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Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli

Conservation News from Italy



- Reserve anniversaries
- Hunting Law changed for the better
- Egyptian Vulture success
- Montagu's Harrier

Winter 2013



LIPU celebrates the 80th birthday of its President, Danilo Mainardi (above and see p8) and (below) Lesser Kestrel subject of a project in Puglia supported by LIPU-UK (see p6).



A change to the Hunting Law

Editorial

David Lingard

Real progress at last

The Italian Hunting Law has long been seen as far from perfect, but it is a lot better than it would have been had it not been for the advice and pressure of LIPU and other NGOs in Italy.

One of its obvious weaknesses has been the ease with which the Regions have been able to “opt out” of the sections they don’t like – the process of derogation. Despite rulings that this is illegal it has been going on for many years, and has been used by many regions to add birds to the list of those which may be legally hunted.

Birds such as Chaffinch and Brambling have been added to the list and shot – not for food, for one can hardly make a meal of a Chaffinch, but simply for “fun” – because the little bird makes a convenient moving target.

Law 157 of 1992 has, at last, been amended and all the lobbying, petition signatures and judgements of the European Court have produced a change for the better, let us all hope that the adherence to the new law will be permanent.

There could hardly be a better seasonal present to the birds of Italy – well done to all who had a part in bringing about this change.

**From the
President of
LIPU**

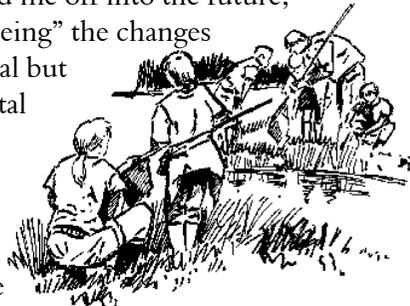
*Fulvio Mamone
Capria*

GETTING BACK TO THE YOUNG

It is to them that we must turn to develop the awareness that the environment must be protected, that our natural resources are not inexhaustible, that wild creatures are symbols of the beauty and well-being of the world around us. A happy festive season to everyone!

Here we are. Christmas is on its way. It is a moment of happiness and hope, but also one of reflection, of looking back on the year which is about to end. I am thinking about all those good feelings which LIPU has inspired in me, about the priceless presents it has given me, about those things which make life worth living. All of them precious, some intense, others more serene. The walk along the paths of the Sulcis to dismantle the small-bird traps placed by the poachers, the 25th anniversary celebrations of the Torrile Reserve, the pictures of the birds treated by the rescue centres and released throughout Italy, the ever watchful and unfailing guard mounted by the young volunteers of the Natural Leaders at the September meeting in the Massaciuccoli Oasis.

It is precisely these last, these boys and girls full of enthusiasm, coming from different cities and backgrounds who today leave me the strongest impression. They send me off into the future, they push me into “seeing” the changes both cultural and social but above all environmental which we need. This lets me say that not all is lost, that there is a possibility of redemption for nature



and for people in Italy, in Europe and throughout the world. It is above all boys and girls with whom LIPU must start again, bringing them up in voluntary work and into an awareness of nature by creating opportunities for cultural development and for group activities in order to realise a new ambitious path to civic progress. We must nurture in them the awareness that the environment must be protected, that natural resources are not inexhaustible, that wild animals are symbols of the beauty and health of the environment, that cities must be treated well along with the countryside and all the good things which surround us. If we succeed, it will be a better world. I write this as I think of them, the boys and girls and the children, of what sort of world they will inherit and what they will be able to build for themselves. I fear for them a little but I have great confidence. I am thinking of my son, Manuel, who is six years old. It is with him – I really couldn't do anything less – I am writing a new Christmas letter, which seems to be the umpteenth but which is in reality new, a letter which is different every year because reborn and different is the hope which inspires it. What present do we want this year my dear Manuel? What shall we ask of Father Christmas, we members of LIPU?

