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- New reserve in Campania
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- CAP reform – “a poor effort”



A view of the new LIPU Oasis at Benevento – page 12



A Ferruginous Duck, now under pressure – page 15

An opportunity for reform – missed

Editorial

David Lingard

This is not the place for airing arguments for and against our membership of the European Union but in this issue Patrizia Rossi writes of the latest failure to make real changes to the Common Agricultural Policy.

From the early days of the Treaty of Rome the aim has been to allocate rewards based on production and we can remember butter mountains and wine lakes although I never managed to swim in one. The EU would have us believe that serious and far-reaching reforms were introduced in 1992, 2000 and 2003 but is it really any better?

The Eurocrats tinker with it, but it remains the largest expenditure of European funding and is said to be responsible for forcing up the price of food in Europe. It may also worsen poverty in other parts of the world by the dumping of European surpluses at low prices. Why can we not step back and look again? The aim of making Europe self-sufficient in food was achieved decades ago, so now is the time to consider whether this colossal expenditure could be better directed.

If just a small proportion of the CAP budget was redirected at the improvement of the environment it would have a greater, more far-reaching effect on the continent we will be leaving to future generations than anything the CAP has achieved thus far – but will it happen?

BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL

by *Claudia Celada, LIPU Nature Conservation Director*

In the right direction

The world congress of BirdLife International has taken place in Ottawa. A global network bringing together the ideas, the passion and the skills that are safeguarding important segments of biodiversity.

The world congress of BirdLife International was held at the Ottawa conference centre this June; a unique and precious experience and opportunity to share in the progress of the BirdLife partnership. A chance to reflect on and evaluate the work that LIPU has undertaken in recent years on projects that have made a genuine contribution, on the global scale, to the conservation of biodiversity and of birds.

A hundred and twenty partners, seven thousand local groups, thirteen million members and supporters: these are the numbers that testify to the growth of our network. But they are statistics that would mean little if they were not accompanied by an equal measure of success in the real world of bird and biodiversity conservation. In this age of ours, where we are witnessing the destruction of the environment on a daily basis, it is sometimes easy to become discouraged, when it seems that whatever we do is of little use against the vast global forces that are lining up on the other side. It is therefore important to hear the stories that all these organisations have to tell: their successes, their testimony. The central message that emerges is clear: when we apply ourselves with dedication and planning, success will come. For example, there is the reduction in the mortality of

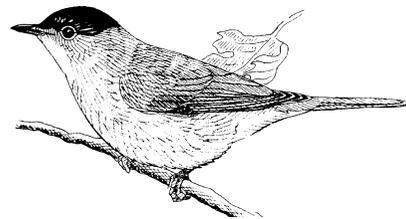
seabirds due to long-line fishing (80% fewer birds are succumbing to being caught on the hooks thanks to the use of simple technical fixes). Then there is the regeneration of 200,000 hectares of the precious lowland tropical rainforest of Sumatra, and the pulling back from the very brink of extinction of species once reduced to a few individuals but now on the way to recovery, such as the Kakapo, the rare nocturnal parrot of New Zealand's Fjordland, or the Azores Bullfinch, rescued from oblivion by Portugal's BirdLife partner, SPEA.

What characterises these achievements is an enormous energy. All over the world, BirdLife's partners are flagging up significant gains, even in extremely testing circumstances (for example in the vast marshes of Iraq, which are beginning to revive and repopulate). The destruction of IBAs (Important Bird Areas), such as that of Panama Bay, crucial to the migration of birds between the Nearctic and Neotropical regions, has been forestalled by the coordinated action of many BirdLife partners in protesting to the governments concerned over the damage such projects can do in the name of development. And so we note with satisfaction the contribution of LIPU has made, by writing to the government of Kenya, to the safeguarding of the Dakatcha IBA, Kenya's last coastal forest, which was to be paved over with biofuel plantations. It is thus easy to see the importance of belonging to a partnership, that of BirdLife, a network in every sense. A network for biodiversity, a network for ideas and abilities, a network for people who have nature conservation in their hearts, and who, all over the world, are confronting problems that can seem insurmountable.

