 3 Sep., then single figures from 19 Sep.-15 Nov. Scattered records of 1-2 in late Nov. and Dec., but 23 passed over Mistra on 18 Dec.  
1976 : singles on 2 days in Jan. and on 5 days in Feb. Then almost daily from 6 Mar.-3 May (max. 20 on 28 Mar. otherwise mostly in single figures). Singles on 4 dates from 15-30 May. Pair at Sarraflu on 14th and 1 at Ta' Cenc on 16 Aug. In autumn almost daily from 5 Sep. till end Nov. with a max. of 250+ on 8 Oct. 1-3 on 6 dates in Dec.

RED-FOOTED FALCON *Falco vespertinus*

- 1975: recorded only in spring: on 13 days from 21 Apr.-9 May with a max. of 5 on 5 May.  
1976: 1 at Mtahleb on 6 Apr., then on 3 days from 25-28 Apr. with 4 on 26th. Singles on 16 May, 16th and 24 Sep. and 24 Oct.

MERLIN *Falco columbarius*

- 1976: singles at Buskett on 23 Oct. and 7 Nov. and at Wied il-Mielah on 31 Dec.

HOBBY *Falco subbuteo*

- 1975: singles on 22nd and 30 Mar., then on most days from 9 Apr.-27 May, mainly low single figures with a max. of 15+ on 15 Apr. Autumn passage from 2 Sep.-6 Oct., recorded almost daily. High single figures or up to 15 on most days, mainly at Buskett.  
1976: spring passage on 16 days from 27 Mar.-31 May (max. 6 on 15 Apr. and 17 May). In autumn almost daily from 22 Aug.-12 Oct. (max. 60+ on 24 Sep.) and singles on 24 Oct. and on 3rd and 8 Nov.

ELEONORA'S FALCON *Falco eleonora*

- 1975: in spring singles on 25 Apr., 2nd, 6th and 17 May and 1 Jun. Marked autumn passage with single birds on 13 dates from 12 Aug.-4 Oct. (but 2 on 1st and 5 Sep.) Most Sep. records from Buskett.  
1976: singles at Rabat on 3 Feb., at Mellieha on 11 Apr. and at S. Andrew's on 17th and 18 May. In autumn first on 23 Aug. then 1-4 almost daily from 7 Sep.-10 Oct. Singles on 22nd and 23 Oct. Most records from Buskett.

SAKER *Falco cherrug*

- 1975: 1 at Mellieha on 17 Apr.  
1976: 1 at Buskett on 6 Oct.

PEREGRINE *Falco peregrinus*

- 1975: Usual pair at Ta' Cenc where 2 juveniles fledged in the first week of May. In Apr. singles on Comino on 27th and at Gebel Ciantar on 30th. Singles on 9 other dates from 31 Jul.-2 Nov. from Filfla, Ghar Lapsi, Comino, Buskett, Ghadira and Anchor Bay. Some of these were probably passage birds.  
1976: Pair in spring on Gozo at Ta' Cenc, and singles on 10 scattered days in April.-May and Aug.-Nov. at various localities

QUAIL *Coturnix coturnix*

- 1975: 2 on 26 Jan., then single figures on a few days from 9 Mar.-26 Apr. with a max. of 10+ at Xaghra on 14-19 April. 1 on 13 Aug.  
1976: singles on 3 Jan. and 21 Feb. Then up to 5 on 19 days from 14 Mar.-7 May. In autumn singles at Bubaqra on 16th and 25 Sep. and 1 Oct. and 1-2 on 3 days from 19-28 Nov.



WATER RAIL *Rallus aquaticus*

1975: 1-2 in suitable areas in Jan.-Apr. to 6th, 1 on 4 Oct., then from 1 Nov. onwards, with a max. of 7 at Girgenti on 12 Dec.

1976: 1-2 on 4 days in Jan.; singles on 28 Aug. and on 5 days in Sep., and again 1-2 on 6 days in Oct., on 6 days in Nov. and on 19 Dec. Most records from Girgenti, Buskett, Ghadira and Lunzjata.

SPOTTED CRAKE *Porzana porzana*

1975: singles on 22nd and 28 Mar., 6 Apr. and 17 Oct.

1976: singles at Salina on 24th and at Chadwick Lakes on 31 Mar., at Targa Gap from 6-8 May, at Salina on 27th and 30 Sep and at Lunzjata on 3 Nov. 3 at Ramla Valley on 1 Nov.

BAILLON'S CRAKE *Porzana pusilla*

1976: single at ix-Xerriek on 29 Mar.

CORN CRAKE *Crex crex*

1976: 1 at Buskett on 16 Apr.

MOORHEN *Gallinula chloropus*

1975: 3 records of singles in Jan.-early Feb. Spring passage from 14 Mar.-8 May with 17 records of 1-2, most from 10-20 Apr. 1 was at Girgenti in late July and Aug. First in autumn on 5 Sep., then regularly to 27 Dec. with most in Oct.-Nov., max. 6 at Girgenti on several days.

1976: 1 on 23rd and 2 on 24 Jan. and 1 on 4 Mar. Then 1-3 on 11 days from 25 Mar.-26 Apr., but 10 on 2 Apr. In autumn again 1-3 on 12 days from 10 Sep.-29 Oct., but 8 on 11 Oct. Singles on 8 Nov. and 19 Dec. Most records from Girgenti Valley and Salina.

COOT *Fulica atra*

1975: singles on 3 Sep. and 19 Oct., then on 11 days from 8 Nov.-16 Dec. Influx on 26 Nov. with 17 at Salina and 8 at Marsa.

1976: singles at M'Xlökk on 16 May (unusual), at Rabat on 23 Sep. and at Salina on 10 Oct. 3 at Salina on 11 Oct.

CRANE *Grus grus*

1975: 7 on 23rd and 2 on 25 Sep., then on 10 days from 17 Oct.-27 Nov. Seen in small parties, max. 19 over Mgarr on 26 Oct.

1976: 1 at Lunzjata on 18 Oct., then on 6 days from 1-10 Nov. (max. 25+ on 1st), 1 on 26 Nov. and 2 on 2 Dec. at Rabat.

OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus*

1976: singles at M'Xlökk on 28 Mar. and at M'Scala on 2 Aug.

BLACK-WINGED STILT *Himantopus himantopus*

1975: 1-4 on 7 days from 7 Mar.-2 Apr. Singles on 7th and 16 Jun, 12th, 29th and 30 Jul. were unusual.

AVOCET *Recurvirostra avosetta*

- 1975: singles at Salina on 25th and at M'Scala on 29 Aug.  
1976: 16 off l-Ahrax Pt. on 18 Sep. and 1 at M'Xlokk on 27 Nov.

STONE CURLEW *Burhinus oedicnemus*

- 1975: singles on 9 dates from 23 Mar.-11 May, but 8 at Qbajjar on 10 Apr.  
Singles at Rabat on 15th, 18th, 24th and 25 Sep., and 1 at Armier on 1 Dec.  
1976: singles on 23rd and 27 Mar., then up to 4 on 5 scattered dates in Apr.  
8 on 10th and singles on 28th and 31st in Oct.

PRATINCOLE *Glareola pratincola*

- 1975: 1 at Ta' Qali on 15 Apr. and 1 seen shot in May. 1 at Salina on 7th and 2 at M'Scala on 17 Oct.  
1976: singles at Hal Far on 2nd and 12th, at Ghadira on 6th and at ix-Xerriek on 7th. 6 at Ta' Qali on 4th and 2 at Sta. Lucia on 23rd. All dates in May.

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius dubius*

- 1975: single figures on most days, mainly at Ghadira, from 8 Mar.-1 May, with a max. of 13 at Hal Far on 16 Apr. In autumn 1-4 on 13 dates from 12 July.-3 Oct., with most in July-Aug.  
1976: 2 on 10 Jan. and 1 on 15th and 2 on 28 Feb. Then frequent from 3 Mar.-25 Apr. (almost daily from 24 Mar.-11 Apr.) with a max. of 60+ on 27 Mar. Single at Ghadira on 4 May. 1-2 on 10 dates from 17 July-1 Sep. and 1 on 10th and 3 on 27 Oct.

RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula*

- 1975: No spring records. 16 on 31 Jul., 5 on 5 Aug., 5 on 6th, 20+ on 15th and 15 on 17 Sep., and 1 on 20 Oct. Most records from Luqa airfield. 3 at Hal Far on 12-28 Dec.  
1976: 1-2 on 6 days in May and 1 at Armier on 29 Aug.

KENTISH PLOVER *Charadrius alexandrinus*

- 1975: singles at Ghadira on 1st and 24 Apr. 2 at M'Scala on 3 Oct.  
1976: 2 at Hal Far on 10th and 31 Jan. and on 7th and 8 Feb. 3 again at Hal Far on 31 Mar. and singles at Ghadira on 18 Apr., 4th and 29 May and at Armier on 29 Aug.

GREATER SAND PLOVER *Charadrius leschenaultii*

- 1976: single birds at M'Scala on 16th and at limits of Zejtun on 26 Jul.

DOTTEREL *Eudromias morinellus*

- 1975: single figures on 10 days from 11 Sep.-1 Dec., with most in late Oct.  
1976: On 27 dates from 11 Sep.-28 Nov. A large flock exceeding 300 over B'Kara on 2nd and ca. 130 on 6th and 7 Nov., otherwise mostly in single figures.

GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis apricaria*

- 1975: Up to 70 at Hal Far in Jan. and Feb., last 2 on 25 Mar. Occasional records from other areas with 50 over Benghazi on 12 Feb. In autumn from 1 Nov. onwards; the wintering flock at Hal Far reaching a max. of 60 in late Dec. Passages frequently recorded in late Nov. with a max. of 40+ at Sannat on 27th.
- 1976: Flock of up to 200+ at Hal Far in Jan., down to 50+ by mid-Mar. Up to 10+ on 14 dates from 3 Oct.-5 Dec. in various localities.

GREY PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola*

- 1975: 1 at Zonqor Pt. on 5 May, 1 at Marsalform on 13th and another shot at Qawra in mid-Aug., 2 shot at Tas-Safra and 1 at Qawra early Oct., and singles at Delimara on 13th and at M'Xlokk on 17 Dec.
- 1976: 1 at Hal Far on 11 Jan.

LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus*

- 1975: 1-6 on 3 days in Jan., then 4 on 22nd and 1 on 31 Mar. In autumn single figures on 9 days from 25 Oct. and up to 60 at Hal Far and 25 at Luqa airfields in late Dec.
- 1976: Up to 150+ (on 25th) at Hal Far in Jan. down to 1 on 8 Feb. 1-8 on 4 dates at other localities in Jan. with 12 on 30th and 25 on 31st at Luqa. Single at Ta' Qali on 19 Mar. Then on 6 dates from 1-28 Nov. with a max. of 63 on last date. 12 at Ghasri on 29 Dec.

SANDERLING *Calidris alba*

- 1975: singles at Delimara on 8th and 22nd and at M'Scala on 22 May.

LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta*

- 1975: single figures almost daily mainly at Ghadira from 6-30 Apr., 1 on 21 May and 2 on 6 Jun. In autumn recorded in 12 days again in single figures from 21 Jul.-27 Aug. Singles on 8 Nov. and 1 Dec.
- 1976: 2 on 3rd and 4 on 7 Apr. Then almost daily from 18 Apr.-5 Jun. (max. 90+ on 16 May). Frequent from 20 July and almost daily from 31 Jul.-4 Sep. (max. 16 on 3 Aug.). 2-3 on 3 more dates in Sep. and 1 on 1 Nov. In Spring most records at Ghadira while in autumn at Salina and Marsa.

TEMMINCK'S STINT *Calidris temminckii*

- 1975: 3 on 26th and 1 on 27 Apr. and 2 on 4 May at Ghadira. 1-2 at Salina from 16-29th and 1 at Marsa from 28-30 Jul.
- 1976: 2 at Ghadira on 19 Apr. and singles at Salina on 5 dates from 17 Jul.-22 Aug.

CURLEW SANDPIPER *Galidris ferruginea*

- 1975: 1-3 on 4 days from 24 Apr.-8 May. In autumn recorded only in July — 4 on 21st, 2 on 25th and 1 on 29th at Salina, and 1 at Buskett on 29th.
- 1976: 2-5 at Ghadira on 6 dates from 2nd to 22 May. Then 1-5 at Salina from 31 Jul.-7 Aug. and on 4 Sep.

PURPLE SANDPIPER *Calidris maritima*

1976: 1 at Gzira Pt. (Wied il-Ghajn) on 5 Dec. (1st record for Malta).

DUNLIN *Calidris alpina*

1975: very poor year with 4 on 13th and 1 on 27 Aug. and 3 on 17 Oct. at Salina. 1-2 on 4 days from 8-24 Nov. then 2 at Luqa on 30 Dec.

1976: 1 at Marsa on 2 Apr. was the only spring record. 1-2 mostly at Salina on 6 dates from 27 Jul.-23 Aug. 1 on 26 Sep. and 2 on 12 Oct. at Salina and 1 at Xemxija on 23-24 Oct.

RUFF *Philomachus pugnax*

1975: in spring recorded on 10 days from 24 Mar.-8 May in single figures but 13 at Hal Far on 25 Mar. Main autumn passage from 23 Aug.-16 Sep., always 1-2 but a flock of 30+ over Buskett on 5 Sep. Singles on 14 Oct. and 10 Nov.

1976: First on 28 Feb., then very frequent in Mar. (14 dates with max. of 50+ on 3rd, 55+ on 27th, 75+ on 28th and 130 on 29th). Then on 14 scattered days in Apr. and May (max. 23 on 16 May). Singles at Salina on 20 Jul., 14 Aug., 5th and 8 Oct. and 3 on 16 Sep.

JACK SNIPE *Lymnocyptes minimus*

1975: 1 on 1 Jan., then 1-2 on 19th, 24th, 25th and 26 Nov. Most were at Salina.

SNIPE *Gallinago gallinago*

1975: 1 on 1 Feb., then 11 records on 9 dates from 1 Mar.-2 May; 9 at Lunzjata on first date, otherwise 1-2. In autumn there were 17 records of 1-3 birds on 14 days from 3 Oct.-1 Dec.

1976: 1-2 on 4 days from 18 Feb.-3 Mar. Then up to 3 almost daily from 19-31 Mar. In autumn first on 9 Sep. then 1-3 on 11 days from 21 Sep.-9 Nov.

GREAT SNIPE *Gallinago media*

1975: singles at Lunzjata on 3rd and at Chadwick Lakes on 27 Mar., at Delimara on 13 Apr. and at Rabat on 11 May.

1976: 1 at Marsa on 2 Apr.

WOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola*

1975: singles on 14 Feb. and 12 Mar. From 25 Oct.-7 Dec. in autumn when recorded on several days. Best day was 26 Oct. with a total of 40+ at 5 localities and 'several' at Delimara.

1976: 1 at Xemxija on 3 Jan., then on 5 dates from 25 Nov.-3 Dec. (max. 20+ on 25th) and 1 at Xemxija on 24 Dec.

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa*

1975: 1 over Hal Gilwi on 15 Apr.

1976: 1 at Luqa on 30 Jan., 2 at Hal Far on 3 Feb., 1-3 on 4 days from 18-23 Mar. and 1 at Salina on 21-22 Aug.

BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica*

1976: 1 at M'Scala on 22 Jul. Singles at Munxar Pt. on 4th and at M'Xlokk on 4th, 10th and 21st, all in Sep.

WHIMBREL *Numenius phaeopus*

1975: 1 at Salina on 28 Mar.

1976: 1 at Munxar Pt. on 2 Apr.

CURLEW *Numenius arquata*

1975: singles at Kercem on 8 Apr., at M'Xlokk on 6 May and at Bahar ic-Caghak on 20 Sep.

1976: flocks of 5, 10 and 15 off M'Scala on 27 Mar.

SPOTTED REDSHANK *Tringa erythropus*

1976: 1 at Ghadira on 25 Apr.

REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*

1975: 1 on 2 Mar., then 1-2 on 13 days from 8 Jun.-23 Nov., mostly at Salina. All records were widely scattered with no peak.

1976: singles at l-Ahrax on 21 Mar., at M'Xlokk on 12 Apr., at Salina on 20th and 22 Jul. and on 10th and 19 Aug., and 2 on 8 Oct. also at Salina.

MARSH SANDPIPER *Tringa stagnatilis*

1976: singles at Marsa on 14th and at Chadwick Lakes on 24 Mar., and at Ghadira on 23 Apr.

GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*

1975: On 8 days in spring from 10 Apr.-21 May; singles except for 3 at Ghadira on 29 Apr. In autumn only 1 on 26 Aug.

1976: 1 at M'Xlokk on 27 Mar., 1-2 at Ghadira from 17-23 Apr. and 2 at M'Xlokk on 8 May. Then singles at Salina on 16 Jul. and on 4 dates from 19 Aug.-1 Sep. 8 over Buskett on 26 Aug.

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus*

1975: a poor year with 2 on 1 Mar., then singles on 2nd, 10th, 15th and 22 Apr. Flock of 25 on 27 Jul., then 1-5 on 7 days from 4-30 Aug.

1976: 1-3 on 10 days from 28 Feb.-14 Apr., and 1-2 on 17 days from 22 Jul.-29 Sep.

WOOD SANDPIPER *Tringa glareola*

1975: 17 records of 1-3 from 2 Apr.-29 May. Same numbers in autumn on 14 days from 4 Jul.-28 Aug.

1976: Up to 8 on 19 days from 22 Mar.-26 May and up to 25 on 22 days from 2 Jul.-27 Aug. 1-2 on 18-19 Sep. and on 3rd and 15 Oct.

COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleucos*

1975: 1 on 25 Mar., then low single figures on most days in several places from 15 Apr.-10 May. 1 on 25 May. Almost daily around the coasts from 7

Jul.-29 Sep., mainly single figures with a max. of 15 on Filfla on 16 Aug.  
One was found dead at Marsa on 19 Oct.  
1976: 1-3 on 23 days from 20 Mar.-22 May. Almost daily from 17 Jul.-28 Aug.  
(max. 25+ at Salina on 13 Aug.). Up to 5 in Sep. on 5 days from 11th-  
28th. Singles on 30 Oct. and 14 Nov.

TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres*

1975: 1-3 on 6 dates from 5-25 May. 1 at Ghadira on 21 Sep.

POMARINE SKUA *Stercorarius pomarinus*

1975: 1 taken offshore on 15 May.

LONG-TAILED SKUA *Stercorarius longicaudus*

1976: 1 taken offshore on 23 Sep.

MEDITERRANEAN GULL *Larus melanocephalus*

1975: Max. of 50 at Marsamxett on 23 Feb. Last were 2 at Salina on 25 Mar.  
and 1 at Ghadira on 1 Apr. 1 on 19 Oct., then low single figures from  
24 Dec.

1976: Up to 300+ in Jan. (highest on 24th), up to 500+ in Feb. (highest on  
8th) and up to 75+ in Mar. (highest on 13th); last record was 1 on 31  
Mar. Most records from Grand Harbour and Rinella. In Oct. 2 records  
off l-Ahrax of 1 on 19th and 7 on 23rd; in Nov. 4 off l-Ahrax on 24th  
and at Sliema on 26th; and in Dec. 1 at Sliema on 10th.

LITTLE GULL *Larus minutus*

1975: 1 at Salina on 23 Feb., 3 in Grand Harbour on 28 Nov. and 1 at Bahar  
ic-Caghak on 14 Dec.

1976: singles at Marfa on 10th and in Grand Harbour on 23 Jan., and 2 (singles  
at Hal Far and at Marsa) on 8th and at Rinella on 10 Feb.

BLACK-HEADED GULL *Larus ridibundus*

1975: double figures in harbours in Jan.-Feb. with a max. of 450 at Marsam-  
xett on 23 Feb. Only single figures in Mar. with the last on 7 Apr. Up  
to 500 were at Marsa on 23 Nov., then usually double figures till end  
of year.

1976: Up to 1000+ in Jan. (highest on 24th), up to 700+ in Feb. (highest on  
8th) and up to 100+ in Mar. (highest on 13th). Last record of 2 on 30  
Mar., but singles in Apr. at Luqa from 7-13th and at Hal Saffieni on 21st,  
2 at Luqa on 19 Oct., then up to 220+ from 22 Nov. till end of year.

SLENDER-BILLED GULL *Larus genei*

1975: a wounded bird was picked up near Filfla on 23 Sep.

1976: 1 on 20 Oct. and 2 on 7 Nov. both records at M'Scala.

