

LIPU-UK is now a Charity

As some of you already know, LIPU-UK is now a charity and that enables us to achieve even more efficiency. I measure efficiency in the financial sense as the proportion of the funds raised in the course of a year which is actually sent to our friends in Italy to be spent on the projects we have agreed to support.

I am happy to report that last year that figure was 89.4% and the target this year is to exceed 90% by as large a margin as possible by reducing costs and increasing revenue.

As you know we have no paid staff and the bulk of our costs are the printing and distribution of our publications. I have had many letters expressing satisfaction with our newsletters and I thank these correspondents for their suggestions and encouragement. Two newsletters so far this year have been of 16 pages, the downside of which is that we step up from 19 to 33 pence postage, but I believe this extra expense is worthwhile because our publications are often all that you, the members, receive in exchange for your contributions.

That extra postage cost is offset to some extent by the 280 members who now pay their dues by Bankers Order involving no postal reminders from me.

Now we have another way to increase our revenue without any additional cost - Gift Aid. In the last budget the Chancellor removed the bottom limit of the Gift Aid scheme and this means that we can now reclaim tax paid by you on every single pound you give to LIPU - if you are a taxpayer. The only requirement is a declaration

completed and signed by each of our supporters which I have to keep on file.

Before you think, "Oh, no not another form to fill in." please remember that it's much worse for me - for you it's one form, for me it's nearly 2100! This paperwork exercise might appear tedious but it is essential to us - the tax we reclaim amounts to 28 pence for every pound you give in subscriptions or donations. A rough estimate is that we would have reclaimed about £8000 last year had the scheme been in operation and that can fund a lot of conservation work...

How can you help?

- Please complete and return the Gift Aid declaration when it is sent to you (this might take several months to reach all members and friends).
- If you do not pay tax please fill in your name and postcode and cross through it or write "Not eligible", this really does help by preventing me sending reminders in case it was a simple oversight.
- Please forgive me if I send you a second form, this really is quite a complex exercise!



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Robert Gifford

It was with shock and great sadness that I learned of the death of Robert Gifford at the age of 43. Robert had been a member of LIPU for many years and had supported the work in Italy by taking part in the Anti-Poaching camps on the Straits of Messina. Robert, of Braintree in Essex, was passionate in his commitment to bird protection and with his passing LIPU has lost a good friend and an active supporter.

However, Robert's memory will stay with us in the person of his mother, Mrs Ruth Gifford, who has joined LIPU knowing that this is what Robert would have wanted - welcome Ruth.

Conservation News from Italy

FROM THE PRESIDENT OF LIPU

Danilo Mainardi

I teach Nature Conservation at the University of Venezia. As we study the history of Man's impact on Nature I emphasise this concept: Man's activities have always valued short-term gains, and have failed to take long-term harmful consequences into consideration. I give an example: if I cut down a forest I obviously gain something from it; but I do not take account of the serious consequences of the disappearance of woodland, such as climate change, flooding, desert formation and reduced biodiversity. It is absolutely vital, therefore, that for our own well-being, we should change the way we function.

The sale of "panettoni" at Christmas is a case in point. We will be able to satisfy our need (short-term) to celebrate a traditional festival, but we will also be looking further to the future: to when the trees we are planting now will become woods and forests.

NATURE CLOSE TO HOME

Armando Gariboldi

Throughout Italy there are processes at work aimed at depriving local protected areas, parks and regional reserves of any real meaning. It is the well-used onion technique, when, gradually, layer by layer, quietly and with little outcry, the perpetrators attain their own contemptible objectives.

They are trying to resume speculative activities in areas, often neighbouring large cities, where the natural environment only survives thanks to exhausting civil battles, often being fought by local people. The 19 great National Parks are not so much at risk, but rather the constellation of over 700 protected areas managed by provincial and regional authorities. It is a network of outstanding importance that in total covers an area greater than the whole of the Veneto. LIPU has been bringing attention to this very problem for some time and now the question is becoming ever more worrying, threatening to spread rapidly throughout Italy.

Playing with words, such as the difference between "Natural Parks" and "Regional Parks", and taking advantage of bureaucratic quibbling, many regional governments are reducing the area of their managed, and therefore protected, parks by some 30-60%, weakening them so that they become merely tourist areas. Local politicians of all parties and persuasions spout fashionable phrases, such as sustainable development and eco-tourism, but are not anxious to guarantee a real future for regional and provincial parks and reserves.

