



40th Anniversary edition

OFF THE GROUND AND FLYING FOR FORTY YEARS *from the President of LIPU.*

Forty years ago a small group of dedicated conservationists, both Italian and British, concerned at the systematic destruction of bird life in Italy, came together to form the National League Against the Destruction of Birds. The league eventually became LIPU.

Today we can reflect and testify that the ideas of these visionary people were right and just. Thousands, perhaps millions of hours, spanning three generations, have been spent by volunteers doing bird census counts, promoting ornithology in the schools, legally confronting dangerous, armed poachers, and collecting signatures for the referendum against hunting.

No less useful, perhaps indispensable, has been the support of our members - today more than 30,000. People who by means of a signature or a small donation gave support in the 1990s to the petition for saving the marmot from being hunted in the Alps. People who recently collected

200,000 signatures to lobby Parliament against relaxing the hunting laws.

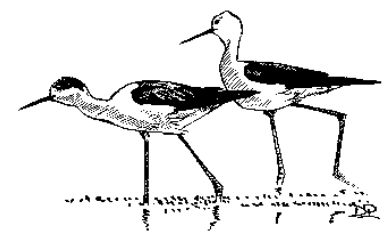
LIPU has come a long way, thanks to help of many friends, some of whom are no longer with us. I will never forget President Mario Pastore who steered LIPU along at a time when it was undergoing rapid expansion.

When LIPU was founded, the hunters comprised an army of 2,000,000 misguided individuals who operated without regulations. Today their number is 800,000 and some of their groups actually do talk about ecology and habitat conservation. The infamous, now obsolete, Testo Unico ruling of 1977, that still permitted catching birds and hunting till springtime, has been, due to our achievement, superseded by the 1992 restrictive regulations.

1992 and 2000 saw further legislation; this time with regard to Nature Reserves. LIPU manages a network of conservation areas. We can say with certainty, that birds in Italy are far better protected now than forty years ago. But much remains to be done.

The world today confronts an emergency problem on a global scale, caused by the growth in the human population and its ever-increasing consumption of natural resources.

The conservation of birds is related to these dynamics. LIPU working within Bird Life International, which it helped to found, must therefore widen its horizons. In Italy we need further restrictions on poaching, we must ensure no new laws hinder progress, and we need to promote more education about the problems that face us. But international policies are important, too. The ecological environment of emerging countries must be considered and also the extent to which our economy can help them. Above all we must maintain our enthusiasm. The solid roots are there. We just need the conviction that we can do even better in the future.



A STORY OF PASSION AND ACTION

by Elena D'Andrea

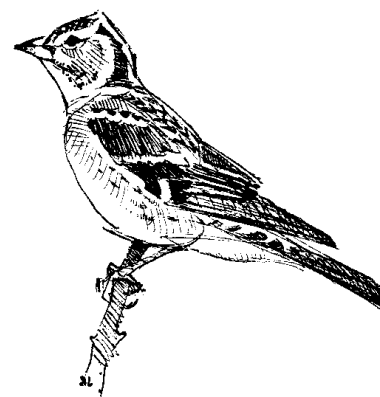
Tireless and determined: such are the LIPU members and volunteers who have written the history of the first 40 years of LIPU.

Talking to those who have lived through the first years of LIPU one receives a clear and strong impression of activism, dash and commitment, which seems unquenchable. This is the strength of those who believe in the value of protecting nature, in the importance of birds and of the whole of our natural environment.

The Director General, in this article, looks back over LIPU's forty years under the presidencies of Fulco Pratesi and Mario Pastore together with a reminder of the link with the British support via the Anglo-Italian Society for the Protection of Animals. She reflects on the continuing growth of the League to its present 30,000 plus members and charts its underlying strengths built on its policy of continuing communal action.

"Today for the first time we have gone past the threshold of 30,000 members. We do this at a time in which the general situation and the economic life of the country are in difficulties with powerful social and political tensions. In this respect, we can give to this result a further significance as if from our 30,107 members had come the unequivocal message to carry on our work with

seriousness, determination and firmness. LIPU's mission is not in question: we can review our working practices to increase our effectiveness and define our specific objectives with greater reference to the present time but the original idea of the "group" and the "spirit" remain fundamental to what we do. Ever growing numbers in our membership will be crucial if we are to count for more at the tables where we sit ever more frequently with politicians and parliamentarians to discuss the laws which are decisive in the protection of the environment and of birds. Crucial too if we are to become economically independent, strong and capable of investing in those areas where no others find any "interest": in activities which often fall outside the laws of the market but which for us assume the greatest significance. Such are our projects for birds threatened with extinction, for the natural reserves and areas important for birds, our campaigns to change agricultural practices and those against poaching and to promote the necessary policing. Such also are the projects in favour of environmental education and the diffusion of an ecological culture that can change attitudes and opinions at all levels. This, and so much else, is what we shall have to do and what we insist with the utmost determination on continuing to do. Because we believe, along with all our members, in a world rich in biodiversity, where people and nature live in harmony, in a balanced and sustainable way.