“That the birds held in cages as lures may escape for ever from their prison. That the countryside will resound to the song of the larks, sparrows and swallows once again in great numbers, once again full of the joys of spring. That birds on migration can be safer and have greater protection both in the parks and in their natural habitats”. You want so many things, my dear Manuel, all of them important. To bring them about will need the help of a stronger and more representative LIPU, with the oases full of visitors, with helpers in the rescue centres, with

volunteers in the local branches, with children in schools and in the streets and members, above all members. A LIPU with so many active and willing members. They, they are our real Father Christmas. Our dear, invaluable members. A Father Christmas multiplied by a thousand, by ten thousand, by forty thousand.

First of all, then to them goes the wish, my wish, that of LIPU and that of Manuel. Let them spend a peaceful Christmas and a happy holiday. Let them find under the Christmas tree what they wish for and maybe also the Detlef Singer, that marvellous book of bird photographs. And together with us all may they be able to build, step by step, bit by bit, a kinder tomorrow, one which is more human and natural – which starts in 2014

A Happy Festive Season to all you LIPU members, Fulvio and Manuel send you their warmest greetings.

AT THE TIME OF THE FULL MOON

Conclusion of the first part of a study into the reproductive period of the Lesser Kestrel in two districts of the National Park of Alta Murgia - from which has emerged a new picture of the small falcon that likes the steppes.

During the period of the full moon it catches crickets and grasshoppers. Are we talking about the Long-eared Owl? No, the Lesser Kestrel, a small raptor that on many occasions makes the most of the light that comes from our natural satellite to search for food, above all in the area of the pseudo steppe,

the treeless grassy plain, partially cultivated with cereals. We are between Gravina in Puglia and Altamura, in the heart of the Alta Murgia National Park. Thanks to a study carried out by the Conservation Department of LIPU, Species section, and financed by LIPU-UK and the National Park itself, 12 GPS tracking devices have been fitted to the same number of Lesser Kestrels. The individual adults have been caught in artificial nests, fitted with the devices and recaptured again to download the data accumulated during the 2-3 days with which they have lived with the device. Thanks to these methods, it has been possible to discover some interesting behaviour.

Besides the nocturnal hunting already mentioned, it was found that the individuals of the two populations of Altamura and Gravina, Puglia, are not in cross-contact during the intense activity for the search for food. Each population has its own defined territory and does not invade that of others, because, at the moment, there is enough food. Thus it was found that the females can carry out their own hunting, also in the cultivated fields (usually wheat or other cereals), that are closest to the nests and localized within a particular area, so that they can care for the eggs and chicks. The males, on the other hand, travel further (up to 18 kilometres from the nest), above all using the areas suitable for hunting like the 'pseudo steppe', where most of the food is found, particularly crickets and other orthoptera. It could be defined as the perfect division of domestic labour, which certainly benefits the successful reproduction of the species.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, MISTER PRESIDENT

by Danilo Selvaggi, LIPU Director General

Danilo Mainardi, Honorary President and heart of LIPU, is now 80 years old

The film starts at 7.10 pm. Twenty minutes' entertainment, with the comical alien called Mork (an extremely young Robin Williams) or the western called Furia, or the American 50s film Happy days with Fonzie and Richie Cunningham. Then, at 7.45 pm, before the weather forecast and the sacred evening news, here comes the next Almanac of the Day. Is it Monday? In that case it's him as well, Danilo Mainardi, On behalf of animals. Like a kid, I wait for that title as if I were waiting for the revealing of another little secret of nature, the jaguar, praying mantis, mountain gorilla. In a few minutes Mainardi tells you things half way between the academic and a chat in the dining room whilst you wait for dinner. And it makes you happy. You understand in some way that it's a perfect balance.

