

## How do we measure success ?

Editorial

*David Lingard*

It is good, from time to time, to pause and review our work and the progress made, to ensure that all is well and we are still aiming for, and achieving, valid objectives.

LIPU has been established in Italy for only 41 years and we are much younger having been founded in 1989 but we can surely see success in both countries. If we look at the work and projects supported by LIPU-UK over the years we can be proud and feel some real satisfaction - things are changing for the birds in Italy, there may still be some way to go but it's a lot better than it was in the dark days of the early 1990s.

The people who used to say, "It's a waste of time going to Italy, they've shot all the birds." are now seeing birdwatching holidays being offered by companies such as Bird Holidays of Leeds and Island Holidays who are based in Comrie, Scotland.

The reasons are many but surely LIPU can take some credit for its major input to the Hunting Law which was passed in 1992, before which the hunting of wild animals and birds was totally uncontrolled. In the last

*Messina - a safer  
place*

quarter of a century the number of licensed hunters in Italy has reduced by two thirds and the young men are choosing other pursuits and pastimes. LIPU has no quarrel with legal hunting, even though it would be happy if there was no hunting at all, but has consistently and vigorously opposed the poachers with some notable successes.

Today the situation on the Messina Strait in the spring is relatively peaceful compared with the carnage of just a few years ago. The credit goes to many, as well as LIPU - WWF, FMF and the Forest Guards among others have all played their part and the migration is so much safer as a result. The situation still needs to be controlled to prevent it flaring up again, but the widespread poaching seems to be a diminishing memory.

Sadly the trapping of birds in the autumn seems to continue unabated and LIPU will continue until we see success in this area as well, I'll have more details in future issues.

The UK section of LIPU is strong although membership is currently stagnant and this gives some concern, but the members we have continue to support the cause with generosity which often leaves me struggling for the right words.

Since I became your delegate I have seen some wonderful things happen which would not have been possible were it not for the financial strength of LIPU-UK.

Each year we have kept our promise to fund four projects in Italy as well as simply collect membership subscriptions, each June we send the sum of €50,000

to headquarters and they know they can rely on this and make plans knowing the funds will arrive.

It is even better because, thanks to your generosity and, of late, some very generous legacies, we have been building a designated fund for, we hope, the purchase of important habitat to create, or extend a nature reserve. This fund currently is worth over £200,000 - a wonderful achievement.

Another measure of success is again financial - since 1989 when LIPU-UK was founded we have sent funds to Italy which recently passed a special milestone - **half a million pounds!** This tremendous sum is thanks to you all, well done LIPU-UK.

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## **LET US BRING ITALIAN NATURE BACK INTO EUROPE!**

**F**rom the Ministry of the Environment a decree on Natura 2000 and the hunting derogations to realign Italy with Europe. However, there are still so many proceedings for breaches of European law on environmental themes that weigh on our country. LIPU continues to work to protect the most important areas for birds and to act to change practices contrary to nature and European law.

Let us begin with some good news, of a decree which signals an historic moment for the Natura 2000 network in Italy: coming on 4 August from the Council of Ministers out of proposals from the Environment and Agricultural ministers Scanio and De Castro, it brings about the first conservation measures for the Italian Zones of Special Protection (ZPS), in other

From the  
President of  
LIPU

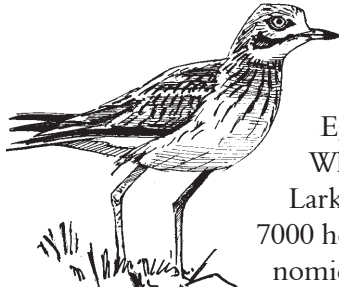
*Giuliano Tallone*

*It is no surprise that in regard to these matters the EU has lost patience with Italy...*

words the areas most important for the protection of birds and their habitats. Strict regulation of hunting, limits on activities that disturb birds and more, as you will read in the special report. But more: there is also a sea change as regards the, up to now, untenable question of the hunting derogations conceded by so many Italian regions in a manner ever more contrary to national and European legislation. It is no surprise that in regard to these matters the EU has lost patience with Italy and opened proceedings for which the aforementioned decree has posted the beginnings of a defence. But indeed there are 80 actions in progress against Italy on environmental issues, of which 8 are in the last phase before judgement and heavy fines.

The worst case is that of the failure to designate the Special Protection Zones, which if not quickly resolved could cost us over 10 million Euros. The basic steps to be made are two: to designate the Zones at once on the basis of the Important Bird Area project, the map of which has been drawn up by LIPU and lodged with the EU; and to set in motion a serious management strategy starting from the bringing up to scratch of conservation measures which guarantee a healthy status for the wild bird populations indicated in the Directive. Haste must be made to avoid the other judgements which are coming on its heels. It is time for the Italian State to respect the Directive in full, without further attempts to avoid its Community obligations.

