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Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli

Conservation News from Italy

LIPU

- Venetian reserve protected
- Project support for 2013
- Progress for LIPU in Puglia
- Annual appeal news

Spring 2013

Above, the LIPU centre in Puglia.
Photo: Enzo Cripezzi

Right, a map to show where this area is in Italy.

Below, a Lesser Kestrel.
Photo: Michele Mendi

Cover: Sardinian coast
Photo Andrea Mazza

From small beginnings

Editorial

David Lingard

Good news from Puglia in southern Italy as LIPU-UK invests for wildlife in the Gulf of Manfredonia. Situated at the entrance to the salt lagoons in the Manfredonia wetlands IBA (Important Bird Area) is a building suited to become a small visitor centre and, perhaps, a ringing station.

LIPU is very keen to build its influence in the area and this acquisition will go a long way to achieving that. It was found by the LIPU delegate to Foggia, Enzo Cripezzi, when it was first offered for sale to a non-business organisation at a significant discount to market price. LIPU-UK agreed to help with the purchase of the building and to help with its equipment by means of our first use of the Oasi Fund.

LIPU now has more influence in the management of the area and is excited by the chance of improving it still further. LIPU-UK is delighted to have been able to help with the purchase of this property and to be able to spend a small part, just €20,000 of the funds collected over the years for this purpose.

Conservation Director, Claudio Celada writes:

"Margherita di Savoia Saltpan" is an Important Bird Area and the largest active saltpan (Salina) in Europe, producing about 30 million cubic metres of salt a year. The area is 4,000 ha, and it is an important component of one of the main wetland systems in southern Italy. The Salina has been a Nature Reserve since 1977, a Ramsar site since 1979, and is a Special

Protection Area meeting the criteria of the Birds Directive.

It is characterised by a series of basins with varying degrees of salinity. In some areas beautiful Salicornia vegetation occurs. The site supports many waterbirds including Avocet (1,000 wintering birds on average, and 400 breeding pairs), Black-winged Stilt (about 100 nesting pairs), Shelduck (4,000 wintering birds, up to 12,000 in the nineties). It is also one of the few sites for which there are Slender-billed Curlew records.

The beautiful Flamingos are also present with thousands of individuals wintering and 300–700 pairs breeding. Among the rarer species Slender-billed Gull, Gull-billed Tern, and Kentish Plover breed in the area, while small colonies of Lesser Kestrel, Roller and Stone Curlew occur in the surrounding agricultural areas.

Until a few years ago, LIPU was able to use a small building located at the border of the Nature Reserve as a visitor centre and ornithological field station. But in recent years, due to bureaucracy, we had to leave the building, until it went up for sale and LIPU-UK decided to assist in purchasing it. Although the building itself may not appear to be particularly impressive, from a strategic point of view it is extremely important that LIPU has secured an outpost in the area, making it possible to patrol a vast portion of the wetland. Furthermore, the building will be used for educational activities, with involvement of local schools and scientific activities.

Poaching and border-line hunting in areas adjacent to the nature reserve are among the most damaging

activities. Poor water-level management is also a concern. A stronger LIPU presence in the area means to be in a better position to improve the situation of this extremely important IBA. And this is why the LIPU-UK purchase of this structure is so important.

AN ALLIANCE FOR BIODIVERSITY

In the lovely setting of the LIPU Oasis of Castel di Guido, near Rome, a ceremony was held at which, after many years of co-operation, LIPU and the State Forestry Corps signed an agreement which will strengthen even more their commitment to fighting crimes against the environment.

From the President of LIPU

Fulvio Mamone Capria

The President of LIPU, Fulvio Mamone Capria writes:–

Our volunteers have always found the Forestry Corps [CFS] to be the section of the Italian police most effective in the fight against poaching and the destruction of the environment and landscape. This long lasting co-operation has finally been formalised in a convention in which the two institutions pledge to continue fighting environmental crime, in protecting biodiversity and our natural heritage and in educating the public. The signing took place on a beautiful day of celebration in the village of Castel di Guido, near Rome, where LIPU manages a particularly fine reserve. I had very much looked forward to the ceremony in which the head of the CFS signed the

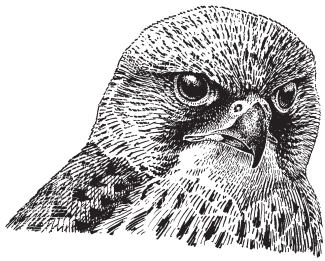
agreement, demonstrating to the public our co-operation in the face of environmental crime. The inauguration was held during the Unesco week for sustainable development and was a great success with the public. Lots of children and families were attracted by educational activities run by volunteers from LIPU and other organisations from all over Lazio.

