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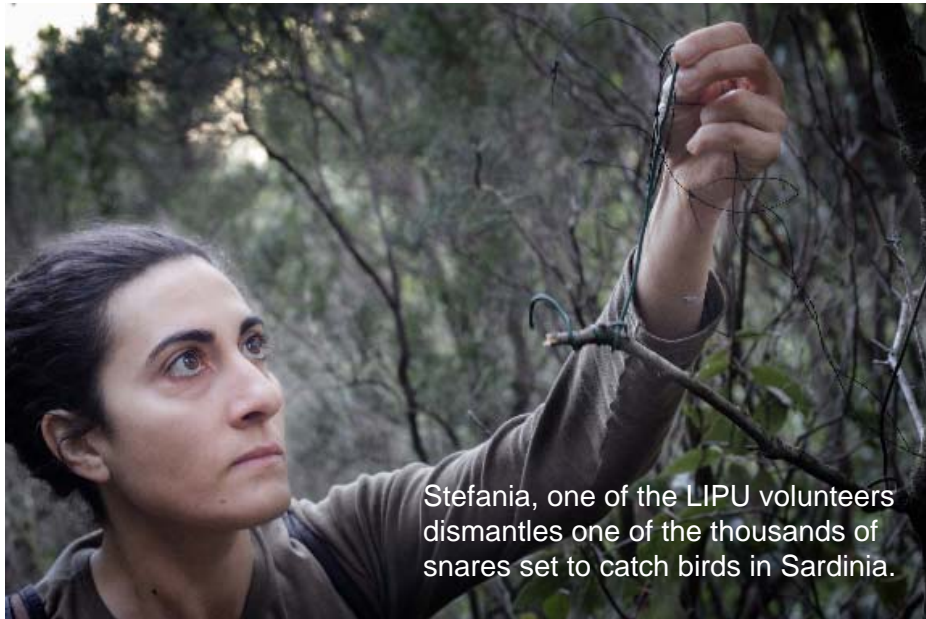
Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli

Conservation News from Italy



- Anti-poaching patrols
- Project support for 2014
- Protection, Science, Education
- Alpine Nature

Spring 2014



Stefania, one of the LIPU volunteers dismantles one of the thousands of snares set to catch birds in Sardinia.



Visitors to the new Pederobba Heronry Nature Reserve on an open day.

Saints and Sinners

Editorial

David Lingard

My cover picture and that to the left, illustrates the unremitting struggle against the poachers in Sardinia. The work is led these days by Gigliola Magliocco and we can see her in the cover picture flanked by volunteer students and a Forest Guard.

The camp which is largely funded by LIPU-UK ran for an extra week in February this year and was working closely with WWF and the Cagliari branch of LAV as well as the Corpo Forestale del Stato. Every day 10 to 12 people were patrolling the hillsides around Capoterra collecting traps and effectively countering all the efforts of the poachers who set traps and snares for birds and animals of any sort.

More on this can be seen, albeit in Italian, at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=znhOVhqCfA0&feature=youtu.be>

LIPU is collaborating with the Spanish and Greek BirdLife Partners and more of the progress of the anti-poaching works can be seen again, at the moment in Italian only, at: <http://www.leavingisliving.org/life/index.php/en/campaign-3/project-updates>

I hope you will feel the same satisfaction as I do that we are very much involved in this work and happy to see such progress.

Unfortunately, we cannot say the same for the LIPU Reserve of Castel di Guido, near Rome. One can see the wetlands of this coastal reserve from the window of your airliner as you approach Rome's Fiumicino

airport, but you can no longer see the visitor centre because vandals have burned it to the ground. It will be rebuilt, but this is a real blow to those who have loved and cared for this special part of Italy, led by warden Alessia De Lorenzis.

Acts of senseless destruction like this are all too common on nature reserves which, in most countries, are usually out of view and easy to enter unseen. This does not excuse the vandals and we have sent our sympathy to Alessia.



A SPECIAL DAY

In Sardinia 15 students from the secondary school in Assemmini removed traps with LIPU volunteers. This is the account of a really special experience.

Unusual, almost frenetic activity outside the Assemmini secondary school. Marta, David, Lorenzo, Silvia and their classmates, whilst closing their school books and pulling on their walking boots, wonder about their secret mission. In a few minutes the coach will take them to Capoterra, and from there they will start to walk along paths where, says LIPU, traps are killing thrushes and robins. “How can this be? And is it really true that such things are happening so close by?”.

“We’re devastated – it’s just like LIPU said it would be...”