This then is the model for BirdLife’s strategies for 2014–2020. Strategies whose strengths come from projects set in concrete terms, that entail close collaboration between all the partners, as birds and environmental issues do not recognise national borders. And it is appropriately perhaps the “Flyway” programme, that for migration routes, which is most emblematic of this renewed emphasis: the protection of birds throughout their life cycle, above all through the perils of their long migration. But whatever the lines of action the philosophy is the same; to think globally, and act locally. It is a huge intercultural experiment that is not an end in itself, but that has, as its objective, the conservation of nature and of our future, whether in the case of local groups on the plains of Tanzania, or that of our own LIPU in city-crowded Europe.

BirdLife International: A growing network

Partner associations	121
Members and supporters	13 million
Local conservation groups	7000
Staff members	7400
Year founded	1923
Website	www.birdlife.org



CAP REFORM – MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

by Patrizia Rossi, LIPU Agriculture Section

The new Common Agricultural Policy launched in Brussels is a disappointment – missing is a true change of direction for the protection of the environment and biodiversity. And all the while the crisis in the sector deepens.

If only they had thought about a change in these times of crisis. A new form of agriculture which would put a premium on the production of healthy food, on the protection of the environment and new opportunities for employment for young people. But the disappointment is so great after the launch, on the 25th June last, of the long-awaited reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. A CAP which over the last decades has always sustained intensive production with maximum environmental impact and causing a serious crisis in biodiversity. A policy which, in the long term, has not been able to guarantee in any way the economic viability of those same businesses which it should have protected. Businesses which, in the last ten years, have been pushed by the crisis to the edge of the abyss: at least 35% of agricultural businesses in Italy have an income 25% less than the national mean (as against a figure of less than 25% having an income lower than 12%, in Europe as a whole).

If the economy is weeping, biodiversity is also in tears

Intensive farming practice impoverishes the agricultural ecosystem in various ways: through the excessive use of synthetic plant healthcare products,

because it destroys the natural elements such as hedges, ponds and woods; and because it substitutes for non-intensive cultivation methods (such as hay meadows and pasture) intensive ones (for example, greenhouses). Some agricultural habitats which are important for the environment are threatened by a contrary phenomenon: the abandonment of areas which are difficult to cultivate in our mountains. Italian farmland is also threatened by factors which come from outside agriculture such as the destruction of land which, in the last sixty years, has led to the urbanisation in Italy of a million and a half hectares of the most fertile soil.

The reform of the CAP – a missed opportunity

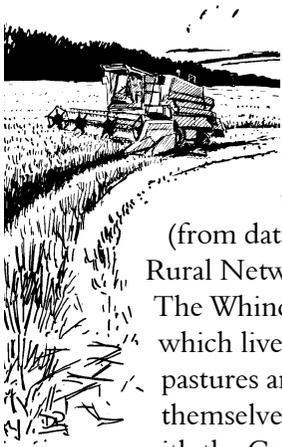
The CAP grants over 50 billion Euros a year to European agriculturalists (of which 7.4 billion go to those in Italy) because agriculture is a primary sector which produces the food we eat and because it is a fact that it should also be important in the protection of the environment and to maintain stability. On the way in which the CAP distributes the money depends the quality of our farmland and of the food we put on our tables. The main thrust which seems necessary judging from a general view of things as they are is to focus on diversification, on sustainability and on multifunctionalism. On the 25th June last the CAP was reformed through a co-decision making process which, for the first time, saw the involvement of the European Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission (the so-called “trialogue”). Many people have described this reform as “green”. But is this really so? Biological agriculture, “zero kilometre” products, social agriculture, the well-being of farm animals, the protection of water supplies, biodiversity: will the new CAP succeed in

encouraging all these? Some new elements have in fact been introduced, but LIPU’s overall judgement of the CAP is negative – because the subsidies to industrial agriculture have been confirmed, as well as the old privileges, without the introduction of real innovations to make our agricultural companies more competitive and sustainable from either an environmental or an economic point of view. Once again, the opportunity for historic change has been lost. So much and so many are the derogations and exceptions that even the few positive reforms have been emptied of significance. An example of this is the so-called “ecological payment”: in order to obtain this subsidy it is understood, among other requirements, that there is an obligation to reserve a proportion of land for nature (for example, leaving a field fallow, creating a wet area or looking after woods and hedges). Well, all farms under 15 hectares in area (which means 85% of all of them) will be exempted in respect of this requirement, and will therefore be able to bank the payment without doing anything for the benefit of birds or biodiversity.