Danilo Mainardi wears his 80 years majestically but also lightly, as is appropriate for someone who has really mastered what he studied and has wanted it to be valued, for itself and for others' sake. Mainardi's contribution to the study of animal behaviour and natural science has been and continues to be impressive. Lectures, books, articles, television programmes, university and awards, Quark and the newspaper Corriere della Sera. Without sacrificing the slightest amount of scientific rigour, Mainardi has nevertheless given a human dimension to knowledge, emphasising the links, the communicative aspect. The technical term for this is popularization:

spreading knowledge amongst people by means of language which people can understand, using examples and the most effective images, tone of voice, gestures, expressions and drawings (a great passion of his). More than popularization, what Danilo Mainardi does is to sow seed in a field to produce flowers and fruit.

And here we can include the great bond that Mainardi has with environmental commitment, with LIPU. A bond that depends above all on the immense love that Mainardi has for animals, loving them as we love the best companions in our journey on this strange cosmic spaceship called Planet Earth. Certainly on the part of the animals. Danilo's presidency and presence have been a mainstay of LIPU over the years. He provides refuge or even rescue. With his advice, words, his expression which can be a little shy and at the same time profound he makes you understand exactly this: that science is wisdom, availability, commitment, and therefore commitment to save nature, preserve biodiversity, protect birds, educate and be educated.

Mainardi's affection for LIPU is enormous, but it's not as great as the affection that LIPU, its members, the Council, volunteers and staff have for Mainardi. At least let's outdo him in this.

Happy birthday, Mister President, with all our heart, from all at LIPU.



THE WORLD OF BIRDS

by *Claudio Celada, Director of Conservation LIPU, and Marco Gustin, Species and Research, LIPU*

Hundreds of ornithologists attended the 17th CIO, the Italian Ornithology Congress, in Trento. A wealth of discussions and information regarding the effects of climate change on bird populations and biodiversity management.

It feels like yesterday. Yet 32 years have passed since that first 'historical' CIO congress back in 1981 in Aulla, Tuscany. Since then, every two years, Italian ornithologists, both professional and amateur have kept up the tradition of getting together to catch up on the latest news and developments.

The most recent CIO was that held in Trento from the 11th to the 15th September. It is satisfying to know that in recent years Italian ornithology has come on in leaps and bounds, as can be seen from the choice of subjects up for discussion at this year's congress: the effects of climate change, ecology, fluctuations in bird populations, reproductive biology, behaviour, physiology, migration, GIS (Geographical Information System) and ecological models, conservation and biodiversity management: agriculture, productive activities and protected areas.

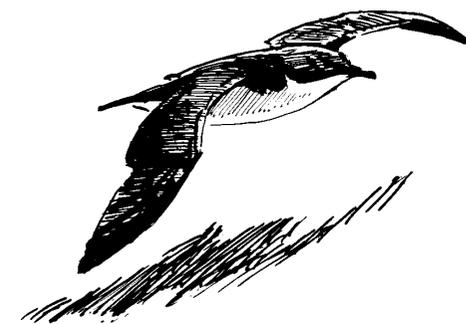
There is an evident growing awareness of the most important aspects of bird conservation and of the fact that this needs an integrated approach from all the scientific disciplines.

It has become increasingly more important to study and record the fluctuations in bird populations,

whether resident, winter visitors or migrants, that have taken place due to recent and past environmental changes. Three intensive days, 400 authors presenting 165 works including 60 talks and 105 displays, contributing to a lively exchange of ideas and new information with round table discussions and seminars.

LIPU's own contribution was also important with a round table discussion, entitled "Bird conservation on a national scale: awareness, critique and future", organised together with ISPRA (Istituto Superiore Protezione Ricerca Ambientale) and attended by about 100 ornithologists. The discussion revolved around the conservation and monitoring of urban bird life, territorial planning and infrastructure barriers.

The talks, given by LIPU and others, were all both informative and interesting. These included the influence of the moon on the behaviour of the Cory's Shearwater, the monitoring of common nesting birds and the politics of conservation of agro ecosystems, all issues that for several years have been high on LIPU's agenda.