With their rucksacks on their shoulders, the youngsters start along one of the paths most frequently used by poachers. Their curiosity increases. Here is the first trap, then a second and a third one. Within a few metres there are ten death traps. There’s a little Robin, hanging. Someone goes up to it – the poor bird is a horrible sight just hanging there. The same thing has happened to other birds a few metres away, a dreadful death. But what do they do with these birds? “They probably sell them to butcher’s shops and restaurants”, comes the reply.

Other traps appear during their walk, some hanging from branches, others on the ground, all “set”, that is to say ready to be sprung as soon as the opportunity occurs. The students start to clear the path with large cutters provided by the LIPU volunteers. There is no trace of the poachers because all the activity has made them take the precaution of moving away. The students divide into two groups, starting to compete over who can find most traps and at the end of the morning there is plenty of booty. “We’re devastated – it’s just like LIPU said it would be. And just a short distance from our homes”.

Even though the experience was upsetting, the two groups ended up happy; the youngsters are aware of having done something good and worthwhile. They want to repeat the experience. They have finalised another date. Next year the next LIPU camp. With shining eyes, the youngsters say goodbye to the LIPU volunteers and the forestry officials and get back on board the coach. Heaven and earth are reconciled – at least for today.

HIGHLIGHTS - BIRDWATCHING

by Danilo Selvaggi, LIPU's Director General

The Audubon's Oriole and other wonders – passion for birdwatching between personal challenge, beauty and nature conservation

There is a scene in “The Big Year”, the movie about birdwatching that was adapted from the novel of the same name written by Mark Obmascik, in which Brad, one of the three participants in the birding rally challenge, reveals to his friend his favourite species: the Audubon's Oriole. ‘In all honesty, I have never seen anything more beautiful’, he says. Brad does not explain why he loves this American bird with black-striped, yellow plumage. In fact, there may be many reasons, but these are often hard to pinpoint. Sometimes it is about the colours, the flight, the habits of that specific species, other times it is about the bond that the species has with a particular place or a story. Sometimes it is about the self-identification with the species, other times it is about these reasons all together or none of them. So to each their own “Oriole”, their favourite species.

Observation Fever

The story narrated by Obmascik is very useful to contextualise this passion, which often becomes a fever, called birdwatching. “The Big Year” is a popular competition that has been taking place in the United States since the Thirties. Its aim is to count the highest number of species from 1st January to 31st December. The story of “The Big Year” is rich in facts, legends and record holders, among them: Guy Emerson, the birder-entrepreneur

whose 497 sightings granted him a record until the beginning of the Fifties and Ted Parker who became the youngest winner in 1971. Among others, it is worth remembering Ken Kaufman, Floyd Murdoch, James Varadan and the legendary Sandy Komito, the champion who has inspired the book and the movie and who is currently the greatest record holder with 748 sightings. For the “Big Year” one risks losing everything: business, money, family. It is a passion out of the ordinary and it speaks of freedom, an irresistible desire to fly and challenge oneself.

Living through birds

“Birdwatching is like travelling to a foreign country whose language you already know”, says Marco Lambertini, Co-ordinator of LIPU's first birdwatching campaign and currently among the top world environmentalists (BirdLife, WWF International). “It's a passion that opens a door onto the fascinating yet complex wildlife world for which you don't necessarily need technical skills. All you need is curiosity”, he adds.

- His favourite species is the Audouin's Gull that he used to watch as a child from his balcony and which embodied the idea of the National Park of the Tuscan-Emilian Apennines, which then became reality.
- Fernando Spina believes that birdwatching is some kind of transformation, “Living the course of nature through birds. Identifying yourself in them.” According to Spina, the most beautiful species is the Eleonora's Falcon. And he has seen many in his years of observation and research.

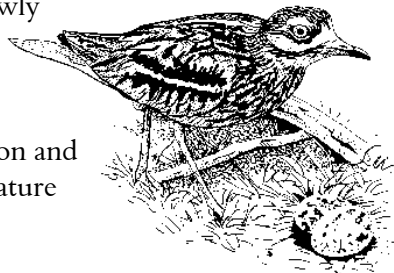
“... birdwatching is not about ticking a newly observed species; it’s a profound experience, it’s aesthetic satisfaction and commitment to nature conservation”.

- The Long-tailed Tit is David Lingard’s favourite species. Lingard, a Delegate of LIPU-UK and an avid birdwatcher said “Many birds are small and fragile but have evolved to survive in a hostile world. We should value their beauty more and minimise human dangers”.



- As for Marco Gustin, one of the top LIPU specialists, his favourite species is the Redstart. There is no specific reason why. However, Gustin stresses the importance of birdwatching not only as a hobby but also as a tool to spread knowledge and develop science.