The game is not over, however, and it remains to define the national and regional programme for the spending of the 3 billion a year for rural development. LIPU will definitely be playing its part...

The crisis of the Skylark, the Short-toed Lark etc.

Whoever visits the Alps will certainly have had the opportunity to see the Whinchat, a migrant from Africa which comes to nest in our country. Its continued presence is threatened by the agricultural reclamation of the valley floors and the natural



reforestation of the abandoned pastures of the higher ground; the species has decreased in numbers, in the period 2000–2012, by 21%

(from data supplied by the National Rural Network and LIPU in 2013).

The Whinchat is one of those species which live in mountain meadows and pastures and which unfortunately find themselves in serious trouble, along with the Garden Warbler (down 39%) and the Fieldfare (down 47%). There are many species which are suffering from the transformation of the agricultural landscape: in the high moorland habitats the numbers of Skylark has diminished by 39% and the Short-toed lark by 22%. Also in similar difficulty are those species tied to more diversified agricultural habitats which are rich in semi-natural features such as hedges and thickets: the Red-backed Shrike has declined by 42%, the Woodchat Shrike by 80% and the Stonechat by 56%.

LIPU and the CAP

LIPU has been involved for many years with the Common Agricultural Policy: in the European context with Birdlife Europe and the other European partners and in Italy, since September 2012, thanks to a partnership formed by 14 environmental associations and others from biological agriculture, among which are numbered AIAB, FIRAB, Slow Food, WWF, FAI and Environmental Legacy, with the aim of drawing up proposals for the reform of the CAP.

CONSERVATION

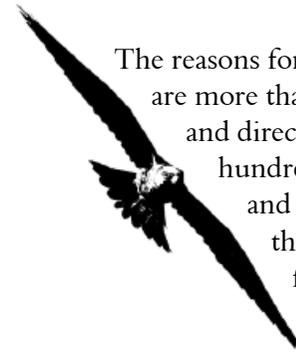
by *Andrea Corso and Marco Gustin*

Aeolian Islands, Eleonora's falcon threatened

There is concern for the declining numbers of the Eleonora's Falcon in the Sicilian archipelago. LIPU is proposing some severe measures to protect the species from human disturbance.

In a period in which all nature is under threat, the situation regarding the splendid Eleonora's Falcon is a particular cause for concern. The results of the 2012 census of breeding birds on the Aeolian and Pelagian islands (Lampedusa and Lampione) are alarming. Over the last ten years the number of pairs has been reduced to 72–93 and on the island of Salina numbers have been halved. The species is known for its unusual characteristic of breeding in autumn before undertaking its long journey across the Red Sea to Madagascar.

Classified as in decline in the European Union and threatened in Europe as a whole, the Eleonora's falcon is classified in annex I of the Bird Directive and is considered vulnerable (Vu) in Italy.



The reasons for the decline of the species are more than evident: mass tourism and direct interference. Every year hundreds of motor boats, bathers and scuba divers freely disturb the rocky cliffs where the falcons breed, alarming the birds themselves and often causing them to leave their

nests. The unprotected eggs thus become easy prey to ravens, rats and gulls or are left cold for too long resulting in the death of the embryo.

A few simple measures could be taken however to improve the situation. Boats should not be allowed within 200 metres of the nesting sites, the tourist board and local administrations could be made more aware and the tourists themselves could be given free leaflets about these birds that are an important part of Sicily's natural history. Last but not least the hunting that is still legal on Sicily's islands should be banned.

We ask the managers of the nature reserves, the mayors of the towns and villages where the falcon breeds, the regional forestry commission and the Sicilian tourist board to help us save this species which belongs not only to Sicily's heritage but to humanity itself.