A HERMIT IN GOOD COMPANY

By Marco Gustin, Species and Research Manager at LIPU

Good news has come from Morocco for the Hermit Ibis, also known as the Northern Bald Ibis (*Geronticus eremita*), a species threatened with extinction. This year, 148 birds have been born in the colonies of Souss-Massa and the population has reached a new high of 443.

Good news from the most important wild population of the Hermit Ibis, a species threatened with extinction in the Palearctic region. The colonies in Souss-Massa National Park, which are close to the small town of Tamri in southwest Morocco, have seen 148 fledged young join the species this year. At the end of the nesting season the grand total of Hermit Ibis was 443, which is double in respect to last year when the rainy season saw the birth of only 73 young.

In the past the Hermit Ibis was common in North Africa and Europe but nowadays the species can only be found in three small areas: Morocco, a semi wild population in Birecik, Turkey and finally a small population in Palmyra, Syria.

Both the management and conservation of the population of nestlings in Morocco is the responsibility of SEO - (BirdLife Spain) in conjunction with the High Commission for Water and Forest, the Fight against Desertification and Grepom (BirdLife Morocco).

In order to protect and monitor the colonies, BirdLife International's Preventing Extinctions

Programme, SEO, along with the HRH Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation has hired 7 wardens who have the daily task of supplying the Ibis with fresh water and protecting them from any unnecessary disturbance. For example, this year they managed to convince a group of fishermen to distance themselves from one of the sub-colonies in the national park, thus allowing the Hermit Ibis to start the nesting season.

The excellent success during the 2013 nesting season in Morocco is most likely down to the excellent weather conditions. In fact, between September 2012 and April 2013 200 millimetres of rain fell, which significantly increased the availability of prey for the Ibis.

A GOOD VULTURE YEAR

Six Egyptian Vultures fledged in 2013, a sign of hope for a species that is still on the brink of extinction.

There have been signs of recovery for the Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*), the species most threatened with extinction in Italy. This year, at least six pairs have succeeded in fledging a chick, including the young pair arrived from Africa in April and which had become established in the LIPU Reserve "Gravina di Laterza". This reserve, thanks to its rocky landscape, provides the perfect breeding habitat for this species. The birds laid one egg in May and on 20 June the good news arrived: the egg had hatched and one pullus, a chick, was now present.

This was an event that the reserve had been awaiting for 10 years - since the last Egyptian Vulture hatched in 2003.

The chick was raised by its parents and monitored constantly by wardens, Vittorio and Manuel, together with the LIPU volunteers, who followed its growth until it fledged on 2 September and disappeared towards Africa. This great result in Laterza was accompanied by five other similar success stories in Sicily, where such a good result, albeit still including a small number of fledged birds, had not been achieved for a long time.

The Egyptian Vulture is included in the IUCN (International Union Conservation Nature) Red List, and is classified as 'CR' (Critically Endangered). How has this majestic species been driven to such critical status? A number of causes are involved: loss of breeding habitat, in particular change from steppe to agricultural systems, the ever lower number of carcasses of domestic animals to feed on, poisoning incidents, high adult mortality, and potentially poaching. The final contributing factor could be wind turbines which, especially in the south of Italy, have been placed without thinking of their impact on large gliding bird species, such as the Egyptian Vulture. One of the pairs in Sicily was particularly at risk as it nested 100 metres from a large wind turbine, placed in a habitat otherwise perfect for nesting.

In Italy there were, in addition to five pairs in Sicily, two in Basilicata, one in Calabria and the one mentioned above, in Puglia.

BIRDS IN THE IGLOO

by Claudio Celada, Director of Nature Conservation,
LIPU

Feathers; physical contact; fasting; migration. These are some of the survival skills that birds use when facing the big winter chill.

As winter approaches the question naturally arises: How do birds cope with bad weather? Birds show a wide array of biological mechanisms and behaviours in response to the cold. The Emperor Penguin is well known for its ability to survive the harsh temperatures and blizzards of the Antarctic (down to minus 60 degrees) thanks to incredible physiological adaptations, special plumage and physical contact with other birds in the colony which provide them with heat.