- Photographer, nature lover and ornithologist Angelo Meschini is indecisive for a moment. “I could say the Roller, but I’d have to say the Stone Curlew . I have dedicated 25 years of my life to it”. In his “birder’s guide”, Meschini jokingly explains that the typical birder is “the one who, when observing the first Swift of the year, stops his car causing a chain-reaction crash” or else “the one who, when spotting the painting of a Redstart’s nest at the Uffizi Gallery, forgets about the Renaissance art and focuses on the Redstart”. Well, it is indeed like living through birds. “After all”, Meschini adds, “birdwatching is not about ticking a newly observed species; it’s a profound experience, it’s aesthetic satisfaction and commitment to nature conservation”.



Birdwatching = Conservation = Tourism

Birdwatching is indeed of paramount importance for nature conservation. This is best shown by “Ornitho”, an on-line platform with the extraordinary potential to collect ornithological data. Ornitho is co-ordinated by Roberto Lardelli in collaboration with LIPU. At present, over 2,000 birders contribute to data collection, thus making birdwatching a vast, common heritage of knowledge.

Birdwatching can also positively affect the touristic sector, considering the tens of millions of birdwatching enthusiasts in the world, especially in the Anglo-Saxon countries. Luciano Ruggeri, President of EBN Italy – a birders’ association that has hosted an Italian “Big Year” in the past – has remained cautious, if not sceptical, at least as far as Italy is concerned. ‘I have been involved in birdwatching for the past 30 years and the causes hindering this activity in Italy are mainly cultural, starting from the lack of education’.

Nonetheless, Ruggeri has just edited together with Igor Festari Birdwatching in Italia -Birdwatching in Italy – a new, great example of what bird observation in Italy is like and what it could be, also in terms of its attractiveness. Also sharing this view is Delta 2000, the association behind the organisation of the International Fair of Birdwatching in Comacchio, that this year will be associated with the LIPU National Assembly. Delta 2000 and LIPU are in charge of a project involving European tour operators that are leaders in the exchange of experiences and the promotion of Italy’s natural heritage, starting with that of the Po Delta.

World's wonder

There is another scene in "The Big Year" that is worth mentioning. The one in which Brad is reconciled with his father who does not understand his "time-wasters" passion. Brad shows him some photos, among them that of an American Golden Plover. 'It is my favourite', he says, forgetting about the Oriole. 'But it's all grey!', says the father, disappointed. 'True', answers Brad, 'most people wouldn't even consider it worthy of a glance. But this is one of the greatest world's travellers. It breeds in the Arctic tundra, then flies to Argentina and then goes back, all in one year. It stops on the beaches of Guatemala and in the farms of Illinois. It is 22 cm long but travels over hundreds of thousands of kilometres. This little grey bird has seen the world's wonders. And despite all that, it is still underrated'.

This is what birdwatching is all about. A way to discover the world and to discover one another. Lightness of being and existential programme. Personal challenge and desire of beauty and natural poetry. And if someone once said that poetry is the truth, that for a moment it shows its real self, the same can be said of birdwatching: there is something irresistibly beautiful that flies very quickly and seems so elusive - the Audubon's Oriole or the American Golden Plover or other big and small wonders. Yet, for a moment, this wonder pauses and it reveals itself to us. And only then, all world's birdwatchers, the experts and the beginners, the talented and the occasional ones can observe silently, motionless, enchanted and for some reason feel happy.

CONSERVATION

By Claudio Celada, LIPU Director of Nature Conservation

Large-scale Agriculture and practices respecting the biological demands of species: here is the recipe for defending the biodiversity of the Alps. Meanwhile, Nature is regaining ground.

Beautiful, majestic, rich in natural life. And, if you look from high up on a clear day, a fount of unforgettable emotion. However, the Alps have undergone, over the last few decades, many changes. The growing urbanisation of the valley floors, of the tourist centres and the development of a network of downhill ski-lift infrastructure, unparalleled in the world, have wrought profound damage on this fantastic and unique region. A region which nevertheless still preserves, through great good fortune, wide areas of unspoiled nature and a noteworthy richness in its biodiversity.