Another striking example is that of the last steppes of the foot of the Gargano in Puglia. Here proceedings have resulted in a judgement against Italy by the Court of Justice for the continued violations against the ZPS that constitutes the largest remaining area of



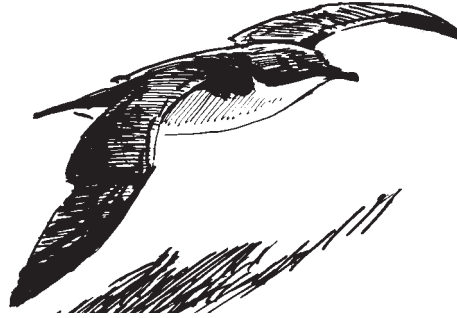
steppe, where are found such birds as Little Bustard, Stone Curlew, Woodchat Shrike, Egyptian Vulture, Black-eared Wheatear, Calandra and Short-toed Larks. Up to a third of the area, about 7000 hectares, has been subjected to economic activities which have damaged 90% of the best area from the point of

view of natural interest. In fact there are new threats to the zones almost daily. A startling example from the lake of Varese: new building by the Commune has already destroyed a habitat under European protection where Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers nested and putting at risk protected birds such as Bittern, Little Bittern, Purple Heron and Red Kite. The first intrusion under dispute is the building of a huge autogrill, among other things without either authorisation or impact assessment as the Habitat Directive demands, the area being a ZPS.

Following an alert by LIPU, which also made representation to the State Procurator for Varese, the project has been halted. There are also plans for a 75-berth marina, with 100 metres of pontoons anchored to the bed, with an adjoining service area of 3000 square metres. The work will have a devastating impact on the fragile lake environment, in which are found birds which have seen the lake accorded European status. The works have been the subject of negative opinions from the Provincial authority as much as from hunters and lake fishermen. A difficult situation, and one can but applaud the initiatives of the Minister, Pecoraro Scanio, aimed at finding solutions that will bring Italian nature back into Europe.

The decree on hunting in Special Protection Zones

seems to demonstrate that the right path has been taken. And may it continue thus, with decisiveness and speed, for nature can wait no longer.



## **NATURE NETWORK 2000 AND THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS: FINALLY!**

**A law depicting the rules of conservation for the IBA-ZPS and also regulating the dreadful Italian system of allowing exceptions or derogations with regard to the hunting of protected species. A decisive contribution by LIPU.**

*by Claudio Celada*

**F**or years LIPU has worked, first to initiate the Italian IBA-ZPS and then to draw up measures for the protection of birds within these 'special protection zones'. Now, at last, an official legislative step has taken place, backed by Europe. With a law promulgated on 4 August the government has set up a series of binding conservation measures for the ZPS. In a few months, in Italy, Nature Network 2000, will 'take off' - it is applicable both to Special Protection Zones (ZPS) and also to Sites of Community Importance (SIC). LIPU has been responsible for promoting these measures aimed at reducing bird disturbance. The measures are listed below. But, first,

we would like to highlight two advances - the significant reduction in the length of the hunting season by two months and the exclusion of Tufted Duck, Ruff and Partridge from the list of species that can be shot.

Alfonso Pecoraro Scanio and Paolo De Castro, for the Ministries of the Environment and Agriculture, had to face up to the accusations against Italy, by the European Union, for Italy's infractions of the hunting laws. Law 221 of 2001 had allowed, purely on a regional basis, the permission to grant exceptions to the list of species that were protected and thus banned to hunters. The ease of these derogations proved an absolute disaster; a swarm of concessions took place. These events really violated international rules.

The stand taken by Europe against Italy was - correct the situation or else face punitive measures, such as heavy fines and the cancellation of the rural development funds. Europe decreed that any dispensations (on species banned to hunters) were henceforward to be exceptional and in any case not to extend beyond one year, further, that the Italian Institute for Wild Fauna should have overall authority and could not be overridden by any local authority.

Local regions are given ninety days to conform. Finally the decree stipulates that exceptions cannot be allowed for endangered species. The decree will be ratified this October. In short, a great result for LIPU. Now, the activists, advisers and the staff of LIPU can see a shaft of bright light in Italy's policy towards nature. The decree has to be converted into law and this is expected to be in October. LIPU, needless to say, will still continue its efforts.

*... a shaft of bright  
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nature.*

## Measures decreed for ZPS.

- The hunting season opens the first Sunday in October (with the exception of wild boar and similar animals).
- Hunting is banned in January (but for two pre-arranged days for boar hunting). There is an absolute ban on any early opening of the hunting season.
- Tufted Duck, Ruff and Partridge, previously allowed, are now excluded from the list of birds permitted to be hunted.
- There is a ban on the derogation that contained the infamous loophole where a small quantity of birds can be shot.
- There are restrictions on the introduction of wild fauna for furthering the purpose of hunting. There is also a ban on establishing new rubbish tips or rubbish disposal sites.
- There is a requirement to adopt safety measures for birds on high and medium tension electric cables - both against electrocution and for prevention of impact.
- Within the special protection zones it is forbidden to introduce high-tension electric cables, the establishment of new ski slopes and the introduction of wind farms until such time as the ZPS management give permission but then only in specific instances.