OASI – A NEW ADDITION

by Marcello Stefanucci, Lipu Benevento delegate

Between nature and history

A new Lipu Oasis at Benevento: 15 kilometres of a river system that hosts important habitats and numerous aquatic bird species. A conservation project that began ten years ago thanks to the efforts of our volunteers

Within the confines and the immediate area of Benevento are contained natural environments of particular interest. The city centre indeed is traversed

by two rivers, the Calore and the Sabato. The first, due to its natural and scenic interest, has since 2002 been the subject of attention from the local Lipu delegation, which has worked for a long time now to give the area some degree of protection. All this because, even though having floral and faunal characteristics in accordance with the parameters of the Habitats Directive, it had not been included in the list of Sites of Community Importance flagged up by Campania to the EU.

It was then that pressure began to be put on Benevento Province to institute a protected oasis, leading after six years to the adoption of a Plan for Hunting and Fauna in February 2008, with an area of 853 hectares being declared off-limits to hunting. It took another five years before Lipu was able to sign an agreement with the Province to take over its management. With this an eleven year journey was brought to an end. It had been difficult and tortuous at times, whether through the amount of administration required, or through the obstructiveness of some of the hunting lobby. All the while, however, our workers were getting on with a series of activities in the area, getting public attention through initiatives such as guided tours and educational work in the schools. They were also keeping records of flora and fauna, publishing leaflets giving both scientific and general information as well as articles in the local press – and occasionally even the national. Alongside this they were organising conventions and widening the environmental fight for the area into things such as opposing damaging building work and the dumping of rubbish.

The Oasis, called the Benevento Wetland Zone until a more appropriate and site-specific one is found, takes in about 15 kilometres of the River Calore through upland and lowland to the centre of Benevento itself. Within its boundaries are three interesting areas of wet woodland, including the 22 hectares of the Pantano–Serretelle, along with muddy and gravelly areas such as that of the Pezzapiana–Ponticelli bend which attracts waders such as Common Sandpiper and Little Ringed Plover. There are also areas of floodplain of great interest, bounded by wide meanders such as the Crocella Pacchiana, Pezzapiana and above all the Pantano (The Marsh), whose name amply describes the character of the site, a great attraction to birders when flooded for the spectacular concentration of water birds such as Grey and Night Herons, egrets, Garganey and Teal.



The next stage, as for other Lipu oases and reserves, is that of effective management for conservation, education, and environmental awareness.

Benevento – Gateway to the Empire

The area of the Oasis is of value not only for its natural and scenic interest, but also for its archaeological and historical evidence, including three bridges from Roman times which gave passage

to various roads, one of which was the consular Via Latina, to connect with ancient Beneventum, an important city half-way from Rome to the Adriatic coast southwards, whence ships departed for the eastern section of the Empire.

DOSSIER

by Giorgia Gaibani, IBA and LIPU Nature 2000 network

Setbacks for Nature

LIPU and WWF have sent the European Commission a dossier reporting damage to sites of the Natura 2000 network in Italy. They are requesting proceedings for infringement against Italy.

It's called "river cleansing", and "saving the waterways". In fact, in the majority of cases, it is only drastic cutting back of vegetation, carried out in a non-selective way and without it really improving the hydraulic functionality of these rivers.

It's a disastrous operation which has destroyed many sites in the Natura 2000 network in Italy, almost always without an initial evaluation of the harm that could be caused to the environment (see the adjoining box). The consequence is the devastation of sites essential for the safeguarding of species and habitat important to the community and areas of special beauty, all of which are fundamental for the health and wellbeing of people. Pictures show eloquently what has happened in some sites of the Natura 2000 network in Friuli Venezia Giulia (codes: ZPS (Special Protection Zones) IT3341002 and SIC

IT3340006), in Liguria (SIC (Sites of Community Importance) IT1343502), in Campania (SIC IT9110002), and in almost all other Italian regions.