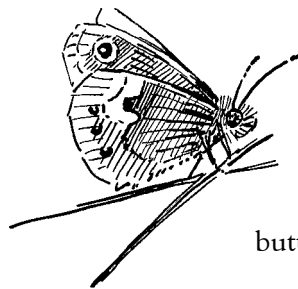
Only the presence of numerous and extensive protected areas such as the national parks (Gran Paradiso, Stelvio, Val Grande and the Belluno Dolomites) and of the regional reserves has in fact brought a limit to the damage. But over and above the obvious impact caused by such changes, the Alps have also had to face up to often badly planned exploitation of the forest, the pastures and the water courses. On one hand, the splendid alpine meadows and pastures have lost



Large areas where man does not intervene could contribute significantly to the conservation of resources and to biodiversity ...

biodiversity because of overstocking which has brought the first signs of erosion. These habitats have been treated beyond measure with nitrate fertilisers which have caused the disappearance of many species of flowering plant. On the other, many forests reveal to the observant eye a story of over use as witnessed by the lack of an age profile in the trees, by the scarcity of older plants and of a lack of variety in the species of the understory. Finally, only a few of the water courses are unregimented and still maintain a natural structure.

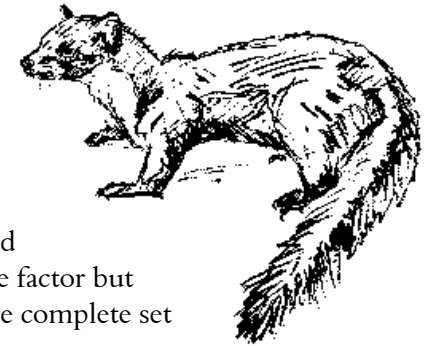
Recently, the idea has been gaining ground that one of the biggest ecological problems of the alpine ecosystems has been the abandonment of the land by a part of the human population. This idea is, however, only valid for some types of environment. It is certainly true, for example, that the clearings in the forests and the biodiversity that they support have come to depend on the presence of man and are destined to disappear in the absence of proper management. The same point is true of the polyphyletic meadows (that is the long-standing



meadows used mostly for mowing in the production of fodder) which can be found in the foothills, environments which have a very high diversity of flowering plants and of insects, including many butterflies.

However, would it not make sense to allow some areas of the alpine landscape (just as in the Apennines), which have undergone a slow but steady population decline, to be returned

completely to nature. What is needed however, first of all, is a comprehensive vision of the Alps of the future, based not just on a single factor but founded on a more complete set of objectives.



Large areas where man does not intervene could contribute significantly to the conservation of resources and to biodiversity, in particular of those species of animal which are at the top of the food chain (the bear, the wolf, the lynx) and which need large stretches of unbroken habitat. On the other hand, where it may be useful and reasonable, that part of the Community Agricultural Policy which includes in its provisions the potential to improve the environment of our countryside and alpine forests could be applied.

The possibility of adapting the mowing of the meadows to the biology of sensitive species such as the Corncrake, the improvement of the ecology of the existing forests to encourage, among other things, the return of the Black Woodpecker or of Tengmalm's Owl, the maintenance of a large-scale agriculture within the alpine mountain areas are only examples of what could be done. A management which is active, wise and prudent and not characterised by intervention, could and should coexist in a properly planned vision of the Alps of the future.

LIFE PROJECT: TO RAISE AWARENESS AND EDUCATE PEOPLE ABOUT RESPECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

by Andrea Mazza, LIPU Press Officer

Another view of the anti-poaching work in Sardinia.

The LIPU anti-poaching activity in Sardinia, which successfully took place last December, was the last event for 2013 in the project entitled Life+ “Safe Haven for wild birds”, which LIPU undertook with its Spanish partner SEO and Greek partner HOS, with JWT Italia, in order to combat poaching in three European areas: Sulcis, in Sardinia, and other “hot” areas in Spain and Greece. In Sulcis, in the region of Capoterra and Masone Ollastu, 25 volunteers from Sardinia and from many parts of Italy have collected 1,600 traps (most hanging from branches and some on the ground), 195 nooses for catching ungulates and 6 nets, as well as destroying dozens of paths used to set traps to catch thrushes and robins. With regard to other actions taken, a well-known bird catcher was reported. In this area of Sulcis there is an ongoing problem with poaching – the paths made up for catching birds can be found just a few hundred metres from houses or in any case within a radius of a few kilometres from built-up areas. “Our presence,” says Gigliola Magliocco, co-ordinator of the LIPU camp, “puts pressure on poachers and at the same time increases people’s awareness of the importance of defending the biodiversity of Sardinia. We want to beat the poachers at this game”.