AUDOUIN'S GULL *Larus audouinii*

1975: single birds at M'Xlokk on 16 Jul. and at il-Munxar (M'Scala) on 23 Sep.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL *Larus fuscus*

- 1975: 3 of the nominate race were shot off the south coast on 15 Apr. Singles at Zonqor Pt. on 17 Apr. and at Dwejra (Gozo) on 2 Jun. 5 at Marsa on 23 Nov. and 1 at Benghisa Pt. on 21 Dec.
- 1976: 5 (4 *graeLLsi* and 1 *fuscus*) off l-Ahrax on 4th and 1 off Rinella on 24 Jan., 3 at Rinella on 10th and 1 at Msida on 26 Feb., 1 at Ghadira on 18 Apr. and 1 at Tigne on 9 Oct.

HERRING GULL *Larus argentatus*

- 1975: Present around the coast and in harbours throughout the year. Double figures in harbours only in winter months. No apparent changes in breeding colonies.
- 1976: Up to 200+ (highest in any one locality) throughout the year. Bred in usual numbers; however, colony at Ta' Cenc seems to be on the decrease — 50+ adults were counted there in April and May.

GULL-BILLED TERN *Gelochelidon nilotica*

- 1975: 2 single birds shot in May and late Aug., the latter at Salina.
- 1976: singles at Salina on 28 Aug. and at l-Ahrax on 20 Nov.

CASPIAN TERN *Sterna caspia*

- 1975: singles taken on 24 Aug. and 8 Sep. the latter at Ramla Bay.
- 1976: 1 off l-Ahrax on 22 Oct.

SANDWICH TERN *Sterna sandvicensis*

- 1975: 1 at Qawra on 22 Jan., then 1 on 9th and 2 on 25 Aug., 1 on 2 Oct. and a flock of 14 at Bahar ic-Caghak on 22 Nov.
- 1976: 1 at Tas-Safra on 14 Mar., and singles at l-Ahrax on 20th and at Ghajn Barrani on 31 Oct.

COMMON TERN *Sterna hirundo*

- 1976: 2 at l-Ahrax on 22 Oct.

LITTLE TERN *Sterna albifrons*

- 1975: 1 at M'Xlokk on 7 Jun.

BLACK TERN *Chlidonias nigra*

- 1975: 1 dead off M'Xlokk on 13th, 5 on 14th and 8 on 15 May at Marsa. In autumn recorded on 5 days from 24 Jul.-7 Aug. with a strong passage south off M'Xlokk on 27 Jul., when 250+ were counted
- 1976: 1 on 17th and 5 on 25 Sep. both records at Ghadira.

WHITE-WINGED BLACK TERN *Chlidonias leucoptera*

- 1975: 1 at Xlendi Valley on 9 Jun.
- 1976: 1 at Lunzjata on 5th; 2 near Ghadira about the 15th; 3 at Hal Far, 1 at Ghadira and 'few' at M'Xlokk on 16th; and 1 at Lunzjata on 17th all in May. 1 at St. Paul's Bay on 5 Sep.

'MARSH TERNS' *Chlidonias sp.*

1976: 70+ on 31 Jul. and 40+ on 5 Aug. ca. 8 km off M'Xlokk (probably *niger*).

STOCK DOVE *Columba oenas*

1975: One at Wied il-Balluta on 26 May.

WOOD PIGEON *Columba palumbus*

1975: singles on 22 Feb. and 15 Mar. 1-2 on 5 dates from 16 Oct.-15 Nov.

1976: singles at Xaghra on 4 Jan., at Ghadira on 28 Mar. and at Xemxija on 6th, at Mellieha on 10th and at Anchor Bay on 24 Oct.

COLLARED DOVE *Streptopelia decaocto*

1975: One on Comino on 27 Apr.

TURTLE DOVE *Streptopelia turtur*

1975: singles from 1 Apr. with first double figures by 10th. Treble figures on several days between mid-April and mid-May, but no large passages. Max. count 850 over Mellieha on 28 Apr. Very few after 18 May with last records on 8 Jun. In Jul. 1 on 5th, 8 on 20th (at Girgenti) and 1 at Buskett. First in autumn 1 on 7 Aug. then almost daily from 27th on through Sep., last on 7 Oct. Only double figures except for 180 at Buskett on 11 Sep.

1976: singles on 21st and 31 Mar., then from 2 Apr.-16 Jun. (daily from 13 Apr.-15 May). Highest in Apr. 800+ on 18th and in May 250+ on 15th. Singles in July on 12th, 24th and 26th. In Aug. 1 on 1st then daily from 17th till 10 Oct. and a single on 16 Oct. Highest in Aug. 120+ on 23rd, in Sep. 440+ on 8th and in Oct. 25+ on 8th.

GREAT SPOTTED CUCKOO *Clamator glandarius*

1975: singles at Bahrija on 16th and at Tal-Handaq on 18 May. One shot at Siggiewi in early July.

1976: singles at Wied il-Qoton on 24th and at Hal Far on 27 Mar. 1 at B'Kara and 1 at Siggiewi also in Mar.

CUCKOO *Cuculus canorus*

1975: spring passage from 28 Mar.-19 May with single figures almost daily from 9 Apr.-11 May. In autumn singles on 12th and 27 Jun., 7th and 22 Jul., 15th and 28 Aug. and 2 on 26 Sep.

1976: Up to 5 almost daily from 29 Mar.-1 May with 1 on 10 May. 1-2 on 14 scattered days from 1 Aug.-24 Oct.

BARN OWL *Tyto alba*

1975: Recorded at 2 sites in Malta and 3 in Gozo. Most records between May and July, with one in Dec.

1976: singles at 4 different localities during the breeding season.



SCOPS OWL *Otus scops*

- 1975 : singles on 10 days from 23 Mar.-7 May. In autumn up to 10 on several days from 20 Sep.-15 Nov. then 1-2 at Buskett and up to 3 at Girgenti till end of year.
- 1976 : singles on 10-11 Jan. and on 12th and 21 Mar. Then almost daily from 31 Mar.-17 Apr. with 1 on 24 Apr. Highest 15 on 4th and 21 on 7 Apr., otherwise 1-4. 1 at Rabat on 12 Jul. In autumn 1-2 on 17 dates from 22 Sep.-28 Nov., but 5+ at Buskett on last date. 1 at Sta. Lucia on 10 Dec.

LONG-EARED OWL *Asio otus*

- 1975 : 1 shot on 22 Mar. Singles at M'Scala on 21 and at M'Xlökk on 28 Oct.
- 1976 : 3 shot in the first half of Apr. Singles at il-Qaws on 12th, at Dingli on 18th and at Buskett on 20 Nov. and at Bidnija on 5 Dec.

SHORT-EARED OWL *Asio flammeus*

- 1975 : 1 on 16 Apr. was the only spring record. In autumn 1-2 on 5 dates from 2 Sep.-7 Nov.
- 1976 : 1-3 on 10 days from 16 Mar.-26 Apr. In autumn singles on 4 dates from 17 Oct.-1 Nov. 8 were seen dead at a taxidermist in Sep./Oct.

NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus europaeus*

- 1975 : spring passage from 5 Apr.-17 May. Recorded on most days in April but only in single figures. In autumn from 15 Aug.-4 Oct. with most in late Sep. Max. 15 at Buskett on 27th.
- 1976 : 1-3 on 19 days from 31 Mar.-21 Apr., but 16 on 13th. In autumn again 1-3 on 13 days from 6 Sep.-18 Oct. most records from Buskett/Rabat.

EGYPTIAN NIGHTJAR *Caprimulgus aegyptius*

- 1976 : 1 at Marnisi on 11 May.

SWIFT *Apus apus*

- 1975 : almost continuous passage from 27 Mar.-27 Sep. with largest gap between 19-26 Jun. Often in treble figures (max. 400) especially in May, Jun. and Aug. Late bird on 20 Nov.
- 1976 : almost daily from 21 Mar.-Sep., and on 9 scattered days in Oct. 1-2 on 7th, 9th and 21 Nov. and on 29-30 Dec. Peaks from mid-Apr. to early Sep. with up to 300+ but 1750+ on 13th and 480+ on 14 Aug.

PALLID SWIFT *Apus pallidus*

- 1975 : only 2 at Ta' Qali on 27 Apr. were positively identified.
- 1976 : singles at Ras il-Pellegrin on 17 Apr., at Mellieha on 2 May and on 14 Aug. and at Buskett on 1 Sep.

ALPINE SWIFT *Apus melba*

- 1975 : spring passage from 24 Mar.-23 May with single figures on 9 widely scattered days. 2 on 9 Jul. In autumn 1-3 on 6 days from 19-28 Sep. and 1 on 25 Oct., all records from Buskett.
- 1976 : almost daily from 19-31 Mar. with 50+ highest on 30th. Then on 5 scat-

tered days in April, max. 16 on 10th. Singles on 7th and 26 May and on 12 Jun., but 2 on 26 Jun. and 6 on 4 Jul. In autumn 1-5 on 8 scattered days from 3 Sep.-7 Nov.

LITTLE SWIFT *Apus affinis*

1976: 1 at Buskett on 1 Sep.

KINGFISHER *Alcedo atthis*

1975: singles at Salina on 19 Jul. and 2 Aug., then regular at various localities, mainly around the coast, from 12 Aug.-19 Oct. Max. 3 at Salina on 7 Sep.

1976: 1-3 on 7 days from 6-27 Aug. and singles on 11 Sep. and on 5 days from 10-30 Oct.

BEE-EATER *Merops apiaster*

1975: spring passage from 7 Apr.-13 Jun.; recorded on 17 dates (max. flock 14) with no clear peak. 7 on 28 Jun. were late birds. In autumn flock of 20+ on 31 Aug. and singles on 3rd and 10 Sep.

1976: On 5 days from 17-24 Apr. (max. 40+ at Xaghra on 20th) and on 4 scattered days in May (max. 50+ at Qrendi on 3rd). Very small autumn movement: on 4 days from 26 Aug.-17 Sep. (max. 15+ at Ta' Cenc on 12th otherwise single birds).

ROLLER *Coracias garrulus*

1975: On 15 days from 15 Apr.-26 May, single figures with max. of 11 on 5th May. In autumn 2 at Rabat and 1 at Buskett on 25 Oct.

1976: spring passage rather poor with 1-2 on 5 scattered days from 16 Apr.-25 May. In autumn again 1-2 on 6 scattered days from 4 Aug.-8 Oct. with most records from Buskett.

HOOPOE *Upupa epops*

1975: First 1 on 19 Feb. then single figures on several days from 14 Mar.-7 May, most in late Mar. to mid-Apr. Singles on 2 Jun. and 1 Jul. were unusual. In autumn single figures on most days from 13 Aug.-14 Sep., then 1 on 30 Sep.