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## NEWLY FOUND TERRITORY

**Stories of struggle but also success, in the hope of a return to legality in an area that is too often tormented by “environmental crimes” towards nature and humans. It is not a coincidence that the 41st LIPU National Assembly was held last May in Ischia.**

*by Rino Esposito*

*... once again established a link between environmental criminals and the mafia.*

In 2005 the numbers of criminal offences against the environment in Italy included more than 23,000 violations of environment laws, and 19,000 people reported (of whom 183 were arrested). In first place there is the illegal disposal of rubbish, where investigators have once again established a link between environmental criminals and the mafia. Campania, with Naples and Caserta areas, is one of the regions that are mostly affected by environmental crimes. Luckily, however, there are brave magistrates who try to tackle this growing phenomenon with the help of specialised police forces, like Carabinieri, and the State Forest Rangers. LIPU’s annual congress, which took place on 19 May at Ischia, was used as an opportunity to underline some of the reports of successful actions against environmental crimes. The event, entitled “Let’s get our area back. Ecology and legality: successful stories”, was under the patronage of the State Forest Rangers, and the sponsorship of Regione Campania, Naples Province, of Coldiretti Campania, of Naples Trade Union, and of Forensia Legali Associati.

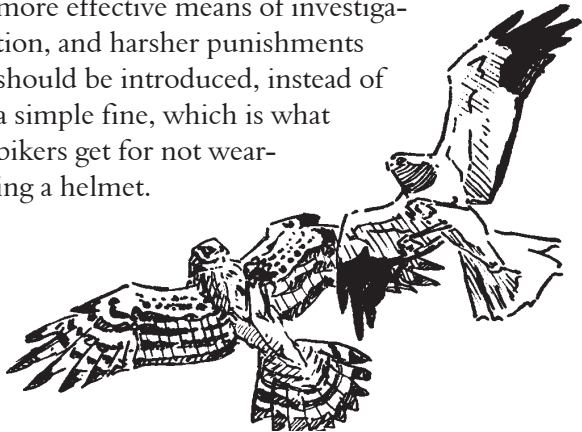
It is important to point out one of the most important operations against illegal waste disposal, coordinated by Federico Bisceglia, an expert judge of Nola

Republic Prosecution Office, and conducted by the State Forest Rangers in the countryside around Nola and Acerra, near Naples. The operation and the officers taking part were commended by LIPU. The leader, Vincenzo Stabile, was very enthusiastic about the success of this operation named “Terra Mia” (“My area”), and he told us that everything started from the finding of dumped metallurgic waste in the areas of Nola and Acerra. It was obviously an illegal disposal of industrial waste near vegetable and fruit agricultural areas, or near waterways. A similar case had already been found in the Regi Lagni Canals, where dusts, salt wastes and building waste were dumped and illegal fumes were gradually dispersing into underground water. A complex investigation was carried out to uncover and demonstrate the presence of an illegal business of waste disposal. The environmental damage had reached a level for which all people arrested were found guilty. For the first time not only the Minister for the Environment, but also the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry came forward as victims of the damage to an area that is one of the most fertile and productive areas in Italy. During the investigations the level of the large illicit income that unscrupulous industrialists made through savings from legal waste disposal emerged. The suspects had dumped heavy metal wastes into the ground, often in riverbeds. This practice is dangerous to public health and the environment alike. Furthermore, it emerged that the same suspects had used some of those areas to grow fruit and vegetables that were then sold for human consumption. During this operation four industrial estates were confiscated, together with 35 cars and lorries, 32 sites between Acerra, Nola, Marigliano, and one in the Caserta province, for a total of 1.2 million square metres, and 277,500 cubic metres of waste found in that area. More than 14

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change...*

people were arrested. Data from this operation are alarming. but. unfortunately, this is the norm.

These illegal practices are widespread throughout Italy, especially concerning illegal waste disposal, due to the lack of a continuous action to combat them, and lack of more effective “weapons” such as more adequate laws, more invasive investigative methods, a strict methodology and coordination in the supervision of the territory by the police. It is essential to increase and put into place all the investigative resources, starting from national police to the local police bodies, where there are many capable individuals who know the situation and the territory. Above all, it is imperative to introduce environmental crimes into the Criminal Code. We hope that with the new Government things can change, and we suggest a LIPU proposition: to include poaching and illegal traffic of wild animals as environmental crimes. These illegal activities involve a large number of criminals and involve huge sums of money, therefore more effective means of investigation, and harsher punishments should be introduced, instead of a simple fine, which is what bikers get for not wearing a helmet.