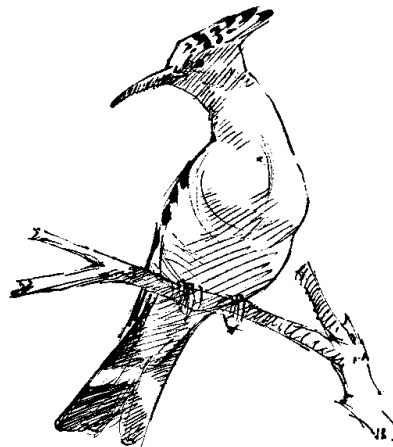


TIMELINE LIPU

- 1965 In reaction to the Italian Government's use of the hunting lobby as consultants on the issue of bird protection, a small group of nature lovers, backed by the Anglo-Italian Society for the Protection of Animals, form The National League Against the Destruction of Birds.
- 1970 The Italian Government decriminalises the catching of birds in nets. LENACDU has 3000 members but sends out 800,000 letters of protest.
- 1974 LENACDU becomes LIPU – La Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli.
- 1975 The Centre for Raptor Rescue is opened in Parma, the first "hospital" in Italy for wild animals.
- 1977 LIPU fights for the passing of the Law (no. 968) on hunting. Wild animals become part of the National heritage and the legal persecution of birds of prey ceases.

- 1978 Start of action to defend migrating birds of prey in the Messina Straits.
- 1979 LIPU collaborates with the EU on the promulgation of the Directive on the Protection of Avian Wildlife. The first LIPU Oasis at Crava Morozzo opens its gates.
- 1986 At the Stork CENTRE of Racking the first baby stork is hatched. The White Stork returns to nest in Italy.
- 1991 LIPU collaborates in the launch of the Quadro Law on National Parks. There is a fierce battle over the Tuscan Archipelago, which in 1996 will become a National Park.
- 1992 Passing of the law (no. 157) on hunting activities to which LIPU made a fundamental contribution. In the campaign to protect the Marmot, the Brambling and the Chaffinch and birds on migration, LIPU collects 300,000 signatures.
- 1993 The International Council for the Protection of Birds changes to Birdlife International and LIPU is chosen as the Italian partner. Birdlife becomes the biggest association in the world for the protection of birds with 100 nations represented in all continents.

- 2001/2 Lobbying to stop the bill proposing to put hunting under regional control, to open the National Parks to hunting activity and to change the rules governing the environment.
- 2004 200,000 signatures are collected to say NO to the deregulation of hunting and YES to the protection of wild animals, defending Law 157/92.



**KEYWORD:
CONSERVATION!**

by Claudio Celada and Marco Gustin

Since its beginning, conserving Italian birds has been one of LIPU's principal missions. Complex and disparate conservation methods have been used in order to accomplish this objective: safeguarding habitats and sites, influencing political decisions concerning environmental issues, raising public awareness, and direct conservation action on the species.

LIPU's single-species conservation plans have followed three main points: 1) The necessity of regular monitoring of the conservation status of all bird species and their habitats; 2) The creation of National Action Plans for the most threatened species, with the aim of identifying the main risks concerning their conservation; 3) Reintroduction of a locally extinct species (only as a last resort and after all other options have been considered). Thanks to this logical approach, LIPU has made, in the past 25 years, a substantial and continuous difference in bird conservation, in particular where threatened species are concerned.

Through specific National Action Plans (such as White Stork and Corncrake), and International Action Plans (such as the Lanner Falcon), LIPU has learnt to deal more effectively with the conservation of different species.

The Griffon Vulture is one of LIPU's symbolic species. This bird has been on the verge of extinction in Italy since the early 1980s. At the end of that decade, LIPU began a reintroduction programme of this bird of prey, starting with its release in Sardinia. Thanks to this project, the Sardinian population of Griffon Vultures doubled in number, reaching 40 breeding pairs after only 10 years. In the period 2000-2002 the project was extended to Sicily, where LIPU released 29 individuals in a joint effort with Parco dei Nebrodi, and Parco delle Madonie. The aim of this project was to establish a self-sufficient and persistent

population of Griffon Vultures, after their extinction from the island in 1965.

