



BirdLife Malta Bird Ringing Scheme

Report to EURING General Meeting 2009

History Set up in 1965 the BirdLife Malta bird ringing scheme has been actively ringing birds in Malta for the past 44 years. The ringing scheme is run solely by BirdLife Malta, with ringing licenses being issued by the local environment protection agency as well as the Commissioner of Police.

Staff BirdLife Malta ringing scheme has no full time staff

Ringers BirdLife Malta has currently twenty licensed bird ringers. As reported above none of these ringers' works full time with BirdLife Malta so ringing is carried out quite sporadically, though there is full participation in ongoing projects. The ringers pay a nominal annual fee of EURO 20 that is collected by BirdLife Malta in order to purchase rings. Rings are very much heavily subsidized by BirdLife Malta. Ringers purchase all equipment, including mist nets using their own funds. A fee of EURO 7 is also payable to the Commissioner of Police upon license renewal.

Birds Ringed The average number of birds ringed throughout a calendar year is around 12,000 birds. To date around 445,000 birds of 190 species have been ringed. Usually the commonest species ringed are, though not necessary in this order, the Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* , Robin *Erithacus rubecula*, Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* and the Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*.

Data collection The ringing data is still in the process of being computerized. This process started around two years, but again with no staff employed to the work much relies on the voluntary work of the ringers themselves. A target for end 2010 has been set for the data of the years 2000 to 2010 to be computerized. To date the group managed to house around 75,000 records.

Projects

- Annual spring and autumn ringing projects on the island of Comino
- Annual visits to the island of Filfla to ring European Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*
- Yelkouan Shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan* life project
- Ghadira and Simar Nature Reserve constant effort sites

Notes 2009 has been, to date, a busy and testing time for BirdLife Malta since at the end of 2008 the Maltese government phased out bird trapping. This created havoc amongst the hunting and trapping fraternity who proposed several remedies to be able to continue trapping, amongst which the setting up of a new ringing scheme run by the trappers themselves. EURING have been extremely helpful in exerting pressure on the Maltese government to ensure that BirdLife Malta ringing scheme remains the only local ringing group, as the one fully recognized by EURING itself. For the time being the idea seems to have been put to rest, though it is sure that more work will need to be done to ensure the above scenario never happens. BirdLife Malta also intends to organize training courses, in small numbers, for those trappers who are genuinely interested to take on bird ringing.