It started in the more industrialised northern regions of Lombardia, Piemonte and the Veneto, but is being closely followed by other large regions such as Liguria and Lazio, where threatening and worrying signals are beginning to appear. The National Government, in the name of decentralisation, is not intervening and thus is acquiescing, with only a few notable exceptions, in this state of affairs. We strongly condemn these moves and are seeking ways to tackle these

new attacks on nature that is under threat “right in our own backyard”.

PANETTONI 2000

Danilo Selvaggi

Next Christmas, on 2 and 3 December, we shall once again be continuing our tree campaign, which last year resulted in replanting woodland in several parts of Italy, at Reggiolo in Emilia, at Colfiorito in Umbria and in the Ofanto in Basilicata. On those two days LIPU will invade streets and squares, along with TV and the Press, and the LIPU Panettoni (traditional Christmas cake) will once again take on the double significance of a symbol of Christmas and a means of helping nature. This fund-raising will allow LIPU to make its own contribution to alleviating the extremely serious problems of fires, deforestation, and general threats to the natural environment and, at the same time, do important work in increasing public awareness.

The ecological importance of woodland is well known but it is being cleared, not only in places like the Amazon rain forest, but also here in Italy, to provide land for roads, urban settlement and industry. This year there has also been an enormous increase in forest fires, many the result of arson.

The seriousness of the situation and our acceptance of an obligation to make our contribution to alleviating a vitally important ecological and social problem have stimulated us to take on the task once again of raising funds for the Trees Project. We have considered conservation priorities and have decided to link the LIPU Panettoni project to three areas, where we feel it is necessary to make a practical as well as symbolic contribution to woodland regeneration.

- The Dunes of Lesina, in the Gargano Park, where the LIPU Reserve was burned this summer. It is ecologically a very important area for Mediterranean vegetation, a rare plant and many birds.

- The pinewoods at Castelfusano, an extremely valuable woodland with owls, woodpeckers and many species of passerines. It was almost completely destroyed as a result of an arson attack.
- At Reggiolo, in Reggio Emilia, where LIPU is in the process of transforming the site into a new wetland reserve.

The great success we had last year is an encouragement to even greater effort in the future. The panettone, specially made for LIPU, will be accompanied by a leaflet which will give information on the Trees Project and will serve as a gift card for those who wish to give them to friends, relatives and colleagues. Novamont produces a new material (Materbi) which has the same characteristics as plastic but is made from natural resources and is completely biodegradable. They are providing the bags completely free.

This operation is in the spirit of combining a simple traditional gesture of having a Christmas panettone and doing something practical for nature. Remember 2 and 3 December, LIPU Christmas for trees, birds and nature.

LIPU PROJECTS: WHITE-HEADED DUCK RETURNS

An ambitious conservation project by LIPU
Marco Gustin and Vincenzo Rizzi

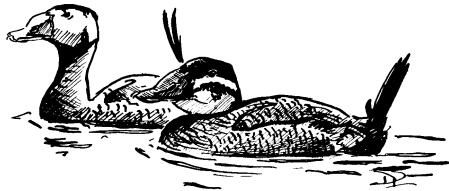
For more than 15 years LIPU has been working to reintroduce the White-headed Duck to Italy, where it has been extinct since 1977. LIPU's first attempt was in Sardinia at the end of the 1980's, but it was not successful due to problems in managing the release sites, as they were not fully protected.

The White-headed is probably the most threatened species of duck in Europe, and is also very much under threat world-wide. It is clear that it must be protected. In addition, LIPU's project is also motivated by the need to re-establish a

population between that in Spain and the one in Turkey. As well as the protection of this species, LIPU is also pressing for public administrators to recognise the need to conserve coastal wetlands.

For several years now the LIPU Stork Centre at Racconigi has cared for and bred White-headed Ducks in captivity, from stock coming from the UK and Spain. Since 1998 there has been an active reintroduction programme in the Region of Puglia, where it has been extinct since 1957.

A 500 hectare site with ample reedbeds has been identified as an ideal area. A first delivery of seven birds was made last February, with a delivery in July of 13 more that had been hatched at Racconigi in 1999. The birds were housed in suitable aviaries within the wetland and kept under surveillance, night and day, by LIPU project staff. It is estimated that the freshwater area at this site can support 10 – 15 breeding females. In spring 2001 we aim to release more young birds that have been bred in captivity.