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS ASSESSMENT
Article 5, subsection 3, of the Dpr 357/97 as modified, which recalls article 6, subsection 3, of the Directive 92/43/CEE, establishes that plans and projects which could have a negative impact on a site in the Natura 2000 network must be submitted in advance to an assessment of environmental effects with the aim of identifying in an exhaustive way all the potential impacts of the plan or project which could be significant for the site, with reference to the conservation objectives of the protected area and to the global coherence of the Natura 2000 network. This should guarantee a balance between the defence of biodiversity and human activity inside the SIC and ZPS. If you wish to read the precise details of the article quoted you can consult the site of the Ministry for the Environment:

http://www.minambiente.it/home_it/menu.html?mp=/menu/menu_attivita/&m=Rete_Natura_2000.html|RN2000_Direttiva_Habitat.html

But as well as non-selective “pruning” along river banks, in the Natura 2000 sites many other actions are carried out without any understanding of the harm these produce in the habitat and amongst the species of community interest for which ZPS and SIC were designated: speculative building projects, habitat destruction (such as uncultivated land and permanent meadowland or areas such as the steppe-like environment of Puglia and Sardinia) with the aim of converting it for intensive agricultural

cultivation. There are even interventions to maintain and manage Natura 2000 sites which do not take account of the objectives for which the site has designated status. Wind farms and photovoltaic structures are also destroying protected habitat in the European Union or habitat which is fundamental for the survival of important species such as the Egyptian Vulture – and there are many other examples. This means that habitats protected by the EU are being destroyed and vegetation and animal species harmed, and large natural and semi-natural areas are being concreted over with incalculable harm to biodiversity, ecosystems and all that supports them. These damaged ecosystems lose their capacity to provide all the services on which people’s wellbeing depends such as the purification of water and of polluted areas, or the pollination of flowers, protection from flooding and storms, or the maintenance of worldwide stable climate.

One sad example: at site ZPS ITA070029 “Biviere di Lentini, an average-sized piece of land at the mouth of the river Simeto and the area opposite the river mouth” and SIC ITA070001 “Mouth of the River Simeto and Lake Gornalunga”, some works which have been carried out without a correct evaluation of their effect have resulted in the Ferruginous Duck decreasing by 70%, the Purple Gallinule decreasing by 60% and the Little Bittern disappearing altogether.

The present economic crisis is increasing incentives for approval always to be given for the building of new infrastructure, with no consideration for the environmental impact or with this treated only in a superficial way. If this modus operandi continues it will soon lead to an irreversible loss of consistency in the value of the Natura 2000 network in Italy.

To stop the impoverishment of sites in the Natura 2000 network, LIPU and the WWF have sent the European Commission a dossier which can be downloaded from <http://www.lipu.it/news/no.asp?1526> requesting the opening of an infringement procedure against Italy to enforce full compliance with the Habitat Directive.

The LIPU and WWF dossier, presented publicly in Rome on 6 June last, represents the first case of a countrywide report concerning the Natura 2000 network in Italy, in other words a report concerning not just one site but almost the entire network. This is so that our biodiversity can be secured not just in word but in deed.

FIND THE SITES OF NATURA 2000 ON THE WEB

The Natura 2000 network is composed of 2,299 SIC (Sites of Community Importance), 27 of which have been designated as ZSC (Special Conservation Zones), and 609 ZPS (Special Protection Zones).

These sites include completely natural environments and semi-natural environments (such as areas of traditional agriculture, pastures etc.) sometimes situated close to inhabited areas. Some people could live inside or close to a site of the Natura 2000 network without knowing it. If you wish to find out where the Natura 2000 sites in Italy are you can consult the European Union website:

<http://natura2000.eea.europa.eu/#>

or the National Geoportal site:

<http://www.pcn.minambiente.it/viewer/index.php?project=natura>

SNIPPETS FROM THE WORLD OF LIPU

Edited by Andrea Mazza, LIPU Press Officer

LIPU and FAI (Italy's National Trust) have launched a shared training project.

An alliance for the territory

The aim of the project launched by LIPU and FAI is to compare different experiences gained in environment and landscape preservation in order to intervene with higher impact in each area. This project, supported by the Cariplo Foundation, is carried out by staff and volunteers from the two associations.

The two organisations face environmental problems that are more and more complex and that need joint efforts to ensure an active and fruitful involvement in the decision-making process on a daily basis.

In Varese, the staff of the two associations have carried out some practice exercises in the beautiful surroundings of the Palude Brabbia Natural Reserve and Villa Panza. Such exercises have led to a stimulating and beneficial exchange of views, experiences and problems. Volunteers have gathered for a week-long training on urbanisation and active participation. This training comprised both theoretical lessons and role-plays led by experts.