1976: spring passage: 1-2 on 5 days from 29 Feb.-11 Mar., 1-5 on 14 days from 23 Mar.-14 Apr. and singles on 20 Apr. and on 3rd, 14th, 25th and 29 May. Autumn movement from 14-30 Aug. with 1-6 on 10 days, from 8-27 Sep. with 1-2 on 8 days and from 8-20 Oct. with singles on 4 days.

WRYNECK *Jynx torquilla*

1975: singles wintered at Buskett and Ghadira, then first spring record on 21 Mar. and last on 5 May. Present on most days but only in small numbers — never more than 2 in any one locality. An unusual bird at Buskett on 23 Jun. First in autumn on 20 Aug., then from 11 Sep. right through to the end of Nov. Larger numbers than in spring. Singles again at Buskett and Ghadira throughout December.

1976: 2 on 1st and singles on 2nd and 11 Jan. Then spring passage from 14 Mar.-7 May with 1-6 almost daily from 27 Mar.-14 Apr. Again almost

daily from 29 Aug.-30 Nov. (max. 9 on 25 Sep.). Present during Dec. with 1-3 on 8 days.

**HOOPOE LARK** *Alaemon alaudipes*

1975: 1 at San Anard on 17 Oct.

**CALANDRA LARK** *Melanocorypha calandra*

1975: 1 caught by trappers in Oct.

1976: singles at l-Ahrax on 22 Oct. and at M'Xlökk on 7 Nov.

**SHORT-TOED LARK** *Calandrella brachydactyla*

1975: breeding in usual numbers. Extreme dates 22 Mar. and 8 Oct. Passage birds as usual in Apr. and Aug.-Sep.

1976: first on 13 Mar. Then present in usual numbers during the breeding season and until 3 ct. with up to 5 till 23 Oct.

**WOOD LARK** *Lullula arborea*

1975: only 3 November records — 2 over Buskett on 2nd, 2 at Lunzjata on 3rd and 1 over San Anton on 8th.

**SKYLARK** *Alauda arvensis*

1975: wintering birds were few with up to 15 at Ta' Genc highest. Small passage (only in single figures) in late Mar.-early Apr., but late birds were recorded on 19th and 26 Apr. and 7 May. Autumn passage from 7 Oct double or low treble figures from mid-Oct.-early Nov. Up to 20 in several localities throughout Dec.

1976: Up to 30+ in a few localities in Jan.-Feb. increasing in late Mar. with a max. of 50+ at Hal Far on 27th; last seen on 4 Apr. 8 on 30 Sep., then daily from 3 Oct. with peak passages from mid-Oct. (max. 1200+ on 30th) till mid-Nov. Up to 50+ during Dec., highest in any one locality.

**SAND MARTIN** *Riparia riparia*

1975: On most days from 17 Mar. to end of May, normally in treble figures with a max. of 1000+ at Lunzjata on 29 Apr. 1 was regularly seen at Lunzjata till the third week of June. 3 on 18 Jul., then from 22 Aug. to 19 Oct. (most in Sep.) in double figures with a peak of 80+ at Buskett on 22nd.

1976: spring passage from 10 Mar.-26 May (daily from 24 Mar.-Apr. and almost daily in May) with peaks of 200-800+ on 14 Mar., 7th and 28 Apr., and 7-8 May. 1 at Salina on 23 Jul. In autumn first on 18 Aug. then almost daily from 25 Aug.-5 Nov. with late birds on 21st (2) and 28 Nov. Peaks of 100-250+ on 8 days from 10 Sep.-5 Oct.

**CRAG MARTIN** *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

1975: 2 at Lunzjata on 2 Jan., then 1 there on 4 days, last on 12 Apr. 1 at the same locality during the 2nd week of Dec. and 2 at Dwejra (Malta) on 27 Dec.

1976: 1 pale bird was taken at Qormi in late Oct.

SWALLOW *Hirundo rustica*

- 1975: 3 on 16 Feb., then from 2 Mar.-15 Jun. Treble figures on most days between late Mar. and mid-May. Max. 1000+ at Lunzjata on 29 Apr. Up to 10 were present at Lunzjata throughout most of June when one was also seen at Nadur. 2 on 13th and 19 Jul. 1 on 20th, then almost daily from 26 Aug.-27 Oct. in double or low treble figures. Up to 20, mainly at Lunzjata, throughout Nov. In Dec. 1 at Marsa on 3rd-5th and 1 at Lunzjata on 12th-13th.
- 1976: spring passage from 10 Mar.-30 May with peaks from late Mar. to mid-May (max. 1000+ on 6 Apr.). 1-6 on 11 dates from 16 Jun.-27 Jul. In autumn daily from 28 Aug.-3 Nov. and on 15 more days in Nov. Singles on 1st and 21 Dec. Peaks in autumn (400-1600+) on 10 days from 23 Sep.-12 Oct.

RED-RUMPED SWALLOW *Hirundo daurica*

- 1975: 1-2 on 6 days from 31 Mar.-13 May, most at Lunzjata and Xlendi.
- 1976: 1-3 from 28-31 Mar. and 8 at Rabat, 10 and 1 at Ramla Valley on 2nd, 18th and 28 Apr. respectively. 4 autumn records: singles at Buskett on 10th, 14th and 15 Sep. and at Rabat on 8 Oct.

HOUSE MARTIN *Delichon urbica*

- 1975: a small, exceptionally early, passage took place between 9th and 26 Feb., with a max. of 20 at Lunzjata. Then recorded almost daily from 12 Mar.-29 May, in same numbers as Swallow. A few records throughout June. Singles on 6 Jul. and 8 Aug., then from 22 Aug.-15 Nov. with most in mid-late Sep. and late Oct. Single or low double figures, max. 40 at Buskett on 14 Oct.
- 1976: 1 at Sta. Lucia on 8 Feb., then almost daily from 10 Mar.-30 May with peaks of 150-800+ on 19 Mar., on 4 days in mid-Apr. and on 5 days from 6-17 May. 1 at Buskett on 8 Jun. and 5 at Lunzjata on 5 Aug. Autumn passage: on several days from 1 Sep.-14 Nov., almost daily at in Oct. with up to 100+.

RICHARD'S PIPIT *Anthus novaeseelandiae*

- 1975: 3 at Hal Far on 15-16 Nov.
- 1976: 1 at M'Xlokk on 20 Dec.

TAWNY PIPIT *Anthus campestris*

- 1975: single figures (max. 5) on 11 days from 22 Mar.-7 May. In autumn 1-3, mainly over Buskett, from 5-11 Sep., and 5-10 at Hal Far on 25-27 Oct.
- 1976: 1-3 on 6 days from 28 Mar.-17 Apr., but 25 at Hal Far on 11 Apr. In autumn, from 24 Aug.-12 Sep., on 11 days max. 30 at Ta' Cenc and 3 at Mthaleb on 9 Sep., then 1-3 from 1-6 Oct.

TREE-PIPIT *Anthus trivialis*

- 1975: 1 on 17th, then from 22 Mar.-9 May. Recorded daily, mainly in double figures with max. of 200 over Sarraflu on 12 Apr. and 300 over Lunzjata on 5 May. Late bird on 24 May. In autumn recorded on most days from

- 21 Aug.-8 Nov., but always in single figures.
- 1976: singles on 3rd and 24 Jan. Spring passage from 13 Mar.-17 May with monthly peaks of 2050+ in Mar. on 29th, 390+ in Apr. on 2nd and 40+ in May on 2nd. In autumn almost daily from 22 Aug.-Oct. and on 6 scattered dates in Nov. till 27th. Peaks in Oct. (460-1140+) on 8th-10th.

MEADOW PIPIT *Anthus pratensis*

- 1975: double figures in most places in Jan.-Mar., with evidence of return passage in late Mar. when max. of 250 counted over Mellieha on 26th. Last were 6 at Mosta on 11 Apr. First in autumn on 20 Oct., then daily till year end. In slightly larger numbers than before, with max. of 200 in the Chadwick Lakes area on 6 Dec.
- 1976: medium double figures in Jan.-Mar. in many places, but up to 150+ at Mellieha on 16 Mar. Up to 10 in Apr. till 25th. In autumn 10 at Buskett on 11th, then from 20 Oct. reaching low treble figures in mid-Nov. with medium double figures by end of Dec.

RED-THROATED PIPIT *Anthus cervinus*

- 1975: on several days from 30 Mar.-18 May, mainly single figures, but up to 60 were at Ta' Qali during the last week of Apr. In autumn 1-5 on 5 dates from 17 Oct.-1 Nov.
- 1976: 1-8 on 5 dates from 6-27 Feb. all at Hal Far and Hal Safieni. Then spring passage from 27 Mar.-20 Apr. with a max. of 800+ at Hal Far on 10 Apr. otherwise single or low double figures. Singles on 2nd and 9 May. In autumn first on 3 Oct. and until 17 Nov.; on 15 dates with a max. of 20+ at Marsa on 12 Oct. 1 on 25th, 2 on 28th and 1 on 30th in Dec.

WATER PIPIT *Anthus spinoletta*

- 1975: One at Salina on 6th and 10 Dec. was probably the same bird.

YELLOW WAGTAIL *Motacilla flava*

- 1975: First on 16 Mar., reaching double figures by 31st. Treble figures on several days with max. of 600+ on 12 Apr. at Sarrafu and on 5 May at Lunzjata. Last on 25 May. 2 were at Ghadira on 15 Jun. and 1-2 at Salina throughout Jul. and Aug. First autumn migrant on 3 Aug., then almost daily from 10th and on to 30 Oct. Double or low treble figures in Sep. and early Oct. Late bird at Ghadira on 16 Nov.
- 1976: spring passage from 11 Mar.-25 May with peaks of 120-550+ from 28 Mar.-1 Apr., otherwise medium or low double figures. 1 on 8th and 2 on 12 Jun. Autumn passage from 6 Aug.-27 Nov. with medium double figures in late Aug., and peaks of 100-250+ in Sep. to mid-Oct. Up to 10 on 5 dates in Nov.

GREY WAGTAIL *Motacilla cinerea*

- 1975: single figures, or up to 10, in several areas in Jan.-Feb., numbers reducing in Mar., last on 28th. Autumn passage from 14 Sep., with a peak in the last week of Oct. with max. of 50 at Lunzjata on 27th. Then in

same numbers as before until year end.