The agreement will allow strong concerted action by LIPU and CFS personnel to prevent environmental crime. Together, they will undertake woodland management and fire prevention and the care and defence of protected areas of countryside and in the mountains. They will also share information about pollution and activities that directly affect biodiversity such as poaching and the illegal trade in rare plants and animals.

Another great benefit of the agreement is that it will demonstrate to the general public the importance of the natural environment, through the value put on nature reserves, bird watching, the care of injured wildlife, and professional development.

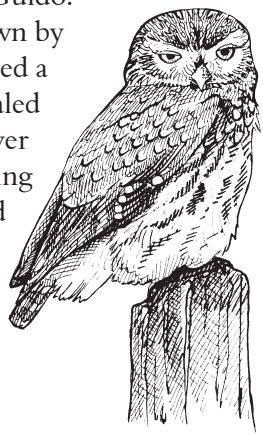
Cesare Patrone, head of CFS, has declared that the signing of the agreement opens the way for close co-operation with LIPU, which has always been concerned with the protection of the natural world. There will a close working relationship both in education and fighting crime against animals and the environment. The CFS with its obligation under Italian law to protect the environment and our forests, is the perfect partner for LIPU and will increase the efficacy of what it is doing every day to oppose the ecomafia.

A few days after the accord was signed an anti-poaching operation was completed in Ischia in the province of Naples. Joint action by LIPU and the CFS led to the arrest of a poacher and the seizure of guns and ammunition, an early reminder of the serious problem of poaching in Italy and the necessity of continuing, without ceasing, the task of preventing and prosecuting illegal hunting.



A Kestrel and Little Owl set free

A Little Owl and a Kestrel were the stars of a liberation event organised by the Rome rescue centre which took place at Castel di Guido. The Kestrel had been shot down by a poacher but had only sustained a fracture of the wing which healed quickly. The Little Owl however suffered a head injury after being hit by a car and so is a splendid example of what a month's stay in the rescue centre can do.



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SWALLOWS, A PARK WHERE THEY WILL BE TREATED AS FRIENDS

Federica Luoni, Department of Nature Conservation LIPU

Conclusion of the project carried out in the Parco Adda Sud, between Milan and Piacenza. A symbol of quality agriculture – 20 hectares of grassland preserved and the migratory routes of 34 birds recreated.

The swallows are returning and some of them will find a better house, or at least, some owners who are a bit more understanding. The project to study: 'The effects of climatic change on bird migration using the swallow as a model of scientific study.' started in 2010 following an agreement between the University of Studies of Milan, the University of Studies of Milan-Biocca, the Regional Park of Parco Adda Sud and LIPU, with the co-financing of the Cariplo Foundation, has now been concluded. The terms of reference were to study the swallow population inside the park and, in particular, its migratory routes, as well as increasing the awareness of farmers and involving them in the conservation of this species.

During the period, researchers from the two Milanese universities, helped by volunteers from the park, have monitored 90 colonies, carried out a census of a further 1,500 nests and, with a small mirror, 'spied' inside every nest in order to follow the growth of the young week by week. Throughout the study, the ideal characteristics for colonies to be good sites for swallows have also been investigated, like traditional farm stalls used by animals and grassland being within 200 metres of the colony.

Some swallows, before leaving for Africa, are fitted with a small technological backpack, called the Geolocator, developed by the Swiss Ornithological Institute. This instrument measures and registers the intensity of sunlight, weighs less than a gram and, thanks to a fibre optic, clips onto the plumage. When the swallows return to their nest the following year, the Geolocator will be recovered and this will make it possible to reconstruct the migratory route taken and the places flown over during the winter.