## **DONATO CEGNE, THE JUDGE WHO FIGHTS THE ECOMAFIA**

**T**hirty million tonnes of waste are disposed of illegally in Italy each year, most of those in Campania. The ecomafia earns tens of millions of euros from this activity. These are the data presented at the LIPU Congress in Ischia by Donato Cegne, who is the most senior judge in S. Maria Capua Vertere (CE). “The region of Campania, he explained, is central to many environmental crimes: apart from illegal waste disposal, there is illegal quarrying, and even “illegal” settlements on State territory. The territory suffers a double wound, because its resources are first used, and then illegal wastes are dumped in the area”. Lack of control is a worrying reality, especially at the bottom of the illegal activities, which translates into no prevention. “The only existing control is the punishment of crimes – Donato Cegne concluded – which has the limitation of not covering all the territory, and it especially occurs too late to save the area from illicit activities.

### **LIPU PRIZES AGAINST ILLEGALITY**

**T**hese four prizes went to people who distinguished themselves in the fight against environmental crimes. During the National Congress, LIPU gave the prize to Vincenzo Stabile, head and coordinator of the State Forestry Body of Naples, for the important long term contribution of more than twenty years to the safeguarding of the environment and its fauna with his investigative police activities, in particular for the Operation “Terra Mia” “. Another prize was given to Franco Nicodemi, head of the anti-poaching team of the State Forest Rangers of Naples, for his great professionalism in coordinating

the Operation Icaro against poaching of birds, and illegal smuggling of wild birds. Finally, two LIPU activists from Ischia were also given prizes: Antonio Maresca and Luigi Di Meglio “for the undying determination with which they have been fighting for Ischia environment and fauna for years, and in hostile territory”. Their example and courage have made LIPU an important reference point for institutions and citizens of the whole island.

### **THE MINISTER PECORARO SCANIO AT THE LIPU ISCHIA CONGRESS**

**“Developing a system of rigorous and respected laws is a great challenge that Italy would like to win”.**

**A**lfonso Pecoraro Scanio chose Ischia and the LIPU National Congress for his first public appearance as Minister for the Environment. Pecoraro Scanio immediately agreed with the LIPU proposition of elevating the gravity of environmental crimes and insert them into the Criminal Code. “We must approve in the short term an Environmental Criminal Code to meet the needs of the most involved judges”, he announced. The Minister presented to the LIPU audience some of the most important points of his mandate: first of all, security for the territory from landslides and floods. Second, transform the State Forest Rangers into a real environmental Police, that can defend wild animals and enforce laws on habitat and wild birds. “There is a general plan for safeguarding biodiversity, and we want to expand and invest in it”, Pecoraro Scanio announced to the applauding audience. Development and employment are not incompatible with the protection of the environment. “On the contrary, even the increased

*Development and employment are not incompatible with the protection of the environment.*

security of the territory can be a chance to increase Italian economy”. “We would like – the Minister concluded – to give a strong signal, and cancel in the next few years the 80 investigations opened by the European Union against Italy for breaching environmental laws.

## **NEWS FROM LIPU**

### **Poacher’s bunkers confiscated.**

**T**wo bunkers and an artificial lake constructed for illegal shooting have been discovered and confiscated by a special police team in the Naples area. LIPU volunteers also took part in the operation. The structures were within a wildlife protection area and covered a total area of some 8000 square metres. In addition 500 cartridges and duck decoys were found. The area is important for several heron species and Marsh Harriers that pass through on migration.

### **MOSE: alternatives are evaluated**

**T**his is the project that is intended to save Venice from the sea. On 1 August the Council of Ministers requested alternative proposals to the proposed mobile barriers. During the past year environmental associations and LIPU have collected signatures and made recourse to the European Commission to attempt to close down this dangerous undertaking. The character of the lagoon is already being profoundly altered by the construction of artificial islands. The point of no return is near. High level meetings are proposed for September to evaluate options and the Minister of the Environment is calling for a new evaluation of the environmental impact.

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## **Ostiglia LIPU Reserve**

Two birds which can be found at Oasi Ostiglia described on page 21 are the herons seen here.

Above is the Purple Heron and at the right is a Night Heron.



## Pictures of

Left is Claudio Celada, LIPU Conservation seen in pensive

Right: Alfonso Pecoraro Scanio, Minister for the Environment, during his engagement and his speech at the AGM in Ischia.

Below is a Kingfisher similar to the one seen at the LIPU reserve at Ostiglia.



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### **Egyptian Vulture**

This vulture breeds in small numbers in the LIPU reserve of Gravina di Laterza in Puglia in the south of the country, see p3.

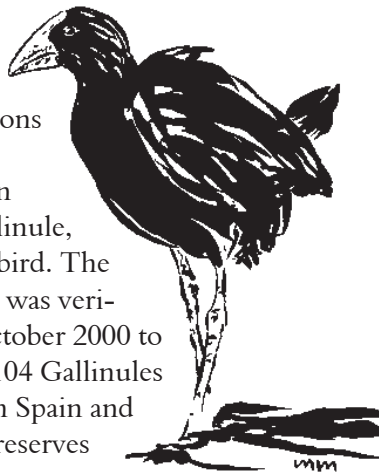
On p23 is the story of an oiled Puffin restored to health and successfully released back to sea.