The Life Community Project has given a lot of attention to educating and raising awareness amongst the local population of Sulcis, especially students, who have been involved thanks to the project ‘With my own eyes’. On 16 December last year LIPU also organized, together with the environmental Forestry Surveillance Corps of Sardinia, in the Molentargius Park headquarters, the important workshop, “Anti-poaching work in Sardinia”, during which LIPU spoke about having removed more than 90,000 traps and reported many poachers between 2005 and the present day. Meanwhile the ‘Leaving is Living’ campaign has been intensified, by means of radio phone-in spots on the main Sardinian radio station Radiolina and also on the main national independent radio networks such as Radio 101, Radio Montecarlo and others, and with articles and newswashes on its website and headlines in periodicals underlining the beauty of migrations and the dangers posed by poaching. (www.leavingisliving.org)

About LIFE+

LIFE+ (The Financial Instrument for the Environment) is the EU’s financial instrument supporting environmental and nature conservation projects throughout the EU. LIFE+ aims to create new solutions to EU environmental problems, to assist the implementation, development and enhancement of EU environmental policy and to integrate the environment into other EU policies.

The LIFE+ programme has so far co-financed some 2,750 projects, contributing approximately €1.35 billion to the protection of the environment.

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FROM THE WORLD OF LIPU

edited by Andrea Mazza, head of LIPU Press Office

LIPU website redesign

A broader audience and deeper engagement. These are the aims of the new LIPU website; to deliver news and stories, enriched with the language of art and of images. The site, designed by Kreative House of Fidenza (Parma), contains 250 articles: analysis in depth, technical data, stories, news, and dedicated pages for each LIPU Oasis and Recovery Centre. Over 450 images show diverse habitats and the different species that live there, accompanied by drawings and illustrations which promote the protection of nature and ecological awareness. Stories can be shared directly through social networks.

Art and nature have at least one thing in common: they both speak the language of beauty. The new LIPU website leaves lots of space for artistic and creative content. Surprises are hidden among the news and stories: from literary quotations which change with every click, to images and drawings by well-known artists. Nature photography is prominent, capable of highlighting the extraordinary beauty of nature with its rich, sophisticated language but demanding standards of deep integrity and an ethical approach.

In addition to news, the site contains “stories” to engage the visitor with simple, direct language. Each story offers the visitor two things: the chance to learn about a key topic, and the chance to offer practical support for a project, campaign, or daily work.

“A cowardly act of violence against a rare, wild, protected species”

Two Sacred Ibis killed

“A cowardly act of violence against a rare, wild, protected species”. Lorenzo Borghi, director of the Rescue Centre Le Capinere near Ferrara, broke the news on Saturday 1st February. The birds had been found on the Ferrara plain by two volunteers. They were X-rayed, confirming the presence of lead shot fired from a hunting rifle. The two rare birds died a few hours later from multiple fractures and other injuries suffered. The Sacred Ibis (*Threskiornis aethiopicus*) is native to Africa and Iraq; the species was re-introduced into Europe in 1976 starting in France. In Italy a few pairs breed in the Piedmont and Lombardy heronries.

Massaciuccoli becomes a Ramsar zone

Eleven thousand hectares of land within the Natural Park of Migliarino, San Rossore, have been designated a “wetland of international importance” under the Ramsar Convention. This wetland includes the 50 hectare LIPU-managed Nature Reserve of Chiarone (Massaciuccoli Oasis).

Sarno River Park: LIPU member new president

Massimiliano Mercede, 35, member of the Salerno branch of LIPU, has been appointed president of the Sarno Hydrographic Basin Regional Park by the Region of Campania. An agronomist and vet, Mr. Mercede has significant experience in the environmental field. LIPU sends its best wishes to the new president.

... the unspeakable act which physically damaged the LIPU building at Castel di Guido.

Letter to Professor Danilo Mainardi, LIPU Honorary President, after the arson attack.

Dear President, Dear Danilo,

With this letter we would like to express both our solidarity and our strong condemnation for the unspeakable act which physically damaged the LIPU building at Castel di Guido, emotionally damaged those who work in the fields of conservation and the environment, and caused hurt to the population at large. We have personally enjoyed the beauty, scents and flavours of the Agro Romano since childhood; from the dawn of a rising and ever-growing awareness of the environment, through to the creation of Oases of national importance, including Castel di Guido itself. Such protection, once-upon-a-time unimaginable, is thanks to the untiring and passionate activity of associations, such as LIPU, which for years have acted where the state has failed. We recall a passage from Gregorovius (1856), quoted in the Guide to Nature in Lazio and Abruzzo (edited by Pratesi and Tassi) which was a bible to us as young naturalists growing up in the seventies and eighties: ... “I have travelled the length of Italy, I have wandered in the famous plains of Agrigento and Siracusa, but I never felt so deeply as when in the Roman countryside: so silent, so grand, so austere beautiful ...”.