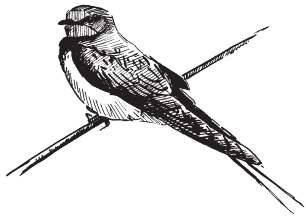
The 34 swallows monitored have thus shown us their stopping places and the areas of their winter quarters, confirmed as being the countries of the Gulf of Guinea in Equatorial Africa. This data will allow a deeper understanding of what is causing the decline in this species and to put in place a strategy for conservation which will also benefit many other migratory species.

To facilitate the swallows' return, whose population has decreased by more than 40% in the park during the last decade, the project has financed the renovation of 4.5 hectares of long-term grassland and the creation of a wetland area where the swallows can find food for themselves and their young, as well as the protection of another 15 hectares of existing grassland for the next five years. Moreover, a trademark has been created 'The Friendly Farm for the Swallow', granted by the Park and LIPU to those agricultural companies that use 'Good Practice' farming methods aimed at swallow conservation. The actions to be adopted are simple, like the maintenance of grass cutting in the meadows, putting in hedgerows the whole length of the field and the maintenance of traditional stalls in a way which will allow the creation of a favourable environment, not

only for the swallows, but also for many other species linked to an agricultural environment, like the Little Owl, the Barn Owl, the Skylark and the Golden Oriole.

Swallow Project – information and photos

The project on the swallows in the Parco Adda Sud and the results obtained are summarised in two publications that can be downloaded from www.parcoaddasud.it (click on 'Publicazioni'). Inside, apart from a detailed description of the project, you can find data and uncommon facts about the swallow and the various ways of contributing to its protection.



A DIFFERENT WORLD

Interview with the new Chief Executive Danilo Selvaggi.

By Andrea Mazza, LIPU Press Officer

"In order to tackle the recession it is necessary to return to the true Italian riches like the landscape, nature and the people."

LIPU was founded almost half a century ago, in 1965. How has the protection of nature changed in almost 50 years?

It has changed a lot. In the beginning, in our culture, it was something completely new. Safeguarding birds and other animals, protecting natural habitats and respecting nature seemed a strange objective and almost impossible to achieve. We used to think of animals as objects, or slightly more, and nature as an inexhaustible depository. We have had to fight to impose a different view of the world. Nevertheless, there is still work to be done so that this vision is fulfilled and mankind knows how to live in the right way.

With regards to the past, nowadays we are observing new threats to biodiversity, such as climate change and the consumption/destruction of the land and the environment. How can we deal with these plights?

These are very big challenges that depend outright on the way in which our society lives and develops. The mistaken belief that to live better one needs to consume more, leads to a doubly negative result: we are by no means better off and the environment suffers. The ecological vision can replace this model only by drawing on technical and scientific skills, and, in particular, even greater public support, to persuade the authorities that people care about nature and expect it to be protected.

For now the economic/financial crisis has reduced useful resources for protecting the environment, with the risk that the future may be even more difficult. How can we find a way out of this situation?

This is an economic crisis that we are experiencing but even more a crisis of values, or rather sentiments. The world is dehumanised, the cities are grey and life is too chaotic. The damage caused by this crisis is

therefore multiplied. Not only are resources that are considered less useful being cut, those in favour of the environment, caring for animals and biodiversity but we continue to continually exploit the natural patrimony. However, there is a way out of this situation. We need to go back to the true Italian riches like the landscape, nature, people and the use of technology. This is the winning formula for a human and nature friendly future.

What are the priorities that LIPU will work on in 2013 and the following years?

We have very important and specific plans: a large project regarding migratory birds, an international campaign against poaching in the Mediterranean, actions to slow down industrialisation in the countryside and creating greener farming. However, we also have the objective, or rather priority of strengthening the LIPU community by increasing the number of members and people who support us. The support from our members and others is really crucial. It motivates and strengthens us and gives us the necessary means to succeed. We want an even bigger LIPU community.

Speaking of which: can you tell us about the new LIPU card? What elements will the association work on to increase the number of members?

We will work on the value of LIPU, on the importance of the big and little things that we do and on how important these things are in contributing to a fairer and happier world. In this sense, the new LIPU card shows an image full of hope. A little girl who is dreaming and appears to be flying with her arms wide open. Around her is a meadow, the

sky and light. This is the future that we want and will do our best to achieve. That is what our vision says: a world in which people live in harmony with themselves and with nature. This is not utopia, but a goal which we share with the members of LIPU and together, action after action - we must make it possible.