- 1976: 1-3 in Jan.-19 Mar. Then in autumn 1-7 from 12 Sep., with daily peaks of up to 36 in Oct., up to 15 in Nov. and up to 8 in Dec.

#### WHITE WAGTAIL *Motacilla alba*

- 1975: present in most areas in Jan.-Mar. with last on 1 Apr. Only single figures, except at the Valletta roost where many of the wintering wagtails roost. In autumn first 1 at Ghadira on 30 Sep., then from 14 Oct. onwards. Double figures frequent in late Oct. and Nov. 1000+ were counted at the Valletta roost on 3rd and 500+ at the newly discovered Marsa roost on 8 Dec.
- 1976: single or low double figures in Jan.-mid-Apr. in various localities. Max 40+ at Marsa on 11 Mar. 1 at Qrendi on 6 May. In autumn from 7 Oct.-Dec. mostly in single or low double figures in various places, but high double figures on a few days in late Oct.-early Nov. 600-900+ roosting in Nov. at Marsa.

#### WREN *Troglodytes troglodytes*

- 1975: singles at Salina on 22 Jan., at Wied il-Balluta on 16th and at Buskett on 22 Feb. 1-2 on 4 dates at Buskett from 25 Nov.-28 Dec. and 1 at Girdgenti on 13-14 Dec.
- 1976: 1-2 at Buskett on 9th and 11 Jan. and on 7th and 21 Feb.

#### DUNNOCK *Prunella modularis*

- 1975: single figures in many areas till early Mar., but up to 20 at Buskett. Few singles till 7 Apr. Singles on 8th and 11th and then from 20 Oct. onwards. In slightly larger numbers than before with max. of 50+ at Buskett on 29 Nov.
- 1976: Up to 20+ in Jan.-21 Mar., and 1-2 on 3rd, 4th and 9 Apr. Unusual early birds at Chadwick Lakes on 10 Aug. and at Wied il-Balluta on 3 Sep. Then almost daily from 18 Oct.-Dec. with max. of 60+ on 24 Oct and 40+ on 19 Dec., the latter all at Buskett.

#### RUFOUS BUSH CHAT *Cercotrichas galactotes*

- 1975: singles at Maghluq on 6th, at M'Xlökk on 13th and near Zeitun on 15 Apr. at Sarraflu on 8th and at Hal Far on 16 May.

#### ROBIN *Erithacus rubecula*

- 1975: double figures in Jan.-Mar., with up to 100 at Buskett, numbers reducing after mid-Mar. Few passage birds till 6 May. Few present throughout summer (up to 3 at Buskett). First passage migrants on 20 Sep. with up to 60 already at Buskett by 27th. Treble figures in many places in Oct.-Nov. with 300-400 on several days at Buskett and Lunzjata. In lesser numbers everywhere in Dec.
- 1976: very common from Jan.-Mar. and in smaller numbers down to scattered singles by end of Apr. Monthly max. at Buskett were 60+ on 11 Jan., 100+ on 28 Feb. and 200+ on 6 Mar. Singles in May on 5 scattered days until 23rd. 1-3 at Buskett on 6 scattered days in July and almost

daily in August and early Sep. with a slight increase until the end. Then numbers rapidly increasing in Oct. with up to 300+ in a few localities down to 100+ in Nov. and 50+ in Dec., daily max. for any one locality.

THRUSH NIGHTINGALE *Luscinia luscinia*

1976: 1 trapped and ringed at Buskett on 8 Aug.

NIGHTINGALE *Luscinia megarhynchos*

1975: On most days from 22 Mar.-8 May, with a final one on 17th. Double figures (up to 30) on several days, mainly in the middle half of Apr. In autumn, 3 on 10th then almost daily from 19 Aug.-early Oct., with sporadic records till 21st. Double figures from late Aug.-late Sep., with max. of 50 at Buskett on 12th.

1976: spring passage from 19 Mar.-19 May, recorded daily from 27 Mar.-21 Apr. with up to 35+ in various localities on several dates, 1-2 on 7 scattered days in May. 1 at Buskett on 14 Jun. Autumn passage from 11 Aug.-29 Oct. in single or low double figures with a max. of 50+ at Buskett on 9-10 Sep. Max. of 125+ on 10 Oct. (total at 6 localities).

BLUETHROAT *Luscinia svecica*

1975: singles at Lunzjata on 2-9 Jan. and 21 Mar.; and at Ghadira on 18 Jan. and 2 Mar.

1976: singles at Marsa on 1 Feb., at Ghadira on 30th and at Hal Far on 31 Mar., at Lunzjata on 16th and at Ghadira on 26 Sep., and near Buskett on 10 Oct.

BLACK REDSTART *Phoenicurus ochruros*

1975: Up to 3 in suitable areas in Jan.-Mar. A very late bird on 18 Apr. First in autumn on 28 Oct. with occasional double figures (max. 12 at Hal Far on 8th) in Nov. Numbers reduced in Dec., but up to 6 still present in a few localities.

1976: 1-5 at various localities from Jan. till 3 Apr. 4 on 1st and 1 on 14 Oct. then almost daily from 23rd onwards with up to 5 at some localities, but 10+ at Anchor Bay on 24 Oct. and 15+ at Madliena/Ras id-Dawwara on 10 Nov.

REDSTART *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

1975: spring passage from 22 Mar.-21 May, with a peak in Apr. Recorded on most days but, as usual, only single figures. From 23 Aug.-26 Oct. in autumn, with a peak from mid-Sep. to early Oct. when recorded in double figures, max. 50 at Buskett on 22 Sep. 2 late birds at Hal Far on 8 Nov.

1976: 1 on 14 Mar., then 1-11 almost daily from 27 Mar.-16 May, with 1 on 26 May. Autumn passage from 3 Sep.-14 Nov. with a peak from 25 Sep.-13 Oct. when frequently in double figures, max. 57 on 8 Oct.

MOUSSIER'S REDSTART *Phoenicurus moussieri*

1976: male at Sarraflu on 15 May.

WHINCHAT *Saxicola rubetra*

- 1975 : an exceptionally early bird at Wied Incita on 15 Feb., then from 31 Mar.-17 May when double figures almost daily. Max. 100+ at Hal Far airfield on 16 Apr. Autumn passage insignificant with 7 singles on 6 days from 12-26 Sep.
- 1976 : spring passage from 27 Mar.-27 May (almost daily from 2 Apr.-9 May) in single figures but 10-14 on 23-26 Apr. and 30+ on 3 May at 2 localities. In autumn 1 on 31 Aug., then 1-7 on 17 scattered days from 9 Sep.-21 Oct. 1-2 on 14th and 25 Nov. and 1-2 Dec. were unusual winter records.

STONECHAT *Saxicola torquata*

- 1975 : single figures widespread in Jan.-Mar. to 12th, numbers decreasing after mid-February. Much larger numbers from 4 Oct. onwards, with a reduction in numbers evident after mid-Nov. Up to 20 in various localities.
- 1976 : single figures in various localities from Jan. till 20 Mar., but up to 15 at Hal Far. In autumn 1 at Buskett on 11 Sep. then movement from 28 Sep. with numbers increasing from early Oct. onwards. Low double figures in various places with up to 30 at Xemxija in Oct. and 50 at Hal Far in Nov., highest for any one locality.

ISABELLINE WHEATEAR *Oenanthe isabellina*

- 1975 : singles at Hal Far on 22nd and at Ta' Cenc and at M'Scala on 31 Mar., at Ta' Qali on 6th and at Hal Far on 8 Apr.
- 1976 : Unusual influx of 1-2 on 7 scattered days from 26 Mar.-14 Apr.

WHEATEAR *Oenanthe oenanthe*

- 1975 : single or low double figures on most days from 10 Mar.-7 May with a max. of 50+ at Hal Far on 16 Apr. In same numbers in autumn, from 15 Aug.-27 Oct. with a max. of 30 at Luqa on 17 Sep. 2 at Luqa on 20 Nov.
- 1976 : singles on 10 Jan. and 2 Feb. Spring passage from 13 Mar. being almost daily till 24 Apr. with a single on 3 May; single or double figures, max. 100+ at Hal Far on 27-28 Mar. In autumn almost daily from 16 Aug. till end of Oct. frequently in double figures but up to 150+ at Ta Cenc on 9 Oct. 1-2 on 5 scattered days in Nov. and 1 on 4 Dec.

BLACK-EARED WHEATEAR *Oenanthe hispanica*

- 1975 : 13 records of 1-2 birds on 8 days from 13 Apr.-17 May, with most in late Apr. In autumn, singles on 3rd, 8th and 11 Sep.
- 1976 : 1-5 on 7 scattered days from 27 Mar.-14 Apr. and singles on 17th and 25 May. 1-3 on 4 dates from 7-14 Sep.

DESERT WHEATEAR *Oenanthe deserti*

- 1975 : 1 seen dead was shot on 12th or 13 Mar.

ROCK THRUSH *Monticola saxatilis*

- 1975 : 5 singles on 4 days between 13 Apr. and 11 May.



1976: 1-2 on 7 scattered days from 16 Mar.-14 May and singles on 8th and 25 Sep.

**BLUE ROCK THRUSH** *Monticola solitarius*

No apparent change in status in both years

**RING OUZEL** *Turdus torquatus*

1975: 3 at Mizieb on 15th and 1 at Ghadira on 16 Nov.

1976: 1 at Tal-Plieri (near Rabat) on 14 Mar.

**BLACKBIRD** *Turdus merula*

1975: single figures in several areas in Jan.-Mar. to 24th, numbers reducing in Mar. Highest were 7 at Buskett on 5 Jan. First in autumn on 12 Oct., numbers increasing by the last week of that month. Then in same numbers as before till year-end.

1976: 1-8 in Jan. and Feb. in various localities, with single birds in Mar. till the 24th and at Marsa on 8 Apr. Again in single numbers from 20 Oct. onwards (up to 5 at Buskett in Nov.).

**EYE-BROWED THRUSH** *Turdus obscurus*

1975: 1 on 1 Oct. near Siggiewi.

**FIELDFARE** *Turdus pilaris*

1975: 1 on 1st and 2 on 2 Jan. Early bird at Lunzjata on 2 Nov., then on 4 days from 4-31 Dec., with a max. of 20 at Xaghra on first date.

1976: 3-5 at Girgenti on 24-25 Jan and 1 at Marsa on 9 Feb., 2 at Buskett on 6 Mar., 3 at Mellieha on 28 Nov. and 4 at Buskett on 19 Dec.