The Roman Plain has been, and continues to be, infested by building and over-exploitation, often with devastating effects. Like a cancer it devours and degrades daily and inexorably what little remains. Luckily nature often shows an unexpected capacity for healing. Wet areas reform quickly, and spontaneously in abandoned places; they are recolonised by fauna and flora, as at “Le Vignole”, a short distance

from Castel di Guido. Fields left fallow shine with the mass return of glowworms. Areas once depleted by excessive commercial hunting re-populate within days of receiving protection.

Agricultural practices which favour the environment have led to an increase in the population of birds which are otherwise declining, such as swallows, sparrows, skylarks, all key parts of agricultural ecosystems.

Castel di Guido can now only really be appreciated from the air. On landing at Fiumicino airport we can see both its size and its enormous potential for biodiversity. This Oasis could become a symbol of harmonious co-existence, between eco-sustainable human activity and a protected habitat, approached with an open and flexible mind. We think this is the best hope for survival into the not-too-far-distant future, even for our own species.

Today, “citizen science” makes an important contribution to the advancement of scientific knowledge of ecosystems and their communities. In many European countries individuals fill in standardised forms to monitor animals that regularly visit gardens, balconies or neighbouring areas, the arrival date of the first swallows, the changing of the seasons. The data collected forms the foundation for our management of species and ecosystems; data which no researcher or institution could obtain on their own. Our fellow citizens, children, schools, all have need of this.

Claudio Carere, Università degli Studi della Tuscia (Tarquinia); Enrico Alleva, Istituto Superiore di Sanità

and the reply:

Dear Claudio and Enrico,

I would like to express, both personally and on behalf of LIPU, my thanks to you, both as friends and as colleagues of considerable experience. Your support is heartwarming.

I too would like to echo how important citizen science has become to the environment. A wonderful example of this took place here at Castel di Guido (and in parallel at Cesano Maderno and Saline di Priolo) with the project “Go Green”. Sponsored by the Prime Minister’s office (Department for Youth), this project gave 60 ordinary boys and girls the chance to follow part-time environmental courses for a year. The experience was incredible for all of them, making emotional, cultural and physical demands. Seeing them busy counting species, devising and leading guided tours, repairing paths and caring for injured animals was a thrilling experience. Above all they gave us hope – hope which this senseless act of violence could easily have extinguished.

Danilo Mainardi, LIPU Honorary President

RESERVE

by Giancarlo Silveri, LIPU delegate for Pedemontana Trevigiana

A house for herons

Thirty years after the discovery of the first Grey Heron nest, the Garzaia di Pederobba has, thanks to volunteers, a new LIPU reserve.

It was, therefore, an exciting event for us, a group of young volunteers of the local section of LIPU Treviso ...

Fiume Piave, 1986: during a surveillance of the area near a fish farm, we discovered a Grey Heron nest. At that time such finds did not happen and to catch sight of one of these birds you had to go to the Venetian Lagoon. It was, therefore, an exciting event for us, a group of young volunteers of the local section of LIPU Treviso, to have a heron in our midst. And so began our long struggle but it was worth it – and at the end of 2013 the Garzaia di Pederobba became a LIPU nature reserve.



But let’s go back to 1986. The first period passed without incident and the number of heron nests increased to 80 and Little Egrets to 12. But herons eat fish and somebody was getting annoyed: five large poplar trees were cut down and five nests were lost. It felt as if we’d been shot in the heart. Then Franco, Luciano, Moreno, Lucio, Claudio, Livio, Ginetto and other volunteers began to keep watch over the area and with the help of the anti-hunting guards and the forest wardens from nearby Valdobbiadene, a close surveillance programme was set up.

The number of Grey Heron nests increased to 103, Little Egret to 23 and Night Heron to 2, but due to acts of vandalism, and overpopulation in a small space, the numbers fell again to 75 (72 Grey Herons and three Little Egrets). But despite the damage, the site was saved. It was at this time that we first got in touch with the Municipality of Pederobba: the mayor was immediately interested in our proposals to protect and develop the area and a long period of collaboration began.

In order to deal with any resistance, we decided to have a few explanatory evenings and we were delighted to see attendance increase each time. The Municipality then, at a special convention, handed over the management of the nature trails and the first guided visits for schools were a great success. Subsequently the Province of Treviso created the nature reserve and turned the disused railway station building into a Visitor's Centre: 170 square metres, with an agreement with the State Railways and the Municipality of Pederobba, in the hands of our group.

Shortly afterwards a path was created linking the centre, the trails and the heronry, with the involvement of the Municipality, the Railways and the Land Reclamation Authority.