Who is the new Chief Executive of LIPU?

Danilo Selvaggi is 44 years old and has a degree in philosophy. He was born in Matera but has lived for some time in Rome. After having furthered his studies in social implications of philosophy, in particular with relation to ecological culture and environmental issues, in 1995 he started his career path at LIPU. A few years later he became Head of Institutional Relations and Environmental Politics and has been the protagonist of numerous campaigns for the protection of wild birds and natural habitats.

The LIPU new membership card.

Against the backdrop of an unspoilt landscape, full of light and hope there is a smiling girl with open arms, who seems to want to fly. This is the image chosen for the 2013 LIPU membership campaign, accompanied by the slogan “Let’s spread our wings”. An image and a message in tune with LIPU’s vision, reproduced in part on the card: “A world rich in biodiversity, where people live in harmony with nature”. “Let’s spread our wings” is also an invitation to be open to others, to increase our participation in the big community made up of people who really care about nature.

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LIPU NEWSROUND

collated by Andrea Mazza, LIPU Press Office

BIODIVERSITY HELD WITHIN A HEDGE

After two years the project "Building Green Walls – The Hedge: a means for bringing connectivity to the traditional agricultural landscape for the conservation of biodiversity in the countryside", undertaken by LIPU thanks to joint funding from the Milan South Agricultural Park and the Cariplo Foundation has concluded. It has had some important results, in order to create continuity of habitats in an area of high environmental importance, over 1500 hedges were put in place. In addition, 50 agricultural estates were contacted by the campaign "Become a Hedge-grower!" for the promotion of agri-environmental measures for the Plan for Rural Development, while eight video interviews were recorded with agriculturalists both from the Agricultural Park and from the neighbouring Ticino Valley Park, to demonstrate the links between biodiversity and agriculture. For information on the project: www.parcosud.lipumilano.it. The interviews are at: http://vimeo.com/channels/muriverdi

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A CAMPAIGN FOR THE INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Two great wings spread wide over the slogan "Leaving is living": it is the image of the new campaign that LIPU will be launching in April to highlight the seriousness of the situation regarding poaching in the area of Sulcis in Sardinia.

The campaign "Leaving is Living" has been devised with the publicists J. Walter Thompson Italia, and will be relayed across media from the radio to the press and the web. The June edition of Ali will devote considerable space to the campaign.

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A WRITER AND LIPU MEMBER

Amelia, a writer for the animals

Tales inspired by true stories, told from the viewpoint of the animals. In such a way might one describe the first two works of Amelia Impellizzeri, "Our friends tell their story" from Il Filo, and "Further stories from our friends", from Mursia. A LIPU member, and a great lover of animals, Amelia wished the proceeds from the first volume to go to the LIPU wildlife recovery Centre in Rome for the care of injured animals. But her great sensitivity towards those in need is shown also by the fact that the two books have been published in collaboration with the associations for the visually impaired, as both audiobooks and in braille, leading in 2012 to the award of the "Braille Prize".

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FOURTEEN WEEKS OF EVENTS BETWEEN MARCH 21 AND JUNE 23

Slowdown spring in the Park of the Po Delta

Coming back, from March 21st to June 23rd, is "Slowdown Spring", fourteen weeks of life in the splendid setting of the Park of the Po Delta of Emilia-Romagna, with excursions on foot, by bicycle, on horseback or in boats in Italy's birding showcase. The first special event will be "Slowdown Easter", or rather a series of events centred round the Easter festival from March 29th to April 1st. New for 2013 will be "Itineradelta", three weekends in April which display the quality of the natural and historical resources. From April 27th to May 5th meanwhile there will be a "Slowdown Week" at Comacchio, and on May 4th and 5th, the Asferico Fotofestival, displaying bird and wildlife photography. There is a complete list of events at www.deltaduemila.net

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A MEMORIAL FROM LIPU IN GENOA

From Aldo Verner, Genoa delegate and LIPU Council

Mauro, you will be missed

One who had been with us for many years, through the launch of the Genoa delegation and our growth into a national body, becoming finally a member of the national council, Mauro Silveri is no more, leaving us at the beginning of February. Mauro was the first volunteer I met, when in 1982 I enrolled in a birdwatching course at Genoa. Starting from our first outing together to Portofino I have memories of

many shared experiences. LIPU was a thing of great importance to him, but even in his latter years when he had no duties to fulfil he continued birdwatching for pleasure up to a few months before his death. It is with profound grief then that we say farewell to you, dear Mauro...