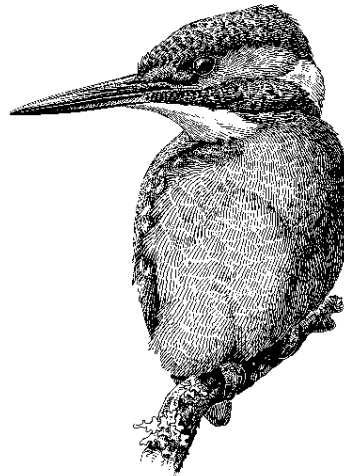
The wetland areas in the east of Sicily have been the setting of another reintroduction programme focusing on a rare species, the Purple Swamp Hen or Gallinule (*Porphyrio porphyrio*). Twenty-six out of the 92 reintroduced individuals were released at Biviera di Gela, while the other 66 birds were released at the Simento estuary. In 2004, after 40 years since its extinction, the breeding population of Purple Swamp-hen/Gallinule was estimated to be 25-35 pairs.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the ongoing reintroduction programme involving the White-headed Duck in the Gargano National Park, and the project on White Stork, which has contributed to the positive population trend of this rare bird in the north of Italy.

Reintroduction of rare species, however, is not the only way to conserve them. Long-term monitoring schemes are also important conservation tools. One such example is the 25-year-long monitoring project on the Sardinian colony of Eleonora's Falcon at Carloforte, started in 1980. This monitoring scheme has contributed to an increase in the current population of about 100-130 pairs, making it the second most important population of Eleonora's Falcons in Italy.

However, LIPU's conservation actions do not focus solely on rare species. Widespread species

are also at the centre of conservation policies. Farmland birds, in particular, have been suffering from an ecologically unsustainable modern agriculture system, which is why LIPU established in 2002 a specific sector for agriculture.



The anti-hunting pioneers

by *Daniilo Selvaggi & Marco Gustin*

The anti-hunting pioneers

Judging by the name with which it was born, LENACDU, (Lega Nazionale Contro la Distruzione degli Uccelli - the National League Against the Destruction of Birds), it seems obvious that LIPU's primary aim is to oppose hunting. A task which was even more demanding in the 60s, given that the number of hunters was then much higher (more than 2 million) and that this phenomenon was widely practised and pervaded the Italian culture. Hunting was an activity poorly regulated by rather feeble laws. The mission of LIPU's pioneers in fighting hunting was well thought out: there was a need to influence public opinion towards

a change in attitude and to replace the hunting regulations with wildlife conservation policies. It was, in fact, law 17/70 which brought about a definitive ban on bird slaughter, an appalling practice that LIPU had vigorously opposed. It was the period during which LIPU promoted birdwatching, introduced the issue of wild birds in education programmes and protested at the mass destruction of wild birds "by the shotgun". This work paid dividends, given that 1977 saw the advent of the new and more stringent law 968/77, which introduced the historic definition of 'wild animals' (directly relating to the protection of birds) and which must have appeared, in those days, as utterly bizarre. Nevertheless there was a need for action towards the evolution of legislation for the protection of wild animals, from "prehistoric" regulation to advanced and intelligent laws.

The evolution of laws

In the early days of LIPU, the law regulating hunting dated back to 1939 (law no. 1016). However, two later laws brought about important changes, first in 1967 (law no. 799) then in 1970 (law no. 17). This meant that wildlife came to be considered as 'non-disposable state heritage'. Until then it had been considered as "res nullius" - belonging to no one). No to poaching!!

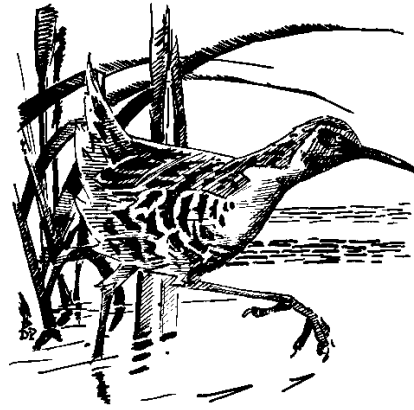
How can we forget LIPU's long battles against poaching? From the *bresciano* fields to those in the *Stretto di Messina* and in the *Campania* region, from the

activities of the anti-poaching guards to the tireless work of the rescue Centres - 40 years of successes and disappointments, of tears and successful gambles. Forty years of commitment by thousands of people, members, activists; all friends of LIPU and of nature, who demonstrated that the founding of LIPU was a tremendous idea, a necessary risk and a 'natural' duty.

Referenda and law 157

More than 1 million hunters, many of them poachers, persevering in illegal practices, represent an intolerable threat and impact on already fragile wildlife. This triggered two referenda, one in the 80s, halted by the Constitutional Court and the second, which reached the last stage with a strong majority of votes, but which was quashed due to the quorum number not being reached by a very narrow margin. The commitment of LIPU on those occasions was huge: stalls, committees, fund raising, fierce exchanges with the opposition, including 'physical' conflict. In spite of these defeats, the message was clear: Italians were now convinced that the protection of animals should come before entertainment by shotgun. The Birds Directive had already been in place for some years and it reinforced the concept and importance of the protection of birds. Finally, in 1992 came the advent of law 157, still current today. The rest is history: the many attempts to modify it, the preposterous desire to return to the 'dark ages' of free unregulated hunting and the obvious

counter commitment, constant and focused, of LIPU's men and women.



