

First confirmed record of Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus* (Desfontaines, 1789) in Malta

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On 14 April 2017 at 18.15 CET, the authors observed a Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus* at Buskett. The location where the observation took place was on the road east of Verdala Palace, 100 metres east of the chapel Il-Kappella ta' San Nikola u Santa Luċija. The bird flew from Verdala Palace at a height of roughly 30 to 40 metres, and headed east towards Żebbuġ/Siggiewi. It was observed for about 30 seconds with binoculars. In the bright sunlight the silvery-grey plumage, black wingtips and black shoulders of an adult specimen were clearly visible. The closest distance between the observers and the bird was approximately 100 metres. One of the authors managed to record a short video of the bird in flight. Alexander Heyd knows the species from several birding trips to Spain, Morocco and Egypt, as well as from a recent holiday in January 2017 to South Africa. Fabian Karwinkel had no previous experience with the species, but was able to identify it easily due to the clearly visible characteristics. The authors submitted their observation to the Malta Rarities and Records Committee (MRRC), and the record was accepted on the 15 February 2018.

Fenech (2010, 2017) had mentioned two previous sightings and one "confirmed record" in the Maltese Islands in 2016. However, these records were not backed up with any photographic evidence or descriptions, nor were the records officially submitted to the MRRC. Therefore, the observation at hand constitutes the first confirmed record of the species for the Maltese Islands.

The nominate race of the Black-winged Kite is native to the Western Iberian Peninsula, SW France, as well as Northern and Sub-Saharan Africa. The breeding grounds of the species closest to Malta are located in Tunisia. Rather than being migratory or sedentary, Black-winged Kites are known to perform nomadic movements according to abundance and distribution of their prey. They have been reported as vagrants in a number of European countries outside their breeding range (Kemp *et al.* 2019).

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