Volunteers are expected to meet again in September to master some effective communication techniques that are necessary to highlight the importance of land and environment preservation.

The LIPU Venice branch has fantastic sightings of a Mediterranean Monk Seal.

by Antonio Borgo, LIPU Venice

Twelve sightings in only two months. The sighting of the Mediterranean Monk Seal in Venice has been an incredible event, yet not a random one. The first sighting occurred at the Grand Canal on June 16. On that occasion, LIPU Venice informed port authorities, fire brigades and local police but the piece of news, which appeared both on local and national press, was welcomed with scepticism and a bit of sarcasm. Nonetheless, LIPU Venice continued its monitoring activity and cooperated with the “Centro Foca Monaca Italia” (Mediterranean monk seal Centre Italy). After several sightings, a video made in Chioggia on August 12 finally confirmed the presence of this appreciated guest. Having dispelled any lingering doubts, LIPU Venice can be praised and commended for their determination in demonstrating, despite the general hostility and mockery, that such unlikely sighting was not that impossible. For further details: www.lipuvenezia.it

Urban Ecology and Birdwatching course in October.

Nature in urban areas

The course on Urban Ecology and Birdwatching organised by LIPU will be held in Ghezzano (Pisa) in October. The course comprises 4 evening lessons which will cover: nature and birds present in urban areas, birdwatching techniques (both

observation and photography), avifauna present in wetland areas and the management problems arising in these ecosystems. The course also includes two guided tours to the Chiarone Natural Reserves: the Oasi LIPU Massaciuccoli and that of Santa Luce. The studying material is free, the joining fee is 10 Euros. For further information: marco.dinetti@alice.it

LIPU Turin will run a course on Ecological Statistics next Autumn.

by Riccardo Ferrari, LIPU Turin Delegate

More IT, fewer binoculars

An introduction to Ecological Statistics based on the R free software: that is what LIPU Turin offers to those involved with ornithology or natural sciences, to help them with the statistical processing of data gathered on the field. Developed for analysis and statistical graphics, which has been widely used over the past 10 years, R has become the software the most utilised in universities and research centres worldwide.

After the success achieved in 2012, a new course is scheduled to start later in 2013. For further info and details: lipu@arpnet.it

The Oystercatchers are back to breed at the Ca' Roman Natural Reserve.

by Michele Pegorer, Manager, Ca' Roman Natural Reserve

From Mauritania, for love

Can an island in the north of the Adriatic Sea be so beautiful to compete against Mauritania's beaches? It seems so: the Ca' Roman Natural Reserve, located between the Venice Lagoon and the Adriatic Sea, has hosted breeding oystercatchers for the fourth consecutive year. One of the two birds present in the reserve is well known to the LIPU activists: the bird has many rings (some coloured) and is easily identifiable with binoculars. This 'star' (it is a star at least for the LIPU staff at the Reserve) was rung for the first time in Mauritania in 2005! The environmental planning for the reserve, which is currently under scrutiny, will include conservation measures designed to guarantee higher safety standards for this species. Indeed, oystercatchers are threatened by the excessive and non-regulated bathing that takes place in Ca' Roman as well as in other areas.

Conservation Associations rely on the Regional Court for a project in Basilicata

by Enzo Cripezzi, Coordinator at LIPU Basilicata

Tourists among Black Storks

Bad implementation of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and of the Appropriate Assessment (AA), lack of transparency, zero consideration for the protected area: this is what organisations such as LIPU, Altura, Lanius and CISO have contested against Basilicata Region which has approved a terrible "via ferrata" project for tourists in the Parco Regionale delle Piccole Dolomiti Lucane, which currently hosts the precious nesting places of endangered species such as the Black Stork, the Lanner, the Short-toed Eagle and the Eagle Owl. The associations have appealed to the Regional Administrative Court to prevent the degradation of these sites and species of great importance. Furthermore, LIPU and other associations are fighting against the dangerous wide-spreading of hundreds of wind towers, which would cause severe damages to the local natural heritage and biodiversity. A terrible move from a region that hosts very important species in need of conservation such as the Red Kite, the Egyptian Vulture, the Otter, the Lanner, the Black Stork and many other rare ones.