STRATEGIES FOR BIRD CONSERVATION IN THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY

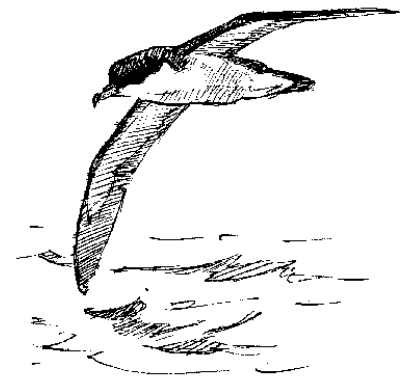
by *Giuliano Tallone*

What will LIPU and BirdLife's conservation strategies be in the coming years? The first step in assigning priorities for action must be to examine the causes of decline in bird species, even though they may be highly complex. Accordingly, BirdLife has used all the science at its disposal to assess the populations and distribution of all 9000 and more species, so that birds are now the best understood of all living organisms, and a yardstick of global biodiversity.

In recent years LIPU's activities have been based both on sites of European importance and on more dispersed, as example rural, habitats, and we have gone beyond Reserves and Recuperation Centres, and the reintroduction of flagship species, to lobby in the wider areas of community

agricultural policy.

The Strategic Document of 1999-2004 attached great importance to these themes and their impact on the activities of the association, and we must decide how best to continue this new path, and channel our activities while adapting to a changing reality. With the fortieth anniversary Assembly in Rome also in mind, we are opening discussions to determine new structures for the association, to regroup the efforts of all its bodies, of local delegations and staff, in a system that will be more flexible and efficient, that will allow the organisation as a whole to move on a united front, while giving greater autonomy at local level, with the solutions arrived at democratically and such that all parties give their unwavering commitment.



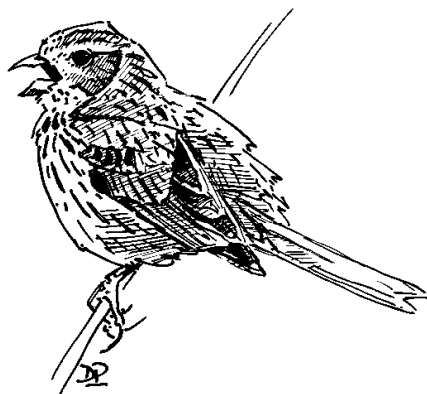
However, our future efforts may best be directed at creating a broader-based environmental culture. We will not be able to resolve problems of bird and nature conservation without a profound cultural shift to a society more sensitive to environmental themes, so that they are

not mere side-issues to those of land, energy and economy, but a principle at the heart of society's values not lightly to be pushed to the sidelines when short-term crises arise. Action is needed so that people at large rank the environment higher on the scale of political priorities, and that it becomes normal to individual behaviour to be more aware of their impact on world resources. The matter is urgent, for this may be the last generation that can moderate the impact of our species, that it may not be marked forever in the geological record as having caused the greatest extinction event of all.

We must also think of concentrating our efforts where they have the greatest impact, in work where biodiversity is both concentrated and threatened, as in the tropics, where forest and coral reef contest with poverty and social and political troubles. LIPU has also to look beyond national boundaries, to the demands on resources of our own economy and whether the growing Italian presence abroad, whether for work or tourism is also impacting on the prospects of species globally.

Our work then must take account of this reality and "go global" in the wider context of BirdLife, so we and our partners must look to invest some of our human and financial base in countries with rich but threatened biological resources. This is not to abandon our traditional activities, but expand them where they will serve. And perhaps our members too, whether birding in the

Caribbean or on the mountains of Patagonia, may give encouragement to those confronting the exploitation of forests and the possible loss of a tenth of all species in the next few years.



OUR EARTH, OUR SKY

Forty diligent years have achieved safe reserves and protected areas

by Ariel Brunner and Ugo Faralli

The first was Crava Morozzo in Piedmont, the latest, "Celestina" near Reggio in Emilia. In between are woods, rivers, marshes, beaches, meadows, pools, coasts, transformed during 40 years of LIPU's lifetime to conservation areas and reserves. Each, from the first years of the 70s, a single battle for a splinter of Nature, to today's system of protected areas from the Alps to Sicily. Thousands of days work by LIPU volunteers, by local authorities, thousands more by LIPU's own primary management guardians, ideas and projects by the public of bird and nature protection, involvement and recognition. Conservation

and awareness, these are the twin pillars of the conservation areas.