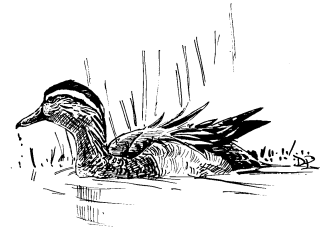


OUR WORK CONTINUES

The former Daunia Risi, for the volunteers of LIPU Foggia who have been working to protect it for more than 10 years, is also known as the Lago Salso Reserve.

These 1000 hectares constitute the largest area in central southern Italy for ducks and herons. Within the 500 hectares of Valli, an area of alternating open pools and expanses of reeds and rushes, there are certainly five breeding species of heron: Little Bittern, Squacco Heron, Night Heron, Little Egret and Purple Heron, and possibly also Bittern. At least eight species of ducks

can be found here: Gadwall, Teal, Mallard, Shoveler, Garganey, Ferruginous Duck, Tufted Duck and Pochard, as well as Great Crested Grebe, Bearded Tit and Moustached Warbler.



The other 500 hectares are agricultural land given over to biological farming. The Valli are inside the boundary of the Gargano National Park, while the farmland is outside it.

Currently LIPU is in the process of developing several activities in the Lago Salso Reserve, ranging from guided visits to ornithological studies. LIPU staff are also drawing up a management plan for the Valli.

A LABORIOUS PROCESS

Angelo Rossi and Vincenzo Cripezzi

Law 157, for the protection of wildlife and the management of hunting, has now been operating in Italy for eight years. However, it is evident that at every level the hunting factions bend the regulations to suit their own purposes.

A function of the A.T.C., a hunting organisation responsible for its supervision and control, should be to co-ordinate hunters, farmers, environmentalists and local authorities. However, the optimistic aspects of the national legislation have frequently been wrecked at local level where affairs have been tilted very much in favour of hunters, often reducing our input to mere submission of information. In addition, at national level the presence of Ekoclub International, a pseudo-environmental association, formed directly by hunters of Federaccia, and often opposed by LIPU, has added its weight further to affect the balance in favour of hunting.

It shows once again that a law on its own is not sufficient to affect the hunting situation in Italy. The hunters often shelter behind doctrines formed way back in the past when they could shoot anything, or almost anything, without limit. This is a major problem for LIPU in its work in local committees.

HUNTING IN THE LIGURIAN PARKS



The situation in the Ligurian Parks is getting more serious, due to the meagre regional finances which hamper development and also to laws which have been recently approved by the Regional Council aimed at continuing to allow hunting within the Park.

The Ligurian Parks authorities thus find themselves seriously limited in their ability to manage an area which should be protected and evaluated, and, just when the Plans are about to be approved, they are at risk of having their boundaries redrawn and their areas much reduced.

The situation is complex and difficult for the Parks in Italy and LIPU's activities are vital in support of nature protection by regional parks, which are being subjected to all kinds of attacks from those with different interests.

LIGHT POLLUTION

Light pollution can do enormous damage to animals: the main victims are turtles, moths, birds and large number mammals.

Light is a vital factor for most biological systems: alternating day and night, between light and dark, is a basic requirement of living things, whether they are animals or plants. When this

natural balance is changed by the introduction of artificial light there is a very real risk of creating irreversible damage. Wild creatures can become very strongly attracted to light, and this can become a deadly trap.

The study of two species of marine turtles has shown a marked influence of artificial light on their egg-laying behaviour.

Within 50 metres of light sources the number of nesting and transiting turtles is significantly lower than in dark areas. Also, on their return to the sea, the turtles do not follow their usual more direct route. It is thought that the turtles confuse the lights with ordinary daylight. It is obvious that the presence of artificial light on the breeding beaches may, therefore, be a serious threat to the future of those species.

Species of birds and butterflies that use astronomical direction finding on nocturnal migration can also be confused by the presence of strong artificial light. Coots, quail and passerines, for example, are attracted to the lights of coastal lighthouses where they may smash into the lamps, while others are burnt when they get too close to the flames of off-shore oil platforms. Many moths are killed against industrial lighting systems.

Many mammals and birds are attracted by car and train headlights and are hit as they cross or hunt along the highway. A newspaper article appeared in 1997, describing how the light from a motorway tollbooth confused a cockerel and its crowing during the night disturbed the sleep of people in the local area.