**SONG THRUSH** *Turdus philomelos*

1975: single or low double figures in most areas in Jan.-Mar., with max. of 30 at Buskett on 12 Jan. In April there were 13 records of singles, the last on 22nd. Singles at Buskett on 17 May and 7 Sep. were exceptionally late and early birds respectively. First in autumn 1 on 30 Sep., then from 4 Oct. onwards reaching treble figures by 20th. Main passage during the last 12 days of Oct. with a max. of 1000 at Tas-Salib on 26th. Only single or low double figures (max. 15) after 2 Nov.

1976: in single figures throughout Jan.-Mar. and until April 16th., but 14 on 28 Feb. and 25+ on 24 Mar. 1 at the Addolorata Cemetery on 13 May. 2 at Buskett on 11 Sep., then daily (in double figures) from 5 Oct.; monthly max. of 930+ on 24 Oct. (total count at 10 localities), 490+ on 7 Nov. (at 6 localities) and 18 (1 locality) on 9 Dec.

**REDWING** *Turdus iliacus*

1975: recorded regularly from several areas in Jan.-Mar. to 2nd. Usually single or low double figures, but 60+ were at Buskett on 5 Jan. Late singles on 19th, 27th and 28 Mar., and 16 Apr. Early influx on 1 Nov., when 6 at Xemxija, then from 14th till year-end. In same numbers as before with a max. of 30 at Girgenti on 24 Nov.

1976 Recorded frequently (up to 20+) in Jan. till mid-Feb., then 1-3 on 4 other dates till 13 Mar. In autumn singles on 29th and 31 Oct. and 8 Nov then 1-4 frequently recorded from 18 Nov.-3 Dec. with singles on 19th and 24 Dec.

**MISTLE THRUSH** *Turdus viscivorus*

1975: 1 on 28 Apr. was an exceptionally late bird. Singles on 11th and 26 Oct., and 1 on 1 Nov.

1976: 5 at Mellieha on 25 Jan., 1-2 at Buskett on 3 days from 17 Oct.-1 Nov., and singles at Hal Saffieni on 7 Nov. and at Lunzjata on 6 Dec.

**CETTI'S WARBLER** *Cettia cetti*

1975: recorded from the following areas: Buskett, Girgenti, Rabat, Ghajn Zejtuna, Xemxija, Mtahleb, San Martin, Wardija, Chadwick Lakes, Lunzjata, Xlendi and Ramla Bay. Breeding was also confirmed at Xemxija and Lunzjata, apart from Buskett and Girgenti. The bird at Ramla was a juvenile (ringed) from the first brood of the Xemxija pair.

1976 present at its usual haunts, but breeding also confirmed at il-Kuncizjoni. Other records, besides those of Buskett, Girgenti, Lunzjata, Xlendi and Mtahleb, were 1-3 at Rabat in Jan. and Oct.-Dec.; singles at San Martin and Tas-Santi in Feb., a pair at Chadwick Lakes in Aug.-Sep.; 1 at Fid-dien in Aug.; 1-3 at Ghajn Barrani in Aug.-Dec.; 1-3 at Sta. Marija Estate in Sep.-Oct. and 1 at Xemxija in Oct. Highest number for 1 locality was 17 (ad. & juv.) at Buskett on 20 Jun. The 1975 pair at Xemxija deserted the area this year.

**FAN-TAILED WARBLER** *Cisticola juncidis*

1975: continued spreading and was recorded from Xemxija, Ghadira, Wied Ghajn Rihana, Tal-Fjuri, Wied il-Luq, Pwales Valley, Salina, Wied il-Kbir (Handaq), Mistra and Wied Qannotta in Malta, and Xlendi, Sar-raflu, Sanab, Gharb and Ta' Cenc in Gozo. Breeding was confirmed in several of these areas with highest numbers at Xemxija, the Pwales Valley, Ghadira and Salina.

1976: new areas where birds have been recorded on one or more dates during the breeding season include Manikata, Wied Incita, Wied is-Sewda, Bisbisija, Sta. Lucija, Il-Hemsija, Wied Babu, Wardija, near Naxxar, Qrendi, Hagar Qim, Wied ir-Rum, Gnejna, Tas-Santi, Ghajn ta' Gordanja, Lippija and Chadwick Lakes.

**SAVI'S WARBLER** *Locustella luscinioides*

1976: singles at Wied il-Luq and at Hal Far on 10th, at Girgenti on 11th and at Lunzjata on 11th, 14th, 15th and 16th, all in Oct. The Lunzjata records involved 3 different birds.

**MOUSTACHED WARBLER** *Acrocephalus melanopogon*

1975: One (ringed) at Girgenti on 23 Nov. the previous year was still present on 18 Jan. 1-2 at Lunzjata from 30 Oct.-7 Nov.; singles at Girgenti on 1st and 6th, and at Ghadira on 3 Nov.; and 1 on 26 Nov. and 2 on 6 Dec. at Salina.

1976: 1 at Lunzjata on 27 Nov.

SEDGE WARBLER *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

- 1975: spring passage from 22 Mar.-29 May, with most between mid-Apr. and mid-May, when recorded almost daily. Usually single figures, but 20+ were at Lunzjata and 10+ at Xemxija on 15 Apr. A very late bird was at Wied il-Luq on 14 Jun. Only 5 autumn records: singles on 21-22 Aug., 5th and 20 Sep., and 7 Nov.
- 1976: 2 on 20 Mar., then in single or very low double figures on 25 days from 31 Mar.-26 May, max. 21 on 4 Apr. In autumn 1-3 on 5 scattered days from 7 Aug.-22 Sep., then almost daily from 8-23 Oct. max. 33 on 10th. 1 on 1 Nov.

REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

- 1975: exceptionally early bird at Lunzjata on 11-15 Feb. As usual, very few in spring; 9 records of 1-3 birds from 28 Mar.-12 May, with most in May. Autumn passage from 7 Aug.-21 Oct., almost daily in the first two months. Single figures with up to 10 occasionally at Wied il-Luq and Girgenti.
- 1976: singles on 4th and 6 Apr., 7 (at Buskett) on 10th and 4 on 15 May, and singles on 6 and 13 Jun. and on 31 Jul. In autumn up to 10 very frequently from 5 Aug.-20 Nov. (on 51 days).

GREAT REED WARBLER *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

- 1975: 1 on 30 Mar., then almost daily from 8 Apr.-10 May, with occasional birds till 31st. Singles figures, except for influx on 15 Apr., when 20+ were at Xemxija and 10+ at Lunzjata. 1 at Wied il-Luq on 13 Jul., then almost daily from 3 Aug.-12 Sep., mainly at Wied il-Luq and Girgenti where up to 5 present. Singles on 6 days between 24 Sep. and 10 Nov. with 2 on last date. 1 trapped and ringed at Girgenti on 12 Dec.
- 1976: spring passage: 1-6 on 29 days from 30 Mar.-17 May. In autumn 1-9 on 19 scattered days from 18 Aug.-2 Nov.

OLIVACEOUS WARBLER *Hippolais pallida*

- 1975: An adult bird, belonging to the race *opaca*, was trapped and ringed at Qbajjar on 25 Aug.

ICTERINE WARBLER *Hippolais icterina*

- 1975: spring passage from 27 Apr.-26 May, single figures almost daily with max. of 20 at Buskett on 17th and 15 at Wied il-Kbir on 6th. In autumn recorded on most days from 9 Aug.-27 Sep., with a concentration during the last ten days of August, but only in low single figures.
- 1976: 1 on 4 Apr., then almost daily from 3-27 May, max. 40+ on 16 May. In autumn 1-4 in 14 scattered days from 8 Aug.-28 Sep., then daily from 7-17 Oct. max. 13 on 10th.

MARMORA'S WARBLER *Sylvia sarda*

- 1975: 1 was taken from Zonqor Pt. (M'Scala) on 26 Feb.
- 1976: 1 at Miziep on 16 Nov.

DARTFORD WARBLER *Sylvia undata*

- 1975: recorded from several areas in Jan.-Feb., with up to 4 at Ghadira, 1 at Xemxija, 3 at Salina, 2 at Marsalforn/Qbajjar and 1 at Bugibba. Last was 1 at Ghadira on 8 Mar. Up to 2 again at Ghadira from 19 Dec.
- 1976: singles at Mellieha on 7 Nov. and at Salina on 13th and at Qbajjar on 29-30 Dec.

SPECTACLED WARBLER *Sylvia conspicillata*

- 1975: common and breeding as usual.
- 1976: present in usual numbers. 40+ at Tal-Handaq on 9 May was the highest for any one locality.

SUBALPINE WARBLER *Sylvia cantillans*

- 1975: spring passage from 11 Mar.-5 May, mainly late Mar.-mid-Apr. Only low single figures. As usual autumn passage much heavier, recorded from 13 Jul.-11 Oct., daily in Aug.-Sep. with double figures (up to 50) in several areas regularly.
- 1976: singles on 29 Feb. and 19 Mar., then almost daily from 24 Mar.-19 Apr. in single or very low double figures and 1-8 on 7 scattered days in May till 25th. Autumn movement started with 2 on 18th, 1 on 25th and 3 on 28 Jul. Then daily from 3 Aug.-20 Sep. and almost daily till 9 Oct.; on 3 other days till 24 Oct. Single or low double figures with peaks of 36-58 from 20-26 Sep. and 58-125 from 8-11 Oct.

SARDINIAN WARBLER *Sylvia melanocephala*

Widespread and breeding as usual in both years.

RUPPELL'S WARBLER *Sylvia rueppelli*

- 1976: Unusual influx: first 1 at B'bugia on 14 Mar., then singles on 8 days from 27 Mar.-6 Apr.

ORPHEAN WARBLER *Sylvia hortensis*

- 1975: 1 ringed at Wied Znuber on 10 May.
- 1976: 1 ringed at Salina on 8 May.

LESSER WHITETHROAT *Sylvia curruca*

- 1976: singles at Mellieha on 4 Apr.; at Wied il-Luq on 25th and at Salina on 26 Sep.; at Ramla Valley on 2nd, at Rabat on 15th, at Wied Znuber on 24th and at Dwejra (Gozo) on 29 Oct.; at Ghadira on 1st and at Lunzjata on 27 Nov.

WHITETHROAT *Sylvia communis*

- 1975: almost daily from 28 Mar.-26 May with most from mid-Apr. to mid-May. Usually single figures but 50+ were at Lunzjata on 5th and 35+ at Wied il-Kbir on 7 May. Very few in autumn with 1-3 on 9 days between 22 Aug. and 8 Sep., and singles on 20-21 Sep. and 9 Oct.