The first LIPU conservation areas were in fact created in areas of particular significance, on account of the diversity and richness of animal and plant species, such as the Biviere di Gela in Sicily, the Brabbia marshes in Lombardy and Carloforte in Sardinia. Others were in completely "reconstructed" environments such as Torrile near Parma. Some dozens of LIPU sites scattered throughout Italy were opened to the public, to form the right relationship between man and nature. Green space for schoolchildren, areas for birdwatching, a little "jewel-casket" of biodiversity and an administrative model for public authorities and Parks - a contribution to the safety of the Red Admiral and the Black-winged Stilt, spiders and bitterns, emerald toads and Golden Orioles.

IBA Project

The IBA- Important Bird Areas - project was started in the mid-80s by BirdLife (then known as ICPB) in order to identify, according to consistent scientific criteria, areas vital to bird conservation in Europe. LIPU staff and volunteers collaborated in the publication of the first IBA inventory in 1989. This was followed by a more extensive edition in 2000. IBAs today are recognised as the first priority in bird conservation, and help us to direct strategically our conservation activities. If, in our pioneering days, we often acted somewhat casually, driven by

emotion to relieve a crisis situation, today we are called upon to act strategically to get the best results. IBAs have therefore become a fundamental means to direct our work on all sides. Meanwhile, the IBA project has grown and transcended European boundaries, becoming, in fact, a world priority of BirdLife International in the last decade, with IBAs and published inventories world-wide.

Nature Network 2000

In recent years a new type of protected site has emerged alongside our national conservation areas. These are Nature Networks 2000. Two most important Directives of the EU, the Birds directive (79/409/CEE) and the Habitat Directive (92/43/CEE) actually foreshadow the creation of a pan-European network of sites managed for biodiversity conservation. Over the years it has become more obvious that nature conservation is a global trust concerned with a collective human heritage, and which thus cannot be addressed only at national level. So our parks and reserves have had designations of SIC (Sites of Community Importance), for protection of habitat and plant and animal species, and ZPS (Zones of Special Protection), specifically for bird protection. The Birds directive was introduced in Italy after 13 years' delay, (through Law 157/92, to which LIPU had made a fundamental contribution). The Habitat Directive was also taken up late, after censure in the European Court of Justice. More serious delay, however, concerns the

designation of ZPS, and in this field LIPU made and is making a difference. After several applications to the European Commission and various judgements of the Court, official recognition of the IBA as scientific reference for the application of the Birds directive has been given. Italy was censured in 2003 for not having designated the IBA as ZPS, and is now under threat of severe economic sanctions. It is on record that some Italian Regions have taken measures to comply with the rules, often working with us, not only for designation of sites, but also to institute the right management. The IBAs, born as a technical scientific instrument, are from now on a legal point of reference for courts and institutions.

The Work Continues

The protection of sites has been one of LIPU's strategic activities from its birth, one of the first candles to illuminate the darkness of the barbarity of uncontrolled hunting and the inexorable advance of concrete. The great battle has radically changed the facts, taking Italy towards 10% protected territory, (even if judicial safeguards are not always translated to real conservation on the ground). Today, thanks to our work, Nature Network 2000 spreads beyond national confines to safeguard biodiversity, and IBAs, one of our principal instruments, have legal recognition.

We have come a long way but much remains to do to protect our precious treasures from

assault. We are ready, as always, to take up the challenge.



A "RESPONSIBLE" KIND OF CULTURE

by Marco Dinetti

Over the last century, technological evolution and so-called "progress" have led to changes that can affect and even alter ecosystems. Today we can see that there is no corner of the earth that has not been "touched" by the hand of man. This interference is sometimes the direct result of exploiting natural resources, but in other cases it is caused by ignorance and a lack of awareness. In any case, this negative behaviour, which today has such catastrophic consequences for life on our planet, is conceived by the mind of man. But man can also give rise to positive and constructive attitudes; here lies the great "power", or rather the enormous responsibility that we have today towards our planet.

The mission, and at the same time the challenge of environmental education is to promote the development of this kind of awareness, especially (but not only) in the younger generation. To encourage a child to discover

nature is a simple thing because this is a natural instinct that has evolved biologically. However adults can instil negative attitudes, (such as fear), overturning this instinctive sense of interest, curiosity and love for animals.

Environmental education and LIPU

Environmental education has always been one of the main activities of LIPU. Through environmental education, we are also acting indirectly towards the conservation of biodiversity. We think it is important to make people of all ages aware of, and to encourage them to discover, the nature of their immediate surroundings so that they will feel a sense of respect and responsibility. Environmental education is one of our main concerns, and touches all aspects of our work, whether conservation or promotion. Indeed the activities of the individual sections, reserves and centres largely focus on this, involving a great number of activists. Many of us who now work for LIPU in a professional capacity started in the environmental field as volunteers, giving precisely this kind of talk about nature and birds to schoolchildren.



LIPU has developed many initiatives over the last forty years in the field of environmental education. Birdwatching and nature-photography courses; summer camps for children; work and ecological-activity camps; nature trips, both day-trips and longer; visits to schools; nature trails in parks and reserves. We have also produced various series of booklets, books, educational games and teaching materials that are available on request from the main LIPU shop, local centres or regional offices.