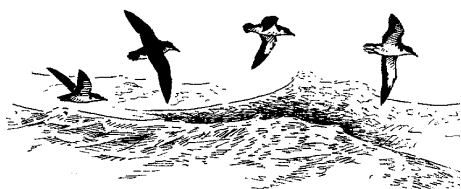


Even a preliminary study of several species and some biological systems has shown the impact of

public lighting on certain life cycles, such as reproduction (reptiles), migration (butterflies and moths, birds), behaviour (birds, mammals), and the production of life-giving substances and seasonal rhythms (plants). It is certainly desirable that great care should be given to the construction of lighting systems, especially those in strategic locations, such as along the coast. The aim should be to avoid the serious impact on plants and animals, and also to reduce unnecessary light dispersal.

Reduce those cones of light directed skywards, stop the rotating beams from the disco, put a cover on those dazzling globes in the garden: the sky and the environment are worth much more than this useless display of lights. At a recent conference at which there was a call for national legislation, LIPU reaffirmed the need to regulate the amount of light being emitted. In recent months three Regions, Lombardia, Toscana and Lazio, have ratified laws for the regulation of the incorrect use of nocturnal lighting. It is an important step, which shows not only a growing sensitivity to light pollution, but also a desire to act now without waiting for national legislation.

In Lombardia about 25% of public lighting is uselessly directed into the sky. The law requires that this amount should be eliminated; new equipment must have zero emission to the sky, old installations must be gradually adapted. The regulations also anticipate that there should be an area of low intensity lighting within a radius of several kilometres of an astronomical observatory. In Lazio the law is aimed at reducing the current level of 15-20% of sky dispersal to 1%, as well as guaranteeing darkness around observatories. The regional laws in Toscana are somewhat less stringent, requiring regulations to be met which are only at the level of those approved some years ago by Piemonte and Veneto.

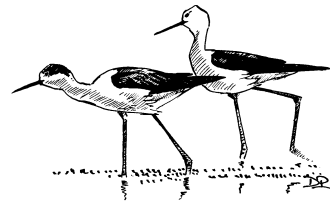


THE BATTLE OF THE RICE FIELDS

Armando Gariboldi

Rice cultivation in Europe is at risk of disappearing due to competition from oriental and American sources and the drop in prices paid to European farmers. The European Commission is in the process of adopting a proposal to introduce reforms in the rice market which, if applied, will see a drastic reduction in the area under rice in all countries of the EU, including Italy, the main European producer.

Rice growing has an ecologically important function in Europe. The artificially created wetlands have become excellent habitats for large numbers of aquatic birds to feed and breed. These include herons, ducks, waders, storks, coots and moorhens. These habitats are also very important for invertebrates, amphibians and fish.



From the environmental point of view the transformation, in the past, from natural wetlands to paddy fields was not an improvement, but scientific research has shown that rice is the best choice of cultivation for the conservation of the existing biodiversity. Compared with other types of cultivation rice has a less drastic environmental impact because it avoids the drying out of the soil and the concentration of salts. Nevertheless, the intensive use of pesticides and fertilisers has often had harmful effects.

Currently throughout Europe there is an increasing demand for biological rice and this change could result in rice production becoming a sustainable activity, from both economic and environmental points of view. With this in mind, priority ought to be given to the "historical" rice growing areas where paddy fields play a fundamental role in the conservation of biodiversity.

Rice growing is important, not only for biodiversity but also for the maintenance of the local

economy, the typical landscape and a rich and original culture which embraces gastronomy, tradition and eco-tourism. The long road towards a more sustainable agriculture has already been started in the European paddy fields. This is already the case in the historically important rice growing areas of the Ebro Delta in Spain, the Camargue in France and some parts of the Po Valley in Italy. In those areas the combination of paddy fields and wetlands has resulted in the preservation of vast numbers of aquatic birds and other creatures.

LIPU is in the front line of this new fight for an agriculture that supports biodiversity and has put forward its own propositions to the Italian Minister of Agriculture. He was fully in agreement and took our representative with the Italian Commission that in mid-July went to Brussels to take up the issue with the EU. BirdLife International is lobbying intensively to preserve this type of cultivation (especially the biological) which is so important for many species of birds.