Volunteers from LIPU Viterbo are satisfied: 13 birds have taken flight in 2013

by Enzo Calevi, LIPU Viterbo Delegate

Montagu's Harriers amid the Wheat

The nesting of Montagu's Harriers has reached record levels in 2013: LIPU Viterbo has announced the birth of 13 birds in five different nesting sites. The heavy rains of the first months of the year

and those of springtime have delayed the sowing of wheat and, in turn, the nesting of Montagu's Harriers.

Indeed, up until mid July only one chick had taken flight but it was at the end of the season that LIPU was rewarded with many records: high number of chicks in flight, first successes with breeding on hay fields, one of the earliest take-offs in history at the end of June (possible thanks to the shield offered by electric grids), and finally the late take-off of three chicks around 10 August.

Various methods and devices were adopted to allow these take-offs, among them: the above-mentioned electric grids, preservation of clover and white lupin fields, and late harvesting of wheat.

118 White Storks have taken flight in Sicily and Calabria at the end of the breeding season

by Roberto Santopaolo, LIPU Rende and Manuel Zafarana, LIPU Niscemi

The White Storks fly in the south

This year, Calabria has been chosen by 17 pairs of White Storks to give birth to 45 chicks. With 5 more couples and 11 more newborn compared to 2012, these births mark a positive breeding season.

The area around Sibari, having hosted 10 couples, seems to be particularly ideal for this species. The most important event has been perhaps the first

nesting of the White Stork in the Neto estuary, in the Crotona province as well as the return of this species in the Luzzi area (Valle del Crati) after five years, possible thanks to LIPU Rende and Enel Calabria that have put in place nest-friendly platforms specifically designed for these birds. In spite of these very positive measures undertaken, LIPU has notified that an entire nest with four chicks has been destroyed in one of the sites in Sibari because of human intervention.

The White Stork population has been stable in the Gela Plain, the second widest plain in Sicily where since 2000–2001 this species has found favourable conditions to breed and raise their offspring, thus leading to the spontaneous creation of the biggest colony in Italy.

Over the past breeding season, the nests, located on medium voltage electric poles, have been observed by the volunteers from LIPU Niscemi.

The couples present in Gela and Niscemi were 39 of whom 36 completed their nesting with the flight of at least one chick. In total, 73 young Storks have managed to take off.

The first nesting of the Gannet in Italy has been observed in Portovenere

The first time for Gannets

It has been an exceptional event, for two reasons at least. Firstly, because it has never happened before in Italy. Secondly, because of the chosen location.

A couple of Gannets has indeed chosen to nest on a boat that was docked at the Portovenere harbour, by the La Spezia Gulf. The boat was owned by Alfredo Puntorieri, an entrepreneur from La Spezia (whom we thank), whose sensitivity allowed the Gannets to stay on board and nest under the constant observation of volunteers from LIPU La Spezia, who have shielded them from unwanted curious and spiteful crowds. The final flight of the young chick rewarded everyone for their efforts. See you in 2014?

The young people of Calabria make a stand against vandalism.

The memory of Giovanni Falcone, the magistrate murdered by the Mafia in Sicily in 1992, is celebrated by the naming of many schools in Italy after this brave man.

Such a school in Rende, Calabria recently decided to stand up to the vandalism which had spoiled a part of their much loved bird garden in the school.

Roberto Santopaolo, Rende delegate writes:

For more than three years our Bird Garden had fallen into a state of complete disuse after repeated outrageous acts of vandalism that have destroyed and spoiled the structures and the natural environment.

Today the area is again in a good condition thanks to the young people of the State Middle School, G Falcone, in Arcavacata, who, with my guidance, have done a wonderful job with great maturity and responsibility.

Armed with hoes, spades, rakes and shears these young gardeners have cleaned up an area which was overgrown with an impenetrable mass of weeds and rubbish that had accumulated over the years. In its place there are now clear paths and flowers and vegetables have been planted.