VOLUNTEERS FOR NATURE

by Vittorio Cavallaro

We in Italy are certainly not at the same level of voluntary participation as in Anglo-Saxon countries. In Britain perhaps one person in two is engaged in some form of voluntary work, but in Italy the number is growing. In Italy, people too often show a strong willingness to participate in some exceptional event but ordinary day-to-day problems that require constant attention

tend to be forgotten. LIPU's objectives are achievable only by the efforts of the many volunteers who, at all levels, give freely of their time.

The LIPU army of volunteers, which includes delegates, activists, ordinary members and donors, unstintingly giving their support, and feeling part of our initiatives, are the very essence of our association. They are its ultimate strength, its most valuable asset. Without their contribution we would not be able to undertake many of our projects and we would risk losing so many battles. The incredible success of the recent petition against more freedom for the hunters is but the most recent of a long line of such examples.

LIPU consists of volunteers who work for improvements that everybody can enjoy, protecting nature for the good of all wildlife and ultimately of the human race.

Thanks to you all.

REFLECTING ON THE PAST IN ORDER TO PROTECT THE FUTURE

by Marco Lambertini

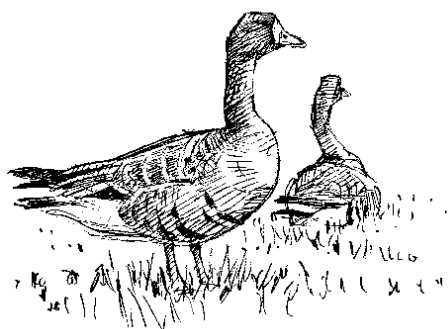
Previously Director General of LIPU.

Anniversaries are important for taking stock: looking back to see what has been achieved and planning for the future. It is not always easy to work out how successful we have been, what

mistakes we have made, whether we have achieved our objectives and made any impact or difference. Our income increased tenfold and members doubled in number: but have we saved more nature? In this year of LIPU's anniversary, I want to invite you to two celebrations.

Imagine a large forest in Ukraine with bears and wolves, and rivers filled with otters and beavers. Further south, near the Crimea, huge coastal marshes, and around little-known seas such as the Sea of Azov about half a million hectares of reed-beds, saltmarsh and sand dunes visited by vast numbers of overwintering aquatic birds (200,000 white-fronted geese and the largest proportion of the world population of Red-breasted geese); nesting birds (ten species of gulls and terns, all the European herons); and tens of millions of birds migrating from immense western Siberia towards the Middle East and Africa.

And the most irredeemable Ital-



ian hunters come here to evade the new restrictive laws in their own country. The new Ukrainian Association for the Protection of Birds, TOPU, has just celebrated its tenth anniversary. TOPU is the only one of 400 not for profit

environmental organisations to have 1500 members and a democratically elected council. It wants to attract members and supporters and publicise its work, getting people to love and watch wild life, particularly birds. Their "Big Winter Bird Watch" involves more than 17,000 people. With six staff, it reminds me of LIPU in the mid 70s in Vicolo San Tiburzio in Parma. But TOPU's strength, like LIPU's, rests not only in the exceptional staff but also in a network of over 80 local groups, members and volunteers who directly monitor more than 70 of the 166 IBA identified in the country. They aim to create a large protected area in the Crimean wetlands, designate and manage an area specifically for bird watching and convert hunting lodges into ecolodges for nature tourists.

Aves Argentinas (Argentine Birds) is an organisation that started many years ago, an active group of ornithologists and bird watchers, which recently developed into a modern association for the protection of birds. They ran a spectacular campaign against the use of powerful pesticides in the huge grasslands of the Pampas where thousands of Swainson's Hawks had been poisoned. The Pampas is still a priority area, as it is now threatened by changes in agriculture and forestry for timber and paper. They have identified and mapped all the most important areas and are urging local politicians to protect these IBA by keeping them out of development plans. The association spotlighted a large marsh less than an hour from Buenos

Aires called Otamendi, three thousand hectares of reedbeds and open water, one of the last refuges of Paludo's deer and visited by 200 species of birds, amongst which are the several threatened species. AA is managing a recuperative centre for wild birds in the tropical forests near the Iguazu Falls as part of its educational projects. The centre is situated in a small reserve where 50 species of butterflies and 222 species of birds have been recorded.

And now in the 40th anniversary year of the association, which is the dearest in the world to me, we focus on LIPU.

LIPU with its professionalism, indefatigable staff, unstoppable volunteers and above all competence, passion, great ideas and an undeniable vocation for struggle, in 40 years has done what we would not have thought possible: it has not only reduced the number of hunters to a seventh and promoted the protection of over 40 million hectares of natural land in over 500 parks and reserves; it has not only given the country modern laws for protecting fauna and land, but it has changed the mindset and attitudes towards wildlife of millions of people. There is still plenty to do: we want even fewer hunters and better managed protected areas. But today is the anniversary, so let me say with pride and using the English language, which I have adopted: very well done LIPU! We have made Italy a much, much better place for birds and nature. May the struggle continue.