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VICTORY AT TREVISO FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT AND FOR LIPU

New ski-lifts at Cansiglio halted

The proposal for new ski-lifts to link the Venetian sector of Cansiglio with the Friulian side has been definitively quashed. So comes the satisfying news from LIPU's Treviso group, part of the environmental movement of the Veneto that has fought with demonstrations and marches for twenty five years to halt the building. The Committee for Strategic Environmental Evaluations has cancelled the project from Piano Neve. "It is something we have continually opposed", says the Treviso group's Giancarlo Silveri, "and at long last we can celebrate that the project has finally been kicked into touch. My thoughts are also with those LIPU activists who supported us for so long but who are with us no more. So to Gabriella and Lorenzo then, we would like to dedicate this victory".

LIPU CONVENTION AT LA SPEZIA, JUNE 13

Windows, the killers of birds

Killers of birds and of biodiversity, the damage done by the plate glass of buildings and the transparent sound insulation panels along motorways and railway lines will be addressed on June 13th at La Spezia, at a LIPU convention titled "Birdlife and Windowpanes". Speakers from Italy and abroad will put forward to the delegates the newest and most effective measure for preventing and mitigating the almost always fatal impacts on them of birds. It is also an increasing peril: glass is in increasing use as a construction material, while cities and infrastructures are encroaching ever more on natural habitats. An updated edition of the manual "Glass and light construction that gives respect to birds" will be presented at the convention. The admission fee is 35 Euros, and 30 for LIPU members. For information: LIPU department for Urban Ecology, tel 0521.273043 – 347.7035640 – marco.dinetti@lipu.it - www.lipu.it

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OVER 10,000 PACKS OF LENTILS AND WINE GIVEN OUT IN THE CITIES

A gift of nature!

A success for the latest instalment of the "Christmas for Nature"campaign, which took place on Saturday and Sunday the first and second of December in 75 piazzas across Italy. Over 10,000 packs were given out by volunteers in exchange for a small donation, including LIPU's organic lentils,

from the La Terra e il Cielo cooperative, and organic wines from the Decordi estate including Nero d'Avola, Syrah and DOC Prosecco. A real benefit then to LIPU's projects towards a healthy agriculture, respectful of the environment shared by animals and humanity. The campaign's visibility was guaranteed as usual by being broadcast by Rai, with radio reports on Rai and other channels, and by being referenced both by the daily press and in periodicals, and on the web. Thanks to everyone... see you again in 2013!

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RETURN OF THE CAMP IN SICILY FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE BONELLI'S EAGLE: VOLUNTEERS FOR NATURE

Starting from the first monitoring in January, and to conclude in May with the fledging of the young, the Sicilian camp for the protection of the Bonelli's Eagle, one of Italy's most endangered species, has returned. This year the associations which have participated in the initiative are CABS, EBN Italia, FIR, FSN, LIPU, MAN and WWF: in the 2012 season 75 volunteers watched over and protected the nests of 26 pairs. This year too LIPU is looking for volunteers willing to dedicate a few days to the vigil. For information: Angelo Scuderi (338-8202750, angelo.scuderi@unirc.it}, Giovanni La Grua (lagruagio@alice.it).

Latest News: The first eaglet was born on March 1st – all those on the camp are optimistic and looking forward to another successful season protecting these beautiful birds.

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CA' ROMAN, A NEW PROTECTED AREA FOR VENICE

by Ugo Faralli, Manager of LIPU Oases and Reserves

It started with the protection of Kentish Plover and Little Tern. A LIPU oasis followed. Now, with the creation of a new nature reserve, there is hope for the future of this little island, and its 40 hectares of nature.