## A SULTAN IN SEARCH OF A REALM

The project to reintroduce the Purple Gallinule [Pollo Sultano] has become a unique opportunity for the defence of the wetlands of Sicily for the benefit of other threatened species.

*by Alessandro Andreotti*

It was possible for the White Stork and now there is victory for the Gallinule project. This project has been ongoing since 1997 but LIPU had already been promoting the idea for some time before then. In the past the bird had been widely distributed along a good part of the western Mediterranean coast but since the nineteenth century there has been a rapid decline caused by the draining of wetland and hunting. By the beginning of the 70s the bird survived in only a few isolated areas in Sardinia and on the Iberian Peninsula. It had definitely disappeared from Sicily by 1957 although it had once been abundant there, especially along the eastern and southern coasts. This was no different from the fate of many other species during the same period. When conditions improved with the introduction of restrictions on hunting many water birds did begin to return but not the Purple Gallinule, as it is a very sedentary bird. The feasibility of the project was verified by a study from October 2000 to December 2003 when 104 Gallinules were bred in captivity in Spain and were released on three reserves



in Sicily. It was a perfect habitat and within a few years they had begun to breed and colonise areas near the release site. The rapid expansion gave rise to the hope that in time a sustainable population would be established.

There was, however a cloud on the horizon as there is no wetland area on the island large enough to support the number of pairs needed to ensure the long term survival of the species. How to avoid a second extinction for the Purple Gallinule? The answer to that question is easy to find in theory but difficult to put into practice. Proper management for wildlife is needed for more areas than those already under protection. The marshlands need to support 150-200 nesting pairs and a web of wet areas must be maintained to allow the birds to spread. In the areas round the project much has already been done to make both institutions and the public aware of the necessity of safeguarding the wetlands of Sicily. The Purple Gallinule has become something of a champion of a conservation campaign which will have positive benefits for other threatened wetland species such as the Marbled Teal , the Ferruginous Duck and the Sicilian Marsh Tortoise.

The WWF Golden Panda Award 2006 was awarded to LIPU for its project to return the Purple Gallinule to Sicily. This is an annual award, given for outstanding initiatives in nature conservation. Giuliano Tallone, President of LIPU, BirdLife in Italy, declared that this demonstrates the importance of bringing back a species that was extinct in Sicily, the care of wetlands and their importance for biodiversity and migrating birds.

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## RESERVES AND CENTRES

### A Jewel-Casket of Biodiversity

175 species of birds, many breeding, among reeds, woods and pools rich in plant and animal species. A fascinating journey in the nature reserve of the Ostiglia Marsh.

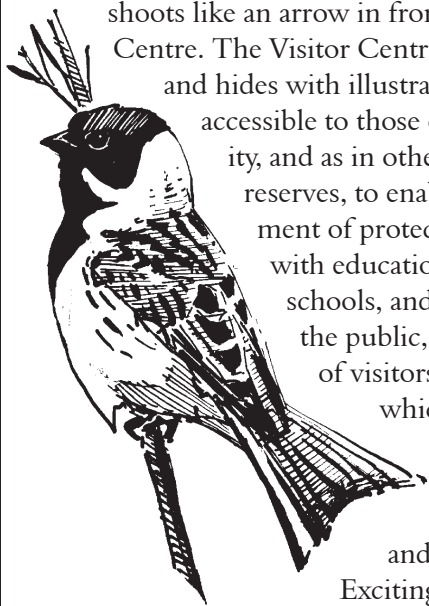
*by Giulio Benatti and Ugo Faralli*

*... an island of biodiversity suspended in a “sea” of meadow, plain, monoculture.*

An island. These are the Ostiglia Marshes; an island of biodiversity suspended in a “sea” of meadow, plain, monoculture. Within it are 80 hectares of marsh and pools, all that remain of a vast valley-system, the ancient Silva Hostilia, which extended (since the end of the Ice Age) in the shelter of the River Tartaro. Lowland woods and marsh vegetation, rich in very many animal and plant species, a real and true jewel casket of biodiversity that has attracted LIPU since the end of the 1970s. Thanks to LIPU, the Ostiglia Marshes have gained many plaudits: “Wetland of International Importance”, Nature Reserve of Lombardy, IBA, Zone of Special Protection, SIC. Since 1986 it has been a LIPU Oasis, thanks to a covenant with the Comune of Ostiglia. The area of the marsh is dominated by extensive canebrakes and sedge-beds, mingled with pools and open water. There are numerous species of aquatic flora, some of which are very rare and special to the Po Plain and whose flowers dot the banks of the marshes in late summer months while others cover extensive surfaces with a continuous blanket, like a floating meadow, and in late autumn changes colour from green to purple-red.