Many species react by migrating to more favourable climates, at the cost of long and perilous journeys. Bar-headed Geese, for instance, fly across the Himalayas at altitudes up to 8,000 m, with temperatures dropping some tens of degrees below zero, and chilling, strong winds. Then there is the small, and very colourful, Palm Warbler. These tiny birds, weighing just over 10 grams, migrate from tropical Central/South America all the way north to the Canadian forests and sometimes as far as the arctic tundra. Males that reach the breeding ranges first have a greater choice of partners, but at such high latitudes there is always risk of an early snowfall, with the accompanying danger of death from hypothermia or lack of food (in this case insects).

Advances in satellite transmitters have made it

possible to follow the migration of individuals, such as the annual migration of Cuckoos from Scotland to Africa. These birds travel in stages, covering distances in short hops. Some individuals have been recorded stopping at woods in England where, if the weather conditions turn unfavourable, they may return to Scotland. There they will await better weather and so ensure their survival.

And then there are species that don't migrate at all. This is the case with some galliformes such as Ptarmigan, a species that can venture above the tree line, and Black Grouse, a most beautiful tetraoide (unfortunately still hunted legally). These birds have developed an "igloo" strategy: when the temperature is very harsh, they burrow into the snow to conserve energy. Conditions are so extreme that even apparently harmless activities, such as alpine skiing, can threaten this beautiful and fragile species.

Back on the other side of the world, to the north Canadian forest, where early autumn signals the start of migration for all species of warbler, and most other birds too. One of the very few birds that can survive the long Canadian winter is a tit, the Black-capped Chickadee (*Parus atricapillus*). When temperatures drop below minus 30, this small bird enters a state of torpor and stops feeding. Searching for food in such low temperatures costs more energy than it provides. A few years ago, a researcher at the University of Alberta observed that in extreme cold conditions even these small passerines "dive" into fresh snow, creating a snow blanket where they profit from the relatively warmer temperature.

To conclude: birds suffer from the cold and harsh weather, but individual species have developed

strategies for dealing with this hardship. While climate change is adding to their problems, adverse conditions are an important cause of selection: sick individuals are unable to keep their plumage in top condition, and succumb easily to the first cold, or even the first rain. We have to accept these natural dynamics, but it helps to be aware that in the harshest of winters, human intrusion can be the cause of one flight too many, with negative consequences for these birds.

Feeding for winter survival

Wrens, tits, Blackbirds and Robins. These winter visitors to our towns and countryside face a serious threat to their survival from cold, snow and ice, so it is important to put out food, preferably in a place that is easy to find and safe to use. Bird tables tick all the boxes. Bird tables are also easily available and come in a variety of styles: standing, attached to a wall or hanging from a branch; open or with a roof. Open tables are perhaps prettier, but a roof has the advantage of discouraging larger species such as jackdaws, magpies, pigeons and doves. For tits and nuthatches another popular choice is the mesh feeder, which should be hung in a place away from potential predators.



OASI

by Ugo Faralli, LIPU Oases and Reserves Manager

Many happy returns to three reserves and two Oases, with hundreds there to celebrate with conferences, events and the release of birds back into the wild. Great emotion and satisfaction at what has been achieved

Palude Brabbia: a tale going back to the Sixties

The origins of the reserve came about in the sixties when a few environmentalists began the defence of a beautiful and unique habitat, finally succeeding with the granting of legal protection in 1983. Since then over twenty thousand schoolchildren have discovered its marvels and it is visited by twelve thousand people a year.

In recognition of this long history, LIPU and the provincial and regional authorities of Varese and Lombardy organised a convention on the 20th of September to commemorate the many successes achieved in the field of conservation (with 150 species of birds recorded in 30 years) and in spreading the environmental message.

The following day over 500 people took part in excursions and workshops, and saw the release of several raptors. A truly exceptional event which gives a sound basis for a future worthy of record.