Once again an oasis has become a nature reserve: Ca' Roman. This pattern of transformation, from LIPU oasis into a protected area has become a familiar one in recent years. Obviously LIPU has worked in close collaboration with the local authorities: in this case the Province of Venice, which has promoted the creation of this nature reserve; and Venice City Council which has provided resources to help us run the reserve.

The story of Ca' Roman started at the end of the eighties. Tens of pairs of Kentish Plover and Little Tern were present on the southern tip of the Venetian lagoon, and Ca' Roman was their favourite place. Building their nests between the residual dunes and the shoreline, in amongst the holiday crowds, these small birds were the inspiration for LIPU volunteers in Venice. Starting with an order, given by the Mayor of Venice, to protect the nests of both species, Ca' Roman become a fully-fledged oasis, with provincial-level protection under hunting law.

However hunting, for once, is not the main threat to species and the environment on Ca' Roman. During the last 20 years, our successive wardens have become more and more convinced that only a nature reserve could guarantee a proper future for conservation. A future not just for plovers and for terns (whose numbers have unfortunately declined), but also for the natural biodiversity of these 40 hectares of dunes, hedges, shoreline, macchia, pine woods and pools.

Around two thousand different species have been recorded in surveys by LIPU, the Museum of Natural History and the University of Venice. Some of the species recorded are rare, and threatened at both national and European levels. Notable species include Nightjar and Scops Owl, together with fairly localised species such as Oystercatcher and Shelduck, which have a few breeding pairs. There are also reptiles and mammals (thanks to the presence of pipistrelles), and above all insects, with many species of conservation importance. These have all benefited from our efforts to remove rubbish from the shore, collected sympathetically, without the use of invasive machinery. Similarly the few pairs of Kentish Plover have benefited from the use of "mobile" fences which reduce disturbance, and surveillance of their nesting areas. All these choices have been made together, by LIPU, the Environmental Health Department of the local council, and in particular with their operational arm, the Naturalistic Observatory of the Lagoon.

All in all, the creation of a nature reserve brings new responsibilities for LIPU and the local authorities. It will be difficult work, as the reserve is sandwiched between construction for the MoSe flood-prevention

project, and construction for 42 new holiday homes. This nature reserve is more than just a part of the larger LIPU strategy, it has become the last hope for the future of Ca' Roman.

Ca' Roman Fact File

By Michele Pegorer, Warden of the Ca' Roman Oasis

Area: oasis: 50 hectares; nature reserve: 42 hectares.

Nature Network 2000: forms the southern part of SIC and ZPS IT3250023 "Lido di Venezia: coastal biotopes". It contains priority habitats in accordance with EU Habitat Directive 92/43/CEE.

Flora: large and well-preserved expanses of grey dune habitat, having an association of mosses and tortulo-scabiosetum grasses (found only in northern parts of the Adriatic), and areas of marram grass.

Fauna – Birds: 152 species were recorded between 2003 and 2011. It is an important breeding site, for Kentish Plover and above all for Nightjar, both species of Community Interest.

Fauna – Other species: some insects of great conservation interest: *Parallelomorphus laevigatus*, threatened with extinction and found along the whole length of the Venetian littoral; *Phaleria bimaculata adriatica* and *Triodontella nitidula*, peculiar to the northern Italian regions; *Licinus silphoides* and *Necrodes littoralis*, locally rare.

Peculiarities: Ca' Roman is a Mediterranean enclave in a region of continental climate. It hosts heat-loving

insects such as *Crioceris paracenthetis*, reptiles, such as Italian Wall Lizard, and also birds such as: Scops Owl, Sardinian Warbler and Cirl Bunting.

Activities: LIPU activities for environmental education attracted over 1000 people in 2012.

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CYPRUS – FROM PROBLEMS TO HOPE

By Giovanni Albarella, Institutional Relations section

Two hundred species of migratory birds and some important rarities.

The island in the east of the Mediterranean is rich in natural life but also in relentless poachers. Here are Birdlife Cyprus' strategies to defend birds and the environment from threats old and new

Thanks to its geographical position, the island of Cyprus represents a staging point of particular importance for migrating birds: more than 200 species have been recorded. In addition, among those resident species may be counted a number of specialities, as, for example, the Cyprus Wheatear. Unfortunately, however, there is no lack of problems, first among which is the very widespread illegal capture of birds. We speak about it with Clairie Papazoglou, director general of Cyprus birdlife.