For the boys it was a unique experience to have two days on intensive field work, organised by our LIPU section but for which they all volunteered. We look forward to later in the autumn when we will, together, put up feeders and nest boxes and I am sure these boys will be the ones to carry the message on conservation around the school and into the community.

A STORY OF FIDELITY

by Rossana Bigliardi, Membership section – a short interview with two members on long standing

We asked Clara, a member of LIPU since 1973, when and why she chose LIPU

“It is a long time ago and I don’t know in which magazine I saw the advertisement about LIPU. But I well remember that I was very pleased to learn that, in Italy too, an organisation existed that had birds at its core. I come from England and I have also lived in other European countries where the interest in winged species is much higher. Due to my background, I have retained the wonderful habit of observing these animals. I have a house in the country where I can immerse myself in nature and see the many types of birds which come and go every season.

An ecological friend of mine told me that it is possible to see lots of species in Italy, more than in England. That is why I do not give up my passion even when I am in the city, where I take advantage of my balcony to observe the inhabitants of the sky.

I support LIPU because I see in Italy, a country quite rich in avifauna, where birds have difficulty in surviving the daily threats like hunting or poaching. With my regular contribution I hope to improve the future of the environment in this county. Best wishes to LIPU with the demanding work that it does on so many fronts”.

We asked Adriana, a LIPU member since 1980, what relationship she has with LIPU and nature.

“I joined LIPU in 1980 but, in reality, I had started to be involved with it sometime previously. I knew the founders in Reggio Emilia, where I used to attend the Association meetings. We were a small, but very dedicated, group of people. I was teaching then and I started to “campaign” in the school, by distributing informative material, whereas, in my free time I developed a bird garden. In my courtyard I cultivated hedges of honeysuckle and holly with the aim of attracting the many birds that came to visit us. This little corner of nature was an example to many of my neighbours, who over the years, started to copy me. Now I have moved to the Romagna, I haven’t stopped cultivating my garden whilst thinking of birds. Because nature is beautiful and, without wishing to be romantic, everything we can to maintain nature also raises the spirit. For me it has always been the best psychotherapy and, in the most difficult moments of my life, nature has given me the strength, the courage, the joy and the serenity of

which I had extreme need. Nature keeps something transcendental in its heart. It is not only a subject but an expression of something superior. What I would really like to do is buy a small bit of land to make an oasis to give to LIPU and therefore, I suggest that the Association should transform my wish into a project. In the city we risk forgetting the beauty that nature can give us. My dream in fact is that in the future one can stop speculative building at all costs. The loss of jobs cannot be used as an excuse, if one could, for example, create new locations in the farming that we have mistakenly abandoned. I am totally happy with LIPU but it is also to see this dream realised that I want to continue to support it.”

NEWS FROM LIPU-UK

Communication is everything in the modern times and we must put across our message using the Internet as well as on paper, and that includes social media.

Fortunately, Peter Massini, a member from Sussex has experience in this area and has offered to look after a LIPU-UK presence on Twitter; he writes:

“It seems somewhat appropriate to use the bird logo, and onomatopoeia of Twitter, to be promoting the cause of conservation of birds in Italy.

Twitter, the micro-blogging site, provides an opportunity to disseminate news, views and information of interest quickly and efficiently, and to build up a network of followers and supporters - and potential new members.

That is why LIPU-UK is now tweeting in the UK for birds in Italy. Please follow us at @LIPU_UK and spread the word.

A successful Twitter feed relies on providing its followers with interesting, engaging information and news, so if you come across interesting links, information or pictures relating to birds in Italy please include @LIPU_UK in your tweets and we'll retweet. If you are not on Twitter, but have news, information, tips on Italian birding sites, etc. please email Peter Massini petemassini@btinternet.com who is managing the LIPU UK Twitter account."

LIPU-UK ANNUAL DRAW

Please support the Annual Draw if you are able, this is a very good way for us to raise extra funds for the birds in Italy and the prizes should be attractive to all. Tickets are not sent to those who asked not to receive them – to all those who buy tickets I say, "Thank you and Good Luck."

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The line drawings are used by courtesy of the RSPB.



Eolian vista, cliffs which are home to the Eleonora's Falcon – page 11



Not a typical Gannetry! – page 25

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