From Barbara Ravasio, manager of LIPU's Palude Brabbia Nature Reserve

Bosco del Vignolo: 15 years of Nature

LIPU, along with the City of Garlasco and the sponsorship of the Parco del Ticino and the Province of Pavia, has celebrated an important event: fifteen years of LIPU's Bosco del Vignolo Oasis. In the two weekends from the 13th to the 22nd of September a convention, open-air theatre and the public liberation of raptors, brought the attention of both institutions and the public to our oasis, which hosted 250 guests, both young and old. The Parco del Ticino and the Provincial authority of Pavia both underlined the importance of oases within their areas, in a convergence of common interests declared also by its title: 15 Years for Nature and People.

From Fausto Pistoja, manager of LIPU's Bosco del Vignolo Oasis

Torrile and Trecasali, a wetland grown from a field of Lucerne

Twenty five years ago the Torrile Oasis was born out of a piece of farmland. To celebrate this splendid achievement the Nature Reserve of Torrile and Trecasali organised, on Saturday October 5th, a meeting of all the participants, both public and private, in this long adventure, with the addition in the afternoon, along with 50 participants, of guided tours and bird counts linked to Eurobirdwatch 2013. The bad weather and heavy rain of the Sunday, however, led to the cancellation or postponement of the workshops, tours, and release of birds back to the wild at the LIPU "hospitals" that were scheduled.

A very positive aspect of this anniversary was that all

underlined how Torrile has been a winning gamble, a story of success.

From Nicola Toscani, manager of LIPU's Torrile and Trecasali Nature Reserve

Cesano Maderno: Nature regained

An interesting conference at the Cesano Maderno's Palazzo Arese-Borromeo with the title Nature Lost and Nature Regained, reflecting on the relationships between landscape, nature, land management and the law, to commemorate 15 years of the oasis, began on September 27th. This was followed by events open to the public, from escorted trips along the footpath for the disabled in the evening, dedicated to Alex Langer, to the opening of the interactive display A Woodland Held Within a Room, set up in the Go Green visitor centre for the young, up to the final celebration, was put back due to bad weather until October 13th, with workshops and theatre. Three joyful days attended by 300 people in total.

From Silvia Baldo, manager of LIPU's Cesano Maderno Oasis

Palude di Ostiglia, a treasure chest of biodiversity

A treasure chest of biodiversity with 175 species of birds and 226 plants, the Paludi di Ostiglia Reserve celebrated its 20th anniversary. On Saturday October 12th a conference on environmental education was held, with experts in the field from various important reserves from the province of Mantua to the Chiarone Reserve, LIPU's Massaciuccoli and the Circeo National Park. On Sunday October

13th Swamp Party took place, a great celebration with theatre, dancing, games and greetings cards. The the grand finale, with the liberation of two raptors including a beautiful Buzzard, regaining their freedom after treatment at the LIPU recovery centres.

From Giulio Benatti, manager of LIPU's Paludi di Ostiglia Nature Reserve



GOOD NEWS FOR OUR MIGRANTS

Modifications to law 157 have been approved. These severely restrict the ability of the regions to issue the dispensations which would allow protected species to be killed. The immediate result is that, this year at least, Bramblings and Chaffinches will be spared.

It has taken not only years of hard work of hard work by LIPU members and volunteers who have

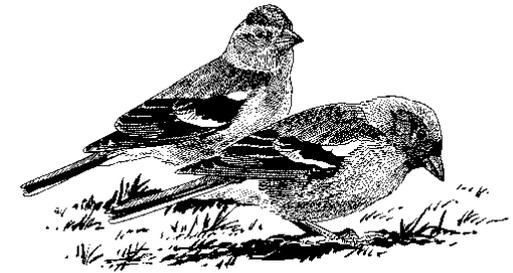
submitted documents, made reports to the police and collected 200,000 signatures for a petition but also a serious charge of breaking European law and the condemnation of Italy in the European court of justice to reach this point. At last, parliament has passed the new law which limits the extent to which regions can allow changes to the list of species that can legally be hunted.