And finally the most important event of all, when on the 29 November last year, thanks to an agreement between the Province of Treviso, the Municipality of Pederobba and LIPU, the first LIPU nature reserve in the Trevigiano area, the third in the region of Veneto was established.

Twenty eight years have passed since that first Grey Heron nest was seen on the river Piave, but those feelings of excitement are still with us today.

Not only herons

The LIPU Heronry of Pederobba occupies six of the 163 hectares of the Rete Natura 2000 site. LIPU Pedemontana Trevigiana manages the Visitor's Centre, the 6 kilometres of nature trails and the nature reserve. The habitat around the heronry consists of wide expanses of gravel with woods of poplar and willow trees, low shrubs and grassland

and terracing typical of the "magredo" areas. 122 bird species have been observed, including, as well as the herons (the Grey Heron and Little Egret are resident, while the Great White Heron is a winter visitor and Purple Herons, Night Herons and Little Bitterns appear in Spring and Summer, and the occasional Bittern in Winter), the rare Goosander, Dipper, Bee-eater, Nightjar, and many passerines. Raptors include the Honey Buzzard, Common Buzzard, Black Kite, Sparrowhawk, Peregrine Falcon and Hobby; migrants the Osprey, Black Stork, White Stork and Common Crane and in the nearby mountains Golden Eagles and Ravens can be seen, especially in the Winter months.



NEWS FROM LIPU-UK

LIPU-UK Annual Draw 2013

Thanks to all those who took part in our draw. It offers attractive prizes, is simple to operate and generates useful income to help with our aims. Although a Draw is not to everyone's taste, we see it as a useful addition to our range of fund raising activities and tickets are not sent to those who have said they don't want to receive them.

The winners in 2013 are:

First Prize	£500	Mark Clay of Norfolk
Second Prize	£200	Felicity Connell of Cornwall
Third Prize	£100	Mr R Brown of Kent

Congratulations to the winners and to those who did not I would say, try again next year, the odds are very much better than any lottery I can think of.

LIPU-UK ANNUAL APPEAL 2014

Each year we ask Claudio Celada, the Conservation Director in Parma, to offer a list of projects which we might be able to help. The trustees then meet to discuss the merits of each candidate and choose those we wish to support – this year we are breaking new ground by taking on a tougher target than ever before, we want to raise a total of just under 100,000 Euros.

This was primarily because we found it impossible to reject any of the candidates – the merits of each were plain to see, and, secondly, we felt that some or all of the Business Reserve could be devoted to this if necessary. There is more about how we intend to use our reserves later, but for now, these are the projects we have agreed to support:

1. Anti-poaching – in Brescia, Sardinia and Messina

Despite all the efforts of the volunteers on the ground in the camps, over the years, which we have financed, poaching is still a serious threat to Italian and European birds. I wish we could say that the end is in sight but that would be too optimistic – but that is the reason we must not give up. We'll support this vital work until it's no longer necessary.

2. Anti-poaching in Sardinia in Spring (new)

The winter anti-poaching camps in Sardinia have brought a realisation that the problem continues into Spring and this year Gigliola (see the cover) and her teams of volunteers will be on the familiar ground to tackle the poachers. This is a new project and we await progress reports with a keen interest.

3. Raptor Migration through Sicily

For ten years LIPU-UK has sponsored the dual-purpose project in Sicily. Research into the flight paths and roosts of migrating raptors and storks dovetails beautifully into the anti-poaching work at the Messina Strait. Text messages tell the watchers at the short sea crossing when to expect the next flock of migrants and the volunteers and Forest Guards can do their work more effectively. LIPU is about to publish a Long-term Strategy on the Italian Flyway and by continuing to support this project we can help support that policy.

4. Consumables for Raptor Recovery Centres

Another continuing need is for supplies for the Raptor Recovery Centres where injured birds are treated, we are always happy to help in this area.

5. Bonelli's Eagle protection in Sicily

Young Bonelli's Eagles are much sought by illegal traders and last year LIPU teams guarded the known nest sites, discovered four new nests and, as a result, 27 birds fledged successfully. We are keen to build on this success and help these beautiful raptors.

6. Lesser Kestrel Study

The Alta Murgia National Park faces many threats, one of which is the effects on the natural environment of farming activities. This appears to be changing the abundance of prey species for the Lesser Kestrel and more detailed research is needed to convince the authorities of the need for action to protect this delightful little falcon.

7. Survey work for the Atlas

Many will be familiar with the latest atlas from the BTO; in Italy a similar book is in preparation but there are some gaps in the survey coverage – we want to help fund the work to make the data more complete. A credible breeding and wintering atlas is a powerful tool in persuading the decision makers in Rome and elsewhere.