Among all the animals present in the marsh, those

whose presence can least be unnoticed are the birds. In the last 15 years, birdwatchers, LIPU and ornithologists have taken a census of 175 species, about 60 breeding. Herons are well represented, Purple Heron, with about 30 pairs, (with a heronry clearly visible from the second observation hide), Bittern, Little Bittern, Black Crowned Night Heron, the Great White Heron, the Squacco Heron. The six pairs of Marsh Harrier (which can be closely observed from the new high observation viewpoint) will ensure that you don't regret your visit to this corner of lowland, apparently similar to neighbouring lands and ordinary agricultural areas. Then passerines, the constant presence of the Reed Bunting, symbol of the Reserve, of Bearded Tit, Penduline Tit, the Great Reed Warbler, of Savi's Warbler. The melodious song of the Nightingale and Golden Oriole accompany us along the nature-path, a few moments before the electric blue of the Kingfisher shoots like an arrow in front of the Visitor



Centre. The Visitor Centre, high viewpoints and hides with illustrated charts are all accessible to those of limited mobility, and as in other LIPU oases and reserves, to enable the proper enjoyment of protected areas. Together with educational programmes for schools, and nature-events for the public, we draw thousands of visitors every year, among which are birdwatching expeditions and release of raptors, theatrical spectacles and open-air lunches.

Exciting and special encounters with birds, with

*"It is a health cure."*

other animals, and with the flora: at all times of the year it is a special treat to visit the Ostiglia Marsh. It is a health cure. After four years of dedication and work, a "LIFE-Nature" project financed by the EU, to conserve the most important habitats of the Reserve, is all but finished. Our two main directions have been to improve the habitats for breeding and settlement of the most important species of animals, and also promote diversification of habitat. We have benefited Purple Herons and Marsh Harriers, Flowering Rushes and Water Lentils, Tree Frogs and Spotted Tritons, and continue to do so. Especially among these last, the amphibians, a species which has drawn particular attention; the Lataste's Frog, a species particular to the Po plain. The number of areas suitable to its needs is now much reduced. The new alder woodland is thought to be favourable, and should lead to an increase in numbers.

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## RETURN TO THE SEA IN AUTUMN

**An unexpected encounter at the end of the holidays with a Puffin, which stayed in my house for almost a month until it was able to tackle the winds and the waves again...**

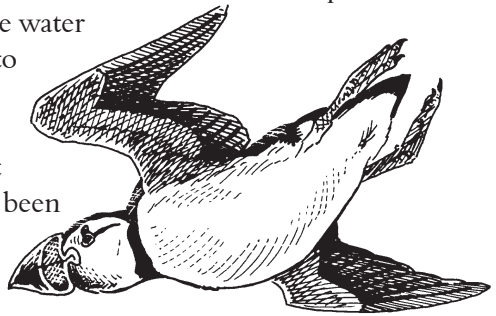
*by Francesco Petretti*

**M**y family had a house at Fregene, near Rome, and we used to go there at the end of the school year. The holidays were endless and by the last week we had had enough, we were longing for the first day of school as if it were the greatest of festivals. On the day before our departure for Rome our friends from the fishing village appeared at our house with a jute sack which contained what looked

*... it was completely  
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bet a penny on it  
surviving*

like a sort of parrot which had fallen into the sea. At the bottom of the sack huddled a bird that was little bigger than a pigeon: black, stinking of diesel oil, its feathers stuck together. With great difficulty someone had realised that that lump of tar and feathers was a Puffin, perhaps one of the most delightful of marine birds in the northern hemisphere. It was really poorly and its breastbone stuck out like a sharp blade under the skin of the chest, showing that it had not eaten anything for several days. I had read that birds covered with oil are usually carefully washed with special solvents and then cared for in captivity until the layer of natural oil over their feathers which make them impermeable can be restored. I hadn't got any special solvents so I took a bottle of soap for washing wool, which is usually used for jumpers and other garments which needed to be kept smooth, and started to wash the feathers. Little by little the oil disappeared but the Puffin was shivering with cold - it was completely soaked and when I finished washing it I would not have bet a penny on it surviving. I dried it with a hair-dryer and put it into a cardboard box. The following morning I took out something completely different from the previous day. It was still thin, but its feathers were smooth and plumped-up, giving it its rounded shape back, its bright orange legs were shining, its beak showed the typical multi-coloured design of the "marine parrot". It was hungry: I went to the market and bought a pack of anchovies. It swallowed them whole from my hand letting them slip down its throat head first. Few experiences are as good as feeding a foundling animal and I set to work with enthusiasm. The Puffin stayed in the bathroom of the house for nearly a month, alternating walks on the floor with swims in the bathtub. When I decided to let it go free I returned to the sea. I opened the box, the Puffin came out and looked hesitantly

around. Then it threw itself into the air with its legs wide apart like the flaps on an aeroplane, its wings started to beat and it flew towards the open sea. It landed in the water and started to swim, rinsing itself with the salt water it had been deprived of. Then it submerged and popped up again like a cork. A Herring Gull harried it but each time the predator attacked it submerged; it seemed to be managing well so I returned home. This encounter was the first of a long series of experiences which led me to discover that the sea where I spent my holidays was in fact a beautiful place, rich in animal life, especially when, the summer frenzy over, the waves, wind and clouds took over the beach again.