BIRDS IN THE CITY

by *Marco Gustin*

Those of us who live in cities are quite used to their historic buildings, their busy streets and overcrowded shops but rarely take time to appreciate those fragments of nature that are really worth more attention. City centres are often a mosaic of micro-habitats, some of which existed before the development of the city itself. There are copses, hedges, uncultivated, as well as cultivated areas. In addition, there are city parks, which, though in a sense artificial, often contain important woodlands that have largely disappeared or are rare elsewhere. It is only in recent years that we have started to talk about an urban ecosystem, one that is dominated by one species, man.

Other unique features of the city environment are the fact that they are young ecosystems and are subject to constant change, and also the fact that the climate, and in many cases the micro climates, vary considerably in the central areas, and are warmer than in outlying places. Cities consume high levels of energy and water, and produce large amounts of refuse. Especially in large cities there are high levels of air, water and soil pollution.

Birds find it easier than most other animals to overcome problems presented by buildings and streets. Some species have become almost companions of man, such as House Sparrows and Collared Doves, while

others, such as Crows and Starlings, have adapted to the new ecosystems, using urban structures to their own advantage as winter roosts.

Rivers and canals that cross cities act as "ecological corridors", helping to spread new species into central parts or outwards to the suburbs.

News from LIPU-UK

The news from Italy in this shorter than usual edition is dominated by the fortieth anniversary and I am sure that I speak for all our supporters when I add our best wishes for the future - Avanti LIPU!

A HOUSE IN TUSCANY

I am sure we have all dreamt of living in another country with a gentler climate than the one we used to enjoy here. John and Sheila Bush did indeed live in Tuscany for years - Sheila writes this account of those happy times.

In 1970, purely by chance. John and I found ourselves halfway up a hill in Tuscany, between the cemetery of Greve in Chianti and the little chapel at the top. This had come about because a friend of ours, who had a small preparatory school for boys, had asked us to share in the rent of a villa, called Melazzano, which he had taken for the summer. Dennis

planned to take a party of his boys there, and was looking around for friends who would join him for a fortnight or so and share the cost.

We drove down, with our fifteen-year-old daughter, and were immediately under the spell of its beauty. Before a week was up we and Dennis had signed an agreement with Patrizio and Adriana Anichini, the owners of the villa, whereby we jointly rented the tinaja, which they also let, for a year for £500.

For the next year or so, Dennis went out during the school holidays, and we did so when we could, for John was still working. But we longed for greater comfort than the somewhat primitive tinaja could offer, and over lots of glasses of chianti and a document bought from the local stationer entered into an agreement under which Patrizio and Adriana would build us a two-bedroom one-storey house. They would charge for the bare cost of construction (Patrizio was a gifted architect, though he had never had any formal teaching), and we would have the house rent-free for ten years. After that we would see.

The actual building was a fascinating experience in the comparative Italian and English methods of designing houses. Many Italian women, it seemed to us, cook in a kind of cupboard, but when we cooked we wanted to be able to enjoy the stupendous view. But we had a hard job persuading Patrizio to let us have an open arch between the kitchen and the sitting-room. After lots of

amicable discussion, he agreed when we volunteered to hang a curtain over the arch, though of course the curtain was never drawn. But in the end he was happy with the result, and would bring his friends to admire it.

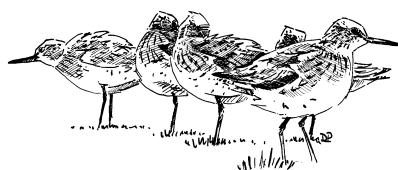
We had started on our Italian adventure without a word of Italian, but it is stupid to go often to a foreign country and not know the language, so we worked hard for our "O" levels at the Italian Institute in London under Signora Momigliano, a demanding and brilliant teacher. Tactfully, we got the same grade. I was writing an Italian cookbook at the time, and had an interesting experience trying to collect tasty Italian dishes from charming ladies who were plucking chickens outside the back door, and were obviously mystified by anyone wanting to write down recipes, and, less productively, with their grander counterparts in nearby castles, who were only just beginning to learn how to live without servants and *didn't* know much more about Italian cooking than I did myself

We loved our little house. It was wonderful sitting under the olive-tree outside the sitting-room, basking in the warmth and the beauty, and eating delicious Tuscan food. In spring there were the fireflies and the nightingales (not to mention the asparagus). Once or twice we even saw a hoopoe. Like many people, we mourned the lack of birds and birdsong, and wanted to do what we could to help the campaign against their shooting, which was why we joined LIPU.