1976: spring passage from 28 Mar.-4 Jun. with 1-11 on 32 evenly scattered days. In autumn singles on 20th and 25 Aug., then 1-4 from 8-15 Sep., with a single on 27 Sep.; then again from 8-22 Oct., max. 21 on first day. 1 at Lunzjata on 1 Nov.

GARDEN WARBLER *Sylvia borin*

1975: almost daily from 8 Apr.-1 Jun., with low double figures, highest 30, throughout most of May. As usual, autumn passage much heavier being daily from 7 Aug.-7 Oct. with a few till 25th. Double figures in most areas in late Aug.-early Oct. with max. of 80 at Buskett on 12 Sep.

1976: singles on 7 scattered days from 31 Mar., then almost daily from 23 Apr. till 27 May frequently in low double figures with a max. of 82 on 15 May. Single singing at Mdina on 13-14 Jul. In autumn almost daily from 7 Aug.-1 Nov. in single or low double figures but with peaks of 90-80+ from 7-12 Sep.

BLACKCAP *Sylvia atricapilla*

1975: widespread in Jan.-Mar. with treble figures at Buskett, Mdina and Girgenti. As usual, numbers gradually built up, reaching a peak in mid-Mar. with max. of 1000 at Buskett on 19th and 300 at Mdina on 22nd. A few passage birds throughout April, the last on the 20th. An exceptionally early bird (a female) at Mgarr ix-Xini on 22 Aug. First autumn migrants on 13 Sep., but no double figures before early Nov. By mid-Dec. numbers increased to about 80 at Buskett.

1976: in several places in Jan.-Apr. till 19th mainly at areas with ivy. Monthly peaks at Buskett: 80+ on 11 Jan., 100+ on several days in Feb., 300+ on 19 Mar. and 50 on 3 Apr. Singles on 6 days in Sep. from 15th, then almost daily till Dec. Single figures in Oct. going up to double figures in Nov./Dec. with a max. of 70+ on 19 Dec.

BONELLI'S WARBLER *Phylloscopus bonelli*

1975: a good year with 19 records of 1-3 birds on 16 days from 9 Apr.-18 May with most in mid-late Apr. 1 at Ghadira on 4 Oct. was the only autumn record.

1976: 1-3 on 11 dates from 28 Mar.-16 Apr. but 6 at Lunzjata on 10 Apr. 1 on 10th and 2 on 12 May. Singles in Sep. on 9th, and 23-28th.

WOOD WARBLER *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

1975: 1 on 29 Mar., then daily from 9 Apr.-11 May, with a few irregularly till 28th. Low double figures (max. 30) in various localities on several days. Autumn passage, 9 Aug.-19 Oct., much smaller with several days without records. Max. was 8 at Girgenti on 30 Aug.

1976: spring passage almost daily from 27 Mar.-25 May in single figures or up to 20, but higher around mid-Apr. with a max. of 108+ on 15th counted at 6 localities. In autumn 1-2 on 6 scattered days from 7-28 Aug., then up to 10 almost daily from 5 Sep.-1 Nov. with higher numbers from 9-22 Oct. with a max. of 150+ on 10th counted at 8 localities.

CHIFFCHAFF *Phylloscopus collybita*

- 1975: double figures everywhere till mid-Mar. when numbers decreased, then mainly single figures till 4 Apr. Max. estimates were 150+ at Buskett on 11th and 100+ at Lunzjata on 2nd, both dates in Jan. A late bird was singing at Ghadira on 18 Apr. An exceptionally early bird was at Lunzjata on 24 Sep., then, after 1 on 11th, daily from 19 Oct. onwards. First double figures recorded on 1 Nov. reaching Jan. levels by mid-Dec.
- 1976: very common in Jan. till 3 Apr. with double figures at several localities and up to 150+ at Lunzjata, 1-2 till 11 Apr. and a very late bird at Sarraflu on 10 May. In autumn first on 3 Oct. then daily from 16th onwards in double figures at several localities.

WILLOW WARBLER *Phylloscopus trochilus*

- 1975: singles on 11th and 14th, then almost daily from 22 Mar.-10 May, with late birds on 17th and 26 May. Single or low double figures with a max. of 20 in various localities on several days. Autumn passage from 3 Aug.-11 Oct., mainly late Aug.-late Sep. Slightly smaller numbers than in spring.
- 1976: spring passage from 18 Mar.-23 May, almost daily from 27 Mar.-4 May; single or very low double figures, highest a total of 65 at 4 localities on 3 Apr. In autumn from 12 Aug., then daily from 20 Aug. and almost daily from 19 Sep. till 23 Oct. Daily counts less than 20 except 78+ on 10th and 23 on 11 Oct. 1 at Ghadira on 1 Nov. was rather late.

GOLDCREST *Regulus regulus*

- 1975: low single figures recorded regularly in Jan.-Mar. to 24th, mainly at Buskett, Girgenti and Rabat. Larger numbers in autumn from 14 Oct. onwards, when recorded in many localities. Highest were 10+ at Buskett on 28 Nov.
- 1976: 1-4 at various localities from Jan. till 6 Mar. and on 1-3 Apr. Then 1-2 on 4 dates in Nov.

FIRECREST *Regulus ignicapillus*

- 1975: In larger numbers and more widespread than *Regulus regulus* from Jan.-2 Apr. Then again from 9 Oct. onwards, with a max. 6 at Buskett on 14 Oct.
- 1976: 1-2 at a few localities in Jan. till 14 Mar. An unusual bird (was recorded) at Rabat from 4 Jun.-8 Oct. 1-3 from 8 Oct. onwards at various localities.

GOLDCREST/FIRECREST *Regulus Sp.*

- 1975: Up to 10 in many areas in Jan.-Apr. to 10th and again from 9 Oct. onwards.
- 1976: Up to 10 in various localities from Jan.-Mar. and singles on 4 scattered dates in April. Almost daily from 11 Oct. onwards with a max. of 25 (20 at Buskett) on 14 Nov.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER *Muscicapa striata*

1975: spring passage from 13 Apr.-27 May, with a peak in late Apr.-early May, when high double figures recorded. Max. was 150+ at Wied il-Kbir on 7 May. Autumn passage much smaller with singles on 7 days in Aug from 3rd., then low single figures (but 10 at Buskett on 22 Sep.) daily from 3 Sep.-4 Oct. Last were singles on 4 dates from 20 Oct.-24 Nov. There were no breeding records.

1976: 4 on 4 Apr., then almost daily from 14 Apr.-27 May. Single figures in Apr. and early May with low double figures on most days from 6-19 May, max. 45+ on 9th. Pair nested at Buskett in June and 1-3 there on several dates in July. 1-3 on 5 scattered days, most at Buskett in Aug., then very frequent from 2 Sep.-22 Oct. in single figures but 15 on 8 Sep. and 12-34 on 8-10 Oct.

RED-BREASTED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula parva*

1975: a rather poor year with 1-3 at Buskett from 18-24 Sep., followed by singles in Oct. at Ghadira and at Girgenti on 4th, at Xemxija on 5th and again at Girgenti on 12th.

1976: 1-5 on 11 days from 8-25 Oct. and singles on 1st and 14 Nov.

EASTERN COLLARED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula semitorquata*

1976: singles at Salina on 25th and at Lunzjata on 30 Mar., at Xemxija on 24 Apr. and at Ghadira on 25 Sep. First records for Malta.

COLLARED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula albicollis*

1975: spring passage from 4 Apr.-5 May: single figures, but 10 at Xemxija on 15-16 Apr. Singles at Buskett on 23 Aug. and 5 Sep. were the only autumn records.

1976: daily from 27 Mar.-8 Apr. with a max. of 20+ on 30th, and 1-6 on 7 scattered days till end of Apr., with singles on 16th and 18 May. Only 1 autumn record: single at Girgenti on 10 Sep.

PIED FLYCATCHER *Ficedula hypoleuca*

1975: spring passage from 29 Mar.-17 May with a peak between mid-Apr. and early May. Low double figures (max. 30) in several localities. 2 were at Wied il-Balluta from 10-16 Jul. and 1 at the Dragonara gardens during the last week of Jul. Autumn passage from 15 Aug.-4 Oct., heavier than usual. The species was recorded almost daily, with up to 6 on a few days.

1976: almost daily from 27 Mar.-25 May mostly in single or very low double figures with a max. of 20+ in 2 localities on 24 Apr. Autumn movement 1-7 on 26 dates from 24 Aug.-10 Oct.

BLUE TIT *Parus caeruleus*

1975: 1 at the Lower Barrakka Gardens, Valletta, on 9 Oct.

PENDULINE TIT *Remiz pendulinus*

1975: 1 taken at Delimara on 11 Apr.

GOLDEN ORIOLE *Oriolus oriolus*

- 1975: spring passage from 13 Apr.-26 May, recorded almost daily with double figures on a few days with max. of 50+ in Gozo on 23 Apr. and at Kuncizzjoni on 5 May. Singles were seen at Buskett and Girgenti on 20 July. In autumn 1 on 10th, then almost daily from 22 Aug.-23 Sep. Only low single figures, with 12 at Buskett on 5 Sep. the only exception.
- 1976: 1-8 on most days from 13 Apr.-25 May, but 22 on 5 May. Singles at Buskett on 5th and 13 Jun. In autumn almost daily from 19 Aug.-25 Sep. (max. 11 on 7 Sep.). 2 on 8 Oct.

RED-BACKED SHRIKE *Lanius collurio*

- 1975: 1 on Comino on 27 Apr. was the only spring record. In autumn 1-2 recorded on 11 dates from 23 Aug.-11 Oct., with most records coming from Buskett.
- 1976: 1 at Xlendi on 21 Aug. then 1-2 on 12 days from 5 Sep.-15 Oct.

LESSER GREY SHRIKE *Lanius minor*

- 1976: singles at Mtahleb and Migra l-Ferha on 8th and 2 at Mtahleb and 1 at Buskett on 9 Sep.