Clairie, since 2004 Cyprus has been part of the European Union. What significance does this have for the protection and conservation of Nature in this country?

The State of Cyprus has incorporated relatively well within its national body of law the Habitat and Birds directives, but their real application leaves much to be desired. As a result of this, the European Commission has begun, with respect to Cyprus, a number of legal proceedings for violation of the directives. Since the entry of Cyprus into the European Union the illegal trapping of birds has decreased, but it continues to be a serious problem while a serious evaluation of the damage brought about by development projects on the sites of Nature Network 2000 was only set up in 2012.

BirdLife Cyprus is active throughout the island?

Mainly in the part under the control of the Republic of Cyprus and in the British Military base. We are undertaking monitoring , mostly of aquatic species, in the northern, occupied part of the island, in collaboration with Kuskor, the Turkish Cypriot association for the protection of birds. But, in general, because of the division of the island, activity in the north is rather limited.

You have said that one of the principal problems in Cyprus is the illegal trapping of birds. How are you dealing with the issue?

We are dealing here with one of the most significant problems facing conservation. Carried out with nets and birdlime and declared illegal in 1974, it is still widely practised. Illegal trapping essentially targets small passerines, mostly Blackcaps, and takes place for the preparation of a food, Ambelopoulia, which is eaten illegally in restaurants. Since 2002 we have been developing a project, with the help of the RSPB, Birdlife's British partner, monitoring

the phenomenon and showing that, with the entry of Cyprus into the European Union, poaching diminished up to 2008 only then to show an increase. We have estimated that in 2012 more than 2.1 million birds were illegally trapped. In order to put a stop to the practice we have launched a campaign of education and we are putting pressure on the authorities to improve the laws and to develop a strategic plan for the complete elimination of the problem.

What else poses a threat to birds in Cyprus?

The destruction of habitat. Many natural areas have been devastated or are seriously threatened by urbanisation, by tourist development, by road construction and by wind farm installations. What is more, in many areas we are witnessing the transformation of the mixed farming which is so important for biodiversity, into intensive farming.

One of your activities is the setting up of single species projects: what are your aims?

We are at present running a project to rebuild the population of Griffon vultures and another Life project for the restitution of the Oroklini marsh an IBA site supported by Network 2000. On this last project we have had very positive results thanks also to the aid given us by LIPU.

Cyprus is a tourist destination for many foreigners. Do you have a programme for promoting bird tourism?

There is no programme as such but we do have a number of promotional initiatives to promote it.

On our site there is a lot of information relating to birdwatching possibilities on Cyprus. At the moment we are also taking part in the Leonardo project, financed by the European Union and organised by the SEO, the Spanish Birdlife partner, for the promotion of birdwatching tourism in protected areas.

Identity Card

BIRDLIFE CYPRUS
Year of birth: 2003
President: Melis Charalambides
Members: 550
Number of IBA in Cyprus: 19
Number of globally threatened species in Cyprus: 5
Internet site : www.birdlifecyprus.org

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NEWS FROM EUROPE – CAP "REFORM"

from the BBC

Farmers could be paid twice for measures to protect the environment under a European Parliament deal.

The Agriculture Committee agreed that EU rules forbidding double payments should be waived to help farmers. Green campaigners say the vote is a scandal and must be overturned by the full

Parliament and member states. The motion was passed because many MEPs want to shield farmers' incomes from the Commission's planned reform of the costly Common Agricultural Policy.

At the moment farmers get paid an annual average of 200 euros per hectare in direct payments from taxpayers – for doing little more than owning land. If they want to be paid more they can opt for an extra green payment to help wildlife. It is under a different section of the budget and gains a further 80 euros.

With critics of the EU clamouring to end farm hand-outs, the Commission says farmers should earn a third of their direct payments by farming in a way that benefits the environment. The committee agrees to that reform of direct payments. It means that all farmers will have to "green" their activities to get full direct payment.

But the MEPs insisted that farmers who are already gaining extra payments for green activities should be entitled to keep them – on top of the money they will get from the direct payment – but without doing any more to earn the cash.