We explored the ravishing countryside, and fell irresistibly in love with Siena. We began to feel like Italians ourselves, and decided that we would like to retire there. We even had the offer of post-retirement jobs.

But then doubt crept in. What about when we grew too old to look after ourselves, or became ill and had to go to hospital? Without a family on the spot, who would look after us then? And even more important was the fact that our daughter, and only child, had emigrated to Canada, and would be unlikely to be able to come to see us if we were living up a hillside in Tuscany. So we decided that England was the better option, and sadly gave up our Italian nest. But we were left with lovely memories, and the warmest of friendships with the Anichinis and with other families, English and Italian, whom we had got to know during our visits, and bless the day when, with Patrizio and Adriana, we had found ourselves sitting round a table entering into our rather vague and Chianti-inspired agreement.

Now, many years later and back in England, we still belong to LIPU, whose work we greatly admire, and send all our good wishes for its success in helping to rescue thousands of birds which would otherwise be massacred by gun-happy hunters.



MOLLY

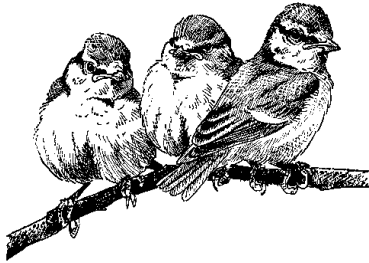
Molly Eady, a life long lover of birds died last year, leaving LIPU a legacy which has doubled the size of our Oasi Fund and brought nearer the day when we can create a nature reserve in Italy. I asked Nicolette Pike to tell us something about this remarkable lady.

Molly was, I suppose, by the world's standards, an eccentric. She never spent money on herself and lived a life of Spartan simplicity - dressing only in clothes her friends gave her or she bought in charity shops. Her only extravagance was travelling - she visited India, Greenland, Norway and the Falkland Islands, chiefly, I think, with bird watching parties.

She had four passions in life; the first was music - she was an excellent 'cello player until her hearing failed (she was stone deaf when she died). The second was sailing - she had a little yacht in her young days and sailed it single handed. Her third passion was gardening- she gardened for the owners of several big gardens, and she had her own little garden which was stunningly beautiful. The National Trust visitors used to stand at her gate and photograph it.

Her fourth passion, and maybe her greatest, was for birds. Her bedroom window was always open - in all weather - so that blue tits could fly in and out (she had nesting boxes attached to the pelmet!). You may imagine the room became somewhat messy,

but it was enchanting to see the birds flying fearlessly around the room or perching on the end of her bed!



Molly would wander around the grounds with nuts in her pockets and birds would come swooping down to feed from her hand. A visiting telephone engineer was very intrigued by this and told her that he wished he could do the same, "Any fool can get a bird to his hand if he stands still and stops talking!". He did as she said and to his delight a bird did alight - but I expect that it was Molly's presence that reassured it!

Molly broadcast in the 60s and 70s on birds for Woman's Hour on Radio 4 and often lectured locally. She was already quite old when we first became friends - a delightful figure despite her odd clothes - short and sturdy with white hair braided around her head - rosy cheeks and bright blue eyes - and, when she was not annoyed about something (cats creeping up on birds for instance) she had a most engaging smile.

I miss her very much, as must the birds when she finally went to end her days in a home for the elderly.

2005 APPEAL

Despite the huge outpouring of generosity after the terrible events around the Indian Ocean, this year's appeal is on track to meeting its target.

If you have made a donation please accept our thanks; if you have not yet had the chance we are still happy to accept contributions of any size.

WINTER 2004/05 REPORT FROM LAGO PATRIA (NAPLES)

by Robin Springett

The weather was bright and warm into December, which was mainly wet and cold with many strong winds and generally very unsettled. A lot of trees were blown over due to the wind and wet soil. In January we had many fine days, but also a lot of frost and fog early on, and a lot of rain, even sleet and snow as the month ended.

Hunting has revived a bit this year after the crack down last year, but it is nowhere near the level we encountered when we first arrived here in October 2002. Due to the very wet weather in December, many fields flooded, and stayed that way into the New Year. Also, further degradation of the marsh has occurred due to the tipping of top and sub soil from a large construction site in Lago Patria, and the construction of facilities for growing and storing shell fish. Despite this, the marsh and

surrounding low lying land continues to be a very important site for wintering birds. For example, a lapwing flock in excess of 200 was present all winter; over 100 snipe could be counted at any one time in one field; the lake holds large numbers of coot, great crested grebe, moorhens and black headed gulls.



TAIL FEATHERS

I hope to return to sixteen pages in our next edition and hope that you all enjoy the miracle of the spring migration.

My thanks, as always, go to the translation team who were: Cicely Adelson, Barbara Avery, Ambra Burls, Daria Dadam, Bryan Lewis, Caterina Paone, Peter Rafferty, John Walder and Brian Horkley.

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