WOODCHAT SHRIKE *Lanius senator*

- 1975: spring passage from 28 Mar.-8 Jun. with most from 9 Apr.-13 May, when recorded almost daily in single figures. An exceptionally large influx took place on 5-7 May with 20+ at Lunzjata on 5th, 25+ at Wied il-Kbir on 6th and 45+ again at Wied il-Kbir on 7th. One at Marsa on 7 May belonged to the race *badius*. A pair bred at Wied Qirda where it was discovered feeding three newly fledged young on 6 Jul.; these were still together at the end of the month. In autumn 1 on 27 Jul., then from 9 Aug.-17 Sep. Only low single figures, with max. of 3 at Girgenti on 22nd.
- 1976: 1-5 almost daily from 2 Apr.-10 May but 20+ at Xrobb l-Ghagin on 26 Apr. 2 on 15th and 1 on 26 May, and 1 on 10 Jun. Pair bred at Luqa where 2 ad. and 3 newly-fledged young were present on 14 Jul. 2 ad. and an immature were seen together at Buskett on 21 Aug. Autumn movement on 18 days with 1-8 from 13 Aug.-3 Oct. but most on 21-26 Aug. and 9-15 Sep.

CARRION/HOODED CROW *Corvus corone*

- 1976: 1 belonging to the race *cornix* at Buskett on 18 May. Last documented record of this race was in 1914.

STARLING *Sturnus vulgaris*

- 1975: double or treble figures in a few areas till mid-Mar. with up to 750 at Hal Far and 500 at Luqa. A flock of ca. 200 built up at Buskett in late Feb. Last was 1 on 5 Apr. Singles at Girgenti on 25 May and over Qormi on 18 Jun. In autumn 3 on 7th, then from 29 Sep. onwards. Largest



flock recorded again at Hal Far: 3000+ on 1 Nov., but only 1000+ were there by end of Dec.

- 1976: Up to 1500+ in Jan.-Feb. Up to 20 in Mar. and singles on 4-5 Apr. and at Salina on 5 Jul. Almost daily with up to 25+ in Sep. from 11th, then daily Oct.-Dec., highest 800+ on 8th and 2300+ on 24 Oct.

SPANISH SPARROW *Passer hispaniolensis*

Abundant as usual in both years.

TREE SPARROW *Passer montanus*

1975: small numbers breeding in several areas as usual. 50+ over Mellieha on 26 Oct. were the only evidence of autumn passage during this year. A hybrid *P. hispaniolensis* X *P. montanus* was trapped and ringed at Hal Far on 7 Dec.

1976: breeding as usual in several localities. Influxes noted in Oct. with 100+ at Xemxija on 11th, highest.

CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs*

1975: single or low double figures (max. 20) in several localities in Jan.-Mar. Smaller number in Apr. to 20th, with a final bird on 3 May. In Jul.-Sep. 1-3 regularly, mainly at Buskett and at Girgenti, but 9 were at Buskett on 5 Sep. First true autumn migrant probably on 28 Sep., with the main passage from mid-Oct. to mid-Nov. Max. was 400 over Gozo on 27 Oct. Numbers reduced to low double figures in Dec.

1976: single or low double figures throughout Jan.-Mar., in smaller numbers till 25 Apr. 1-4 on 6 dates in May and 1-3 on 9 dates in June. Up to 15+ at Buskett on several days in Jul. and almost daily in Aug. and Sep. Numbers increasing in the last quarter frequently in medium double figures. 2 ad. and 2 juv. at Salina on 30 May, 3 males holding territory at Buskett in late Jun. and 3 fully fledged young with a pair of adults at Buskett on 26 Aug. suggest breeding.

BRAMBLING *Fringilla montifringilla*

1975: small influx in late Oct. with singles daily on 22-25th and 8 on 26th. 2 on 7th and 1 on 10th in Dec.

1976: single at Buskett from 14-24 Aug. and at Xemxija on 23-24 Oct.

SERIN *Serinus serinus*

1975: low double figures (max. 50) in Jan.-Mar., then single figures on most days till 5 May. At least 1 pair bred at Buskett where 3 newly fledged juveniles were being fed on 9 May. In Jun.-Sep. records also came from Ramla Bay, Ghadira, Girgenti and Chadwick Lakes, juveniles seen in the last two places. Few passage birds from 1 Nov.; single figures being recorded on 14 days.

1976: up to 10 at various localities throughout Jan.-Mar. 1-3 on 5 days in Apr., 2 at Salina on 11 May and 2 at Buskett on 18 Jul. 1-2 on 4 scattered days in Aug. and singles on 1-10 Sep. and 8 Oct. Then 1-5 almost daily from 22 Oct. onwards with up to 15+ in Dec. Small influxes in Gozo in Dec.

GREENFINCH *Carduelis chloris*

- 1975: single figures (except for 19 on 3rd) on a few days in Jan. to 26th, then on 13 days from 11 Mar.-26 Apr., with max. of 10 at Hal Far on 25 Mar. 1 on 20 Sep., then single figures from 24 Oct. onwards, but with a peak between late Oct. and mid-Nov.
- 1976: on 5 dates from 1-25 Jan. max. 15+ on last date; 2-4 at Ngieret on 4 dates in Feb.; up to 5 on 8 dates throughout Mar.; 1-4 on 4 dates in Apr.; and singles on 12th and 17 May, 2nd and 18 Jul., 13 Aug. and on 4 scattered days in Sep. Frequently recorded in Oct.-Dec. in single or very low double figures, highest 22 in one day.

GOLDFINCH *Carduelis carduelis*

- 1975: 1-5 on 5 days in Jan.-Feb. and 1-2 on 4 days between 29 Mar. and 16 Apr. First in autumn on 29 Oct. with 1-3 daily till 2 Nov. then 1 on 25th. Small influx in mid-Dec. with 12 on 14th, 6 on 15th and 8 on 18th.
- 1976: 1 on 10 Jan., then up to 5 on 6 dates in Feb. from 9th; 1 on 14 Mar.; 4 on 4 Apr. and singles on 24 Jun. and on 11th and 13 Aug. Then in single or very low double figures frequently from 16 Oct. onwards with a max. of 25+ at Rabat on 19 Dec. Small influxes in Gozo in Dec.

SISKIN *Carduelis spinus*

- 1975: 2 on 4 Feb., and singles on 16 Mar. and 5 Apr. Influxes from 25 Oct.-8 Nov., with 100+ on 27th and 60+ on 31st highest. Then 2 on 16th and 4 on 29 Nov., and 30+ on 18 Dec.
- 1976: 1 at Buskett on 18 Jan., 6 at Salina on 4th, and 3 and 1 at Buskett on 7th and 29 Feb. respectively. 4 at Victoria on 2nd and 1 at Ta' Qali on 14 May. 2 ad. and a juv. at Buskett on 3 Jul. suggesting breeding. Singles at Rabat on 5th and at Buskett on 18 Sep., and 2 at Rabat on 29 Oct. and 1 Nov.

LINNET *Carduelis cannabina*

- 1975: low-medium double figures in Jan.-May to 4th, with a max. of 100 at Xemxija on 28 Feb. 1-2 in several areas in Aug.-Sep. First autumn migrants from 19 Oct., with a peak in late Oct. and early Nov., max. 250 over Mellieha on 26th. Smaller numbers after mid-Nov. but up to 200 at some roosts.
- 1976: up to medium double figures throughout Jan.-Apr. 1-3 on 4 scattered days in May. Up to 5 at Ghajn Barrani, Gozo, in Aug. and early Sep. Then almost daily from Oct. onwards frequently in low-medium double figures but with a max. of 370+ on 24 Oct.

CROSSBILL *Loxia curvirostra*

- 1975: 1 juv. at Buskett on 8 Aug.

TRUMPETER FINCH *Bucanetes githagineus*

- 1976: 1 at San Lawrenz on 15 Jul.

SCARLET ROSEFINCH *Carpodacus erythrinus*

- 1976: 2 at Santa Marija Estate, Mellieha, on 27 Sep.

HAWFINCH *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

1975: 1 on 24 Mar., then 1-2 on 26th and 31 Oct., 1 Nov., 4th and 18 Dec.

1976: 1-3 from 3rd to 8th and 5 during the last week of Oct. in Gozo and 1-2 on 1st, 2nd and 14 Nov.

LAPLAND BUNTING *Calcarius lapponicus*

1975: 1 trapped and ringed at Lunzjata on 2 Nov.

SNOW BUNTING *Plectrophenax nivalis*

1975: 1 at Ta' Zuta on 8 Dec.

1976: 2 taken near M'Scala in Nov.

YELLOWHAMMER *Emberiza citrinella*

1975: 1 trapped at San Blas (Gozo) during the last week of Oct. and 1 at Delimara on 27 Nov.

ORTOLAN BUNTING *Emberiza hortulana*

1975: 2 on 29 Mar. and singles on 19th and 26 Apr.

1976: unusual large influx from 27-29 Mar. with 200+ in Gozo on 28th, 100+ at Mellieha from 28 Mar.-4 Apr. 1 at Sarraflu on 9 Sep.

CRETZSCHMAR'S BUNTING *Emberiza caesia*

1976: 1 at the end of March at Lunzjata.

RUSTIC BUNTING *Emberiza rustica*

1975: 1 trapped and ringed at Lunzjata on 3 Nov.

1976: 1 trapped and ringed at Lunzjata on 13 Oct.

YELLOW-BREASTED BUNTING *Emberiza aureola*

1975: ad. male trapped in Gozo on 17 Nov.

REED BUNTING *Emberiza schoeniclus*

1975: singles at M'Scala on 5 Jan. and 3 Mar. An unusually large influx in autumn, with regular records from 25 Oct. to 30 Nov. Birds were recorded at Girgenti (max. 5 on 6th), at Lunzjata (max. 15 on 1st-3rd), Salina (max. 14 on 12th), Ghadira and Xemxija (singles).

1976: 1 at Lunzjata on 2nd, 2 at Qormi on 20th, 1 at Xemxija on 21st and 1 at Lunzjata on 28th, all in Nov.

BLACK-HEADED BUNTING *Emberiza melanocephala*

1976: 1 taken at tas-Silg on 14 Apr.

CORN BUNTING *Miliaria calandra*

1975: breeding in usual numbers. In flocks of up to 40 in June and Sep.

1976: breeding in usual numbers. Flocks of up to 80+ in the hot months near water holes at Buskett, Ramla Valley, Lunzjata and Dwejra (Gozo).

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The Council would like to inform you that at an extraordinary meeting of the Malta Ornithological Society held on Thursday, 26th October, 1978, it was unanimously decided that as from 1st November 1978, the Malta Ornithological Society will be known as THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

This change had to be effected because of an Act passed in the Maltese Parliament — Act XXII of 1978 which controls the use of the words 'Malta' and 'Nation' and their derivatives. All local non government organisations were not given permission to use such words or their derivatives in their title.

We would like to stress that the aims and principles, constitution, officials and official address remain the same as before.

Kindly amend your records accordingly.