These projects reflect well on two sides of LIPU's important work – there is the protection and conservation which, sadly, still needs our wholehearted support and there is the research and science which is essential if lobbying of MPs and other decision makers is to succeed. I hope you will agree with this approach and will support our appeal with the same generosity that you have in previous years.

As well as 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 £200, the Clare Lees Trust sent £300, the Udimore Trust £50, the Valerie White Memorial Trust £250, the Peter Smith Trust for Nature Conservation gave us £1000 and the GW Trust helped us with £400.

Bird clubs and groups were represented by the Gwent Ornithological Society who donated £50, the RSPB Galloway Group £150, the Stewartry branch of the Scottish Ornithologists Club gave £200, Wakefield Naturalists Society gave us £15, and the Dave Scott of 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 an 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.



RESERVES – NATURE AND FINANCIAL

Many years ago, your board of trustees decided to form the Oasi Fund with a view to purchasing a nature reserve for LIPU. That simply stated aim has not been achieved and the fund has grown in size over the intervening years. Successive Trustees' Annual Reports have expressed regret that, despite much effort, none of the fund has been spent for a number of reasons.

It soon became apparent that the purchase of a nature reserve in Italy is totally different from land acquisition in the UK. Reserves are rarely owned by LIPU; they are managed on behalf of the "local authority" (Region, Province and/or Comune) under renewable contracts which cover management costs, wages etc which are paid to LIPU by the authority. The negative side to this is that the reserve could be handed over to a hunters' organisation and, indeed, this happened a few years ago at Montepulciano.

Efforts to find suitable candidates for purchase brought ideas from most parts of the country including, amongst others, a hill side in Sicily, farmland near Varese, cliff tops on Sardinia, a wetland in Sicily and, most recently, another wetland in Sicily. All came to nought for reasons which included possible Mafia involvement, the impossibility of land purchase and again, most recently, the wetland being incorporated into a Regional Nature Reserve. The risks of such acquisitions can be serious; in the last example it has now been found that the lake system has been polluted by illegally dumped asbestos waste and this will be very costly to remove.

Furthermore, this lack of success could be accepted, if with some reluctance, when funds on deposit at over 6% created an annual income sufficient to pay for a major project in LIPU-UK's funding programme. Savers will need no reminding of the dismal rates on offer now.

I hope you can see that your trustees have wrestled with this problem and having failed to find a solution have decided, after taking professional advice, to close the Oasi Fund and redesignate the objectives of this reserve which consists solely of Unrestricted Funds. Henceforth, LIPU-UK will have just two financial reserves – the Business Reserve to tide us over any temporary loss of income and the Project Reserve which can be used in any way agreed by the trustees and the Conservation Director of LIPU which is in furtherance of our charitable objectives.

I think all will agree that the large reserve, built up over a long time, should be spent on the welfare of birds in Italy – that is why we exist and why our supporters have been so generous over the years. I hope to be able to report substantial progress in the months and years ahead.

Situation Vacant – Social Media Guru

Recruitment and ways to stem the decline in our membership are the main topics at meetings of your trustees and it now seems that social media is a medium which we should be exploring.

I realise that many, perhaps most, of our members are not of the "Facebook generation" – and I include

all of your trustees in this. Nevertheless, it is a facet of life today that businesses and charities must have a presence in these areas; we do have a Twitter account (@LIPU_UK) which is looked after superbly by Peter Massini, a member in Sussex.

We need someone to run a Facebook page on our behalf, this could be a self-contained operation but, of course, I'll be happy to pass on the latest news and any other useful information. Please let me know if you think you could help.

I still receive the occasional letter apologising for not having a computer “because I’m 91” which makes me feel boyish as I approach my next “Big One”; so if all this is unintelligible, please don’t worry – it’s something of a mystery to me too!

In the last annual report we asked for ideas to stem the downward trend of our membership which still continues. I’d like to thank all who wrote and telephoned with their suggestions, we may have tried them before but we appreciate your efforts and would still like to hear of any good ideas.

The translation of the Italian text for this edition has been carried out, as well as always, by: Barbara Avery, Giusy Fazzina, Tony Harris, Caterina Paone, Peter Rafferty and John Walder – my thanks go to them all.

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Alpine scenery – nature to be treasured. see p 11
photo: Andrea Mazza



The Sacred Ibis shot for no reason. see p 17
photo Lorenzo Borghi

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**STOP THE MASSACRE
APPEAL 2014**

Please help us