FOR THE HERONS

Claudio Celada

Among the bird species which feed in the paddy fields, herons are the most easily identified. Night Herons, Little Egrets, Grey Herons, Squacco Herons and, in recent years, Cattle Egrets, adorn the fields of the plain. Only the Purple Heron seems not to favour these artificial wetland habitats. We in Italy have a great responsibility to protect these particular species. We only need to consider that about a third of all breeding herons in the Palearctic (Europe, Western Africa and Asia north of the Himalayas) in fact breed in Italy, in colonies that are mainly within the rice triangle. The heronries can be composed of one or more species and are generally found in small remnants of wet woodland of black alder and in the willows surrounding the paddy fields and along the rivers. Outside the rice triangle, which includes the Provinces of Pavia, Novara and Vercelli, some heronries are situated along the River Po in cultivated poplars,

where they may be delicate management problems.

A visit to a heronry in the breeding season is an unforgettable experience - the clamour of hundreds, and sometimes thousands of adults and their young is deafening, the smell is pungent and the presence of mosquitoes is certain. It is certainly not the same kind of pleasure that one feels on a trip down to the coast. But in no other place do I feel such a part of a similar explosion of life. About eight years ago, when I was counting nests, I came to realise how much disturbance an observer can cause, even on a short visit, and even more if they venture right into the colony. The young in fact do not hesitate to throw themselves out of the nest as soon as they feel under threat. If this happens, there is obviously a much greater risk of falling victim to some predator.



It is horrifying to think that political decisions could affect the very existence of this invaluable heritage, which has come about as a result of geography and our traditional agriculture. The consequences of a reducing the area under rice can easily be imagined. LIPU is therefore making an all out effort to convince the appropriate authorities, at European and national level, that there are models of alternative development.

It is now autumn, the herons left for Africa some time ago. We cannot follow their destinies in those distant places. But we can do a great deal so that here in Italy, next spring, in the now quiet woods, the festival of life will flourish once again.



A TYPICAL DAY AT LIPU

Ugo Faralli

9.38 Parma, LIPU National Headquarters - Ugo and Carlo are back in the office after being out all night taking a census of moths. They found 13 new species for the reserve. Volunteers have been working for several weeks refreshing small habitats that are valuable to a large number of animal species, particularly butterflies and moths. The result: 210 species of these colourful insects counted at the reserve.

9.42 Inarzo, at LIPU Brabbia Reserve - The phone rings. It is Andrea, manager of Brabbia in Lombardia, a lovely collection of reedbeds and small pools. He has met biologists to discuss water quality and the need to reduce pollution that may affect the area for which we are responsible. Ferruginous Ducks are breeding well. There are at least two more pairs than before, thanks to all the work done in managing the reedbeds.

11.07 Parma, LIPU National Headquarters - I try to return yesterday's call from Emilio, Director of the Biviere Reserve but he is out on the reserve with some of his staff on patrol. Hunters and poachers often lie in wait and the recent arrivals of Spoonbills and Glossy Ibises have attracted their attention. Managing a protected site, in a difficult area like Gela, means coping with illegal dumping, construction of commercial greenhouses and grazing problems. They are all part of the conservation work that is a testimony, even in this corner of Sicily, to LIPU's efforts for nature protection.

11.44 Roma, a footpath on the LIPU Castel di Guido Reserve -

Another phone-call, this time from Jacopo, the new manager at Castel di Guido, a reserve well known for its swallows. On 250 hectares of biologically farmed land there is a continuous swirl of swallows, swifts and martins, attracted by the millions of insects. This marriage of nature and farming also benefits Bee-eaters and Montagu's Harriers.

11.50 Parma, LIPU National Headquarters - I receive a fax from Paola, manager of the Santa Luce Reserve, in the Province of Pisa. Months of intense effort have resulted in official recognition of the reserve and management responsibility being given to LIPU. It is a great result. In 10 years, an area that was once the haunt of hunters has become a place for birdwatchers and LIPU members to observe an Osprey and the courting ritual of Great Crested Grebes. Working in a LIPU reserve also means spending hours and hours in local authority offices. The "finally" which Paola added to her signature on the fax is a testimony to all that hard work.

14.55 Carloforte, on the nature walk - A phone call to say that the Eleonora's Falcons have now returned to their usual breeding site on the Isola di San Pietro. It is one of the biggest colonies of this rare raptor that breeds only in the Mediterranean. Out of a total of some 6000 pairs, 118 are on the LIPU reserve. LIPU has been keeping the site under observation since 1981 because German falconers and local poachers are always ready to steal eggs and young.