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## **LIPU: POSITIVE RESULTS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT**

*Elena D'Andrea*

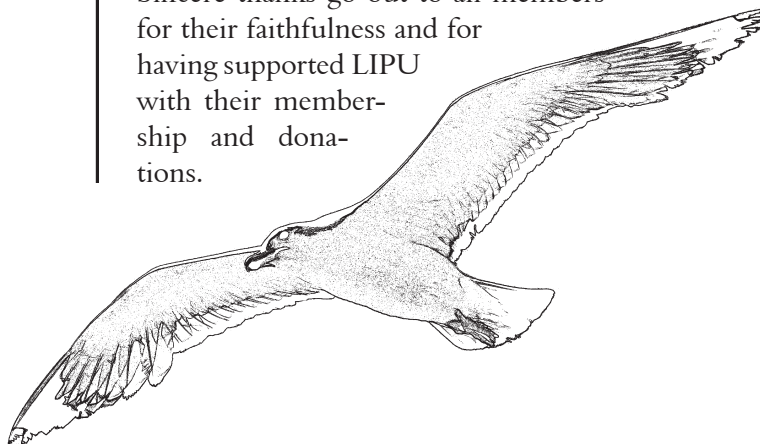
**L**IPU's projects and activity in 2005 was at a similar level to that of the previous year. The total amount of income from membership fees, donations and contributions to special projects amounted to just over 3.5 million euros (almost 2.5 million pounds sterling).

Two thirds of our resources have been spent on conservation, lobbying and environmental education.

This has led to significant results, which are also due to the work of so many volunteers. We have obtained the designation of numerous IBA (Important Bird Areas) as Zones of Special Protection. Proposals that would have changed hunting laws for the worse have been blocked. The bird flu crisis was tackled. LIPU made a significant input to the Ministry of Agriculture document on rural development. A study of migrating birds was completed in the islands around Sicily. Anti-poaching activities were pursued in several parts of Italy. 40 years of LIPU were celebrated in Rome.

At the annual members' assembly there was a presentation of the "LIPU Strategic Document 2006 – 2010: five fundamental years for the conservation of biodiversity". For an association such as ours that is involved in so many diverse activities and forms part of an international network it is vital to have clear objectives at all levels. We will thus make our association stronger and more incisive, and achieve even more satisfactory results for the protection of birds and nature.

Sincere thanks go out to all members for their faithfulness and for having supported LIPU with their membership and donations.



## QUALITY IS THE WINNER

**A pilot initiative which joins the quality of the product to that of the environment: Parmesan cheese is contributing to the protection the natural biodiversity in its area of production.**

*by Giorgia Gaibani*

**P**roducing a high-quality product and, at the same time, protecting the environment is not only possible but is already a reality. This is demonstrated by the production of Parmesan cheese based on methods which go back to its very beginnings but which are today formalised into an obligatory code of practice. This was the context that gave rise to an idea for a collaborative initiative between LIPU, the Parma-Reggio cheese maker's consortium, the Region of Emilia Romagna and the provinces of Parma and Modena. The project is intended to strengthen the existing links between the high quality product and the protection of the local environment, to the mutual benefit of the farmers, Nature and the consumers. The gain for both sides: finding out which bird species benefit from the production of the famous cheese is in itself a contribution making possible the development for the environment and wildlife of the methods of production of Parmesan. In the countryside, a close link has developed over the centuries between the natural world and man's activities in such a way that the survival of some species depends on the continuance of particular traditional and non-intensive farming practices.

However, in recent decades many agricultural processes have changed considerably with ever more emphasis on intensive production and on the standardi-

*... to the mutual benefit of the farmers, Nature and the consumers.*

sation of the product while the quality of foodstuffs and the respect for the environment have been lost to view. Some traditional practices have nevertheless not fallen to the market forces, as illustrated by the production of Parmesan. These methods involve the maintenance, within the areas of production of this cheese, of both permanent and temporary meadows and also the growth of various species of herbs at much higher levels than in other similar zones of the Po Plain. The meadow habitats, now largely removed from the lowland areas of northern Italy following the introduction of techniques of intensive stock rearing, are winning back a vital environmental role and have become indispensable to the survival of many threatened species of animal.

In this way the traditional producers of Parmesan are contributing to the safeguard of natural biodiversity in their areas of production. To achieve the targets of the project, surveys have been carried out of the birds within various typical areas of Parmesan production (in the provinces of Parma and Modena) as well as in control areas outside those of typical production (in the provinces of Mantova and Piacenza). These have taken place both in the winter months to count wintering species and in the months of spring to census breeding species. From these counts it has emerged that the zone of typical Parmesan production plays host to a number of species, both wintering and breeding, which is greater than that observable in the control areas. The results confirm the fact that the traditional methods of cultivation and stock rearing typical of the production of this cheese are compatible with the needs of the environment and the landscape. All of which constitutes an example of how even today there exists the possibility of a co-existence between the quality of the product and that of the environment

which LIPU is striving to promote within rural communities.