Faustine Defossez, Agriculture Policy Officer at the European Environmental Bureau, said: "In times of austerity, when governments and citizens across Europe are tightening their purse strings, it is scandalous – not to mention illegal – to expect taxpayers to pay farmers twice."

She urged the full Parliament to overturn the vote to prove they were representing people, not just farmers. She said a previous planned reform of the farm budget was much more fair.

Campaign group WWF said the committee's vote was outrageous and would bring the EU into disrepute.

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LIPU-UK ANNUAL APPEAL

LIPU-UK launches just one appeal each year in which we ask you to support projects in Italy, which we have agreed to support after much discussion with our friends in Parma.

This year we have a feeling of real optimism, you've read of our small but important acquisition in Puglia, and we've decided to help Italian birds in more ways than ever before. Claudio Celada, the Conservation Director of LIPU gave us, as he does each year, a list of projects he would like to work on in the year ahead. The list was longer than usual and because of the importance of the work described we could find few grounds for shortening it, as a result we have agreed to fund:

Project	Euros
Anti-poaching in Brescia, Sardinia & Messina	15,000
Raptor Migration through Sicily – Year 10	15,000
Raptor Recovery Centres – consumables	11,000
Marine Important Bird Areas – Year 5	12,000
Bonelli's Eagle Protection in Sicily	5,000
Bonelli's Eagle survey in Sardinia	2,000
Lesser Kestrel Study in Alta Murgia NP	10,000
Total	70,000

This is ambitious and much will be familiar; the survey of raptor migration through Sicily has proved exceptionally valuable and the long-term data is being shared with many other organisations. Anti-poaching and support for Recovery Centres is both vital and will remain a long-term task until the poaching is finally overcome. Marine IBA research should be funded by the Italian government but it isn't and is too important to be dropped. The last three projects are new and exciting to help raptors at each end of the scale – from the diminutive Lesser Kestrel to the magnificent Bonelli's Eagle, both birds needing our help.

I am sure you will agree that all these projects are important and that you will want to help with the same generosity as you have in the past. Last year, despite a far from favourable financial climate we had another fantastic response from you, the friends and members of LIPU – it was our second most successful appeal ever and raised a little over £27,000 – my sincere thanks to you all.

LIPU-UK has never openly solicited legacies but is always grateful when members remember the cause of bird protection in their wills. We are pleased to record our gratitude for legacies received from kind thoughts of Mr D A Bullock, Mrs M A Denby and Mrs Margaret Kingston who asked that her gift be devoted to a suitable project for the education of children and this has been done.

As well as these donations from members and friends, we are grateful for the valuable support we received from trusts and grant-making bodies to our last appeal. I am pleased to be able to thank the following for their generosity:

The A S Butler Trust gave £150, the Clare Lees Trust sent £300, the Shirley Pugh Trust donated £150, the Udimore Trust £50, the Valerie White Memorial Trust £250 and the Peter Smith Trust for Nature Conservation gave us £1000.

Bird clubs and groups were represented by the Gwent Ornithological Society who donated £50, the RSPB Carlisle Group £100, the RSPB Galloway Group £150, the Stewartry branch of the Scottish Ornithologists Club gave £280, Wakefield Naturalists Society gave us £15, the Manx Ornithological Society £55 and the Worcestershire Conservation Volunteers made a donation of £60 – sincere thanks to them all.

I am grateful that, for another year, AISPA, the Anglo-Italian Society for the Protection of Animals, continued its valuable support. AISPA played a hugely important part in the founding of LIPU, and by supporting LIPU-UK over the years a special bond exists between our organisations – my sincere thanks.

Finally, please do what you can to make this appeal as successful as you have in the past, every penny given helps to make life safer for the birds in Italy – thank you.

Photographs in this issue are © their credited photographers, line drawings are by courtesy of the RSPB and the excellent translation was done by members of our team, my thanks go to: Jo Bazen, Abigail Cummings, Daria Dadam, Gill Hood, Caterina Paone, Peter Rafferty and John Walder.

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Above: Release of a Little Owl, see p7 (photo: M de Silvi).

Left: Danilo Selvaggi, an interview is on p10

Below: Little Tern at Ca' Roman LIPU Oasis (photo: M Bonora)

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