15.10 Parma, LIPU National Headquarters - Alessandro, the vet at the LIPU Sala Baganza Recovery Centre, arrives. He explains the results of treatment given to Sparrowhawks, shot by hunters, and among the most difficult of our patients due to their intolerance of man. We also discuss the recent release of an oiled Puffin. The public, newspapers and TV were involved in the public relations exercise. At LIPU we realise that saving just one Puffin or one Heron will not save the species and the environment but the message of education we are giving by getting the public to participate is very important.

1703 Pavia, Visitor Centre at the Bosco Negri Reserve -

I call Cristina at Bosco Negri to find out the number of visitors they have had in recent months. The total is almost unbelievable: more than 5000 from March to June, with more than 1800 children from 110 school classes. It is a real living laboratory for Pavia and the surrounding area.

19.00 on the road from Parma to Torrile -
On the way home I think of all our staff and volunteers, and their incredible work. Nearly home I catch sight of two Black-winged Stilts in flight over the canal. I turn towards Torrile and follow them into the reserve. Maurizio greets me and we gaze together at the hundreds of Stilts and Terns that seem to be thanking him and his volunteers. That also goes for all LIPU, made up of thousands of members whose support allow us to obtain such results for nature conservation.

WORK IN PROGRESS

SPECIES AT RISK

A PLAN OF ACTION

The National Institute for Wildlife (INFS), on request from the Ministry of the Environment, is putting an Action Plan into operation for the management of some animal species which are threatened with extinction in Italy. As far as birds are concerned, Plans are being prepared for Audouin's Gull, Lesser Kestrel and Purple Gallinule. An official request has been made for a contribution from LIPU, which already has technical staff working in this area. This is a further example of the esteem in which LIPU is held in Italy.



THE STORKS PROJECT FESTIVAL IN THE CILENTO

Storks have come back to breed in the Diano valley, in Basilicata. This year, once again, the Cilento National Park is organising a Stork Festival in October, in collaboration with LIPU. We have also been asked to be responsible for the scientific part of a satellite radio-tracking project that is due to begin in 2001. School pupils are preparing to link up with groups in Africa, when the storks indicate, by satellite, where they are

spending the winter. The White Storks Project is only one of several that the Cilento Park intends to set up with LIPU.



LEGAL AFFAIRS OFFICE

The Public Prosecutor's Office in Reggio Calabria has put a stop to developments at the Punta Pellaro Holiday Village. It concerns the building of 47 holiday cottages, barely 10 metres from the sea, in the face of all the regulations aimed at environmental protection of the coast. In spite of the developers having obtained the necessary permits, LIPU did not yield: after three years of applying to the magistrates it has managed to get a judgement based on their having illegally divided the site into smaller plots. It is another important victory in this region, but it is still a drop in the ocean, seeing that Calabria does not have a Countryside Development Plan.

NEWS FROM LIPU BRANCHES

NAPLES

Birds in the City

The Naples Branch of LIPU and the Local Authority Environmental Department have promoted a joint initiative to encourage visitors to know and appreciate the many species of birds at the Villa Comunale Park. Bird feeding tables and nestboxes have been installed and a leaflet is available describing the various species found there.

Environmental Education

The same branch, in collaboration with the Campania Regional Authority, has started a project of environmental education in the Foce Volturno and Costa di Licola nature reserve. It is aimed at upper school students to get to know nature and birds at the reserve.

White Stork

LIPU rangers and a unit of the Forest Guards have confiscated a White Stork that was being kept in the garden of a restaurant. The owner has many previous convictions.

PARABIAGO: Vandalism

On 21 June volunteers of the Parabiago branch of LIPU returned to find that their office had been completely destroyed, everything being broken and daubed with paint, from the computer to the slide projector, from the printer to the refrigerator. A few vandals have done over £3000 worth of damage, not to speak of the despair of the volunteers who have seen everything that they had gradually built over the years completely destroyed. The branch is calling on the generosity of LIPU Members to help in any way they can.

ASTI

The Asti Branch of LIPU has decided to start a project, at the Recovery Centre that it manages, aimed at evaluating post-release survival of nocturnal raptors. Ten Tawny Owls that came into



the centre as chicks and were released at the end of July will be monitored for several months by means of radio-tracking, to check their whereabouts and adaptation to the wild. Nocturnal raptors are

important indicators of the state of the environment and man's allies in a biological struggle with insects and problem species of birds.