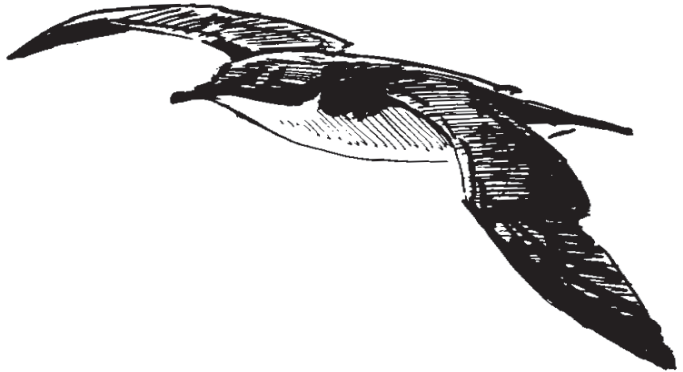
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## CORY'S SHEARWATERS ON LINOSA

**As reported in April, LIPU returned to the island of Linosa with the aim of stopping the illegal collection of Cory's Shearwater eggs and encouraging the islanders to realise that the bird colony is an important resource.**

*Pippo Rannisi*

Loredana, the camp co-ordinator, has worked with the islanders, especially those who in the past collected eggs, trying to convince them to stop doing so. At first they were hostile and unresponsive, and said that most damage to the bird colony was done by rats. She managed to persuade them to collaborate in finding out the reproductive success of the colony and the real level of predation by rats. Thanks to their collaboration, and also the threat of bird flu, which discouraged the activity, egg collection this year was insignificant.



They found that in the area where eggs were traditionally collected, this year eggs were abundant and remained so until Loredana left the island on 10 June. Once the eggs were a few days old they were of no more interest to the islanders. Some of the ex-collectors who had helped Loredana to locate the nests were helping every day to monitor them.

At the end of July we returned to the island to verify the hatching. Unfortunately we discovered that rat predation of the chicks in the first few days of life was very high. We intend to return to Linosa in the coming months to collect more data. I believe however that the collection of eggs may have diminished from the 3 – 4000 in the '80's, partly thanks to LIPU camps from '91 to '96. There has always been rat predation on the colony and I think that it may have been underestimated.

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## **SPECIES IN DECLINE**

One third of the 72 species monitored from 2000 to 2006 under the "MITO 2000" project are found to be in decline in Italy. The project has been organised by CISO (Centro Italiano Studi Ornitologici) and FaunaViva. LIPU – BirdLife Italia will actively participate from now on.

Particularly worrying are the 28 species typical of agricultural habitats. They have seen an average loss of some 30% of breeding pairs over the six years. An area that has been particularly affected is the Po Plain where some species are now almost at the extinction level, for example Corn Bunting and Woodchat Shrike.

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*As in the UK,  
farmland birds are  
in serious decline.*

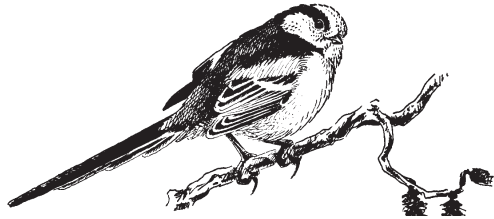
## NEWS FROM LIPU-UK

### New format for the Ali

I asked for comments on the best way of mitigating the increased cost of postage if the Ali had remained in its traditional A4 format after the Post Office changes which were introduced in August.

Thanks to the many who responded, the clear view was to avoid folding the newsletter and to take the opportunity to start afresh with a blank sheet of A5 paper. I hope you like the new look Ali and would be interested to hear any suggestions or comments.

The extra cost of inserting colour pages is no more than we would have paid to the Post Office so I see this as a step forward which is affordable. I hope to print pictures of more members of the LIPU team in Parma in the months to come so you'll be able to put the names to the faces.



### ILLUSTRATED TALK

I am in the process of revising a series of illustrated talks I have given to clubs of all kinds and I can now offer to speak to any group which may be interested in birds in general and the work of LIPU in particular.

If you are a club or group member please pass this offer to your secretary and I'll be happy to discuss the presentation in more detail - thank you.

While I am speaking of meeting people may I say what a pleasure it was to meet so many members at the British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water in August. Also at the fair we recruited almost 20 new members - a warm welcome to you.

The line drawings in this issue are by permission of the RSPB and the European Union, the photographs are all mine but I'd be delighted to receive interesting pictures for publication in future issues.

The hard work of translating this issue was done by: Barbara Avery, Joanna Bazen, Cicely Adelson, Daria Dadam, Bryan Lewis, Caterina Paone, Peter Rafferty, John Walder and Brian Horkley - my thanks to you all.

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