FIRENZE

A young buzzard slowly spreads its wings and takes flight from the top of an ancient cypress tree. A Grey Heron flies over the glistening waters of the fish farm in search of prey. This,

and much more, is to be found right in the centre of Firenze, in the historic Boboli Gardens, where LIPU is part of a project to develop a nature walk. It will help visitors to discover wild birds that are to be found in the rich vegetation of the garden. The walk will be a meeting place of nature and art, a combination that is suitable for any city of artistic importance.

LACCHIARELLA: VISITOR CENTRE FIRE

Attacks on LIPU continue, in response to its efforts in nature protection and land regulation. Members of staff have been subjected to intimidation at the Gela Reserve, while attacks during the summer destroyed the LIPU office at Parabiago (reported above) and a large part of the LIPU Dune di Lesina Reserve. Then, during the night of 1-2 September there was an arson attack on the Visitor Centre at the Lacchiarella Reserve, a protected area near Milan that has suffered many serious incidents, including poaching and building speculation. They destroyed this point of reference for visitors and school students and also burnt a touring exhibition on nature in the area, which was to have been used this autumn. It is just another example of the many malicious attempts to block the work of local LIPU members. We wish to confirm our complete unity of purpose with all our volunteers and members of staff, and reaffirm that these attacks will certainly not stop LIPU's work, but will merely reinforce us in our convictions and in new initiatives.

FIRST STORK CHICK HATCHED

On 19 May a baby stork was hatched at the LIPU Stork Centre at Cascina Venara. Visitors had been able to see the future parents as they changed places on the nest. The chick weighed 50 grammes at birth; after a week it was already able to acknowledge its parents, with typical drumming of the beak, when they came to feed it. At ten days old it had doubled in weight and on 25 July it took its first awkward flight from the nest. It can now be admired in the aviary at the Centre where it will remain for three years, with other storks, until it is mature and paired off

with one of the others there. The pair will then be set free. We do not yet know whether it is male or female, as there is no outward difference between the sexes.

EUROPEAN BIRDWATCH 2000

The biggest chain of birdwatchers in Europe will make it the greatest ornithological event, involving hundreds of thousands of people right across Europe, united in their passion for birds, curiosity and nature.

After the great success of previous events, European Birdwatch will take place once again on 30 September- 1 October. BirdLife Finland will coordinate the event and collect data in real time, sending it on to Japan, where the NTT will contribute a sum of money for each species recorded. European Birdwatch is linked to fundraising for conservation projects supported by BirdLife International, working in all corners of the globe for nature and birds.

It is, therefore, important to take part and report the highest number of species possible. A sheet of paper is sufficient, on which is recorded the observation point, the number of observers, the number of species and individual birds seen, any rarities and the top three species in number. Then send the report to LIPU (or your own bird organisation) who will forward it to the organisers.

30 September - 1 October: Birdwatchers of Europe unite!

thousands of the oiled penguins and feed hundreds of young ones. After they were cleaned up they were taken over 500 miles away, from where they would swim back to their original locations. The journey took a couple of weeks, enough time to get rid of most of the pollution. Local and international organisations took part in this operation, including many BirdLife Partners who sent money and experts in such emergencies.

IMPORTANT BIRD AREA IN DANGER

In Poland, the Bialowieza Forest is under serious threat. It is the oldest forest in Europe and is an IBA on the border with Bellorusse. It is the subject of large-scale commercial logging, which has reduced its area by 20%. OTOB, the Polish BirdLife Partner, along with other organisations, is making every effort to intervene, as the whole forest may be designated as a National Park, enlarging the boundaries of the present protected area. In spite of support from the Ministry of the Environment, there are many opposing interests and the battle will be very hard.

INDIA: A DANGEROUS TRADITION

Every year, more than a million birds of all kinds are captured and then released later as a gesture of religious tradition, meant to be an act of generosity. However in reality it puts many wild species in danger. Illegal trading proliferates, and injury and death is caused by the methods used to catch them and inadequate feeding. The best way to be kind to birds is to leave them free and undisturbed in their natural environment.

NEWS IN BRIEF

South Africa: a disaster for penguins.

On 23 June a ship sank off the coast of South Africa, spilling tons of fuel oil into the sea, only a few kilometres from two very large colonies that hold 40% of the world population of African Penguins, about 21,000 pairs. The South African National Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds took immediate action to clean

Line drawings in this edition are by courtesy of the RSPB

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