It is a dispute that has gone on for years and seen our country at the head of the list of those ugly states where people are not content with hunting species that are not protected but want to go after those that are protected as well. Bramblings, Chaffinches and other small migratory birds are hunted, not to protect crops or historic buildings, but merely for amusement and in the name of ancient traditions that no longer make sense.

The passing of the new law, along with the work of LIPU has meant that this last year has, in a way, been historic. For the first time in living memory in the regions of Italy with the worst records [above all The Veneto and Lombardia there has been no debate, no one has tried to get a dispensation and no finches have been trapped. Will it last? Will it be the same next year? We shall see. For this reason LIPU has requested the European Commission not to close the case against Italy, to remain vigilant and, if necessary, request a new sentence be passed.

The new law is not exactly as we would wish it – we would like the making of all exceptions to be abolished as they are understood in a very differently in our country. So, although the progress made by Italy is pleasing it is still not enough. The hunting of all small birds, indeed of all migratory species must

stop so that they can fly freely through the skies of Europe and are welcomed not by lead shot but that their arrival is celebrated, and greeted with smiles of joy



FROM THE WORLD OF LIPU

Edited by Andrea Mazza, LIPU Press Office Manager

Eurobirdwatch: show of migration

One Montagu's Harrier and two Booted Eagles among the rare sightings in Italy

Nineteen thousand participants, 900 events, 2.4 million wild birds observed. It is the Autumn migration recorded by the Eurobirdwatch, which was organised on 5-6 October by the partner associations of Birdlife International in 30 countries. In Italy, LIPU has offered 40 events to the general public: half of them were organised by various LIPU sections and the other half by Oases and reserves managed by the association. The very bad weather has impacted negatively on both the public's attendance and the species observed. However, a few rare sightings occurred: one Montagu's Harrier in the Biviere Natural Reserve in Gela; two Booted Eagles in the Chiarone Reserve-LIPU Massaciucoli Oasis, one

Ruddy Shelduck at the Santa Croce Lake in Val Lapisina, one Pelican at the Palude Brabbia Nature Reserve and one Pectoral Sandpiper at the Saline di Priolo Reserve.

The species the most observed were the Herring Gull, the Mallard and the Starling; 219 recognised species and 23 thousand birds observed.

At a European level, other rare species have been observed such as the Radde's Warbler and the Dusky Warbler in Finland, numerous Richard's Pipits in the Netherlands and finally 60 White-headed Ducks and 32 Rufous Bush-chats in Uzbekistan.

In Europe the species the most observed were the Starling, the Coot and the Chaffinch. Eurobirdwatch, which has celebrated its 20th anniversary this year, was coordinated by Birdlife Slovakia.

The rare species that nest in LIPU Oases and reserves

Egyptian Vulture: the national star

The couple of Egyptian Vulture observed in Gravina di Laterza was the star of 2013. After a few years of absence, the species has come back in the oasis to nest. Vittorio and Manuel, two of the LIPU volunteers, have followed day by day the flight of the male and the female, the laying of the egg, its hatching and the care of the chick until its flight and its disappearance towards Africa.

The other main actors of LIPU Oases and reserves were the almost 300 couples of Pygmy Cormorant at the Cave Gaggio Oasis, the 100 couples of Eleonora's Falcon at the Carloforte Oasis and the two couples of Spoonbill at the Torrile Natural Reserve (a third couple made an attempt but failed). As for other attempts, it is worth noting that the Greater Flamingoes at the Saline di Priolo Natural Reserve built 26 nests and laid several eggs, but unfortunately no hatching occurred.

Moreover, from North to South, other important species have been included in the EU directives and Red Lists. Among them: the Purple Heron, the Black Winged Silt, the Shag and the Purple Gallinule, all nesting this year in LIPU oases and reserves.

Now these actors, many of them, are in Africa for the winter season. Next year we will tell another story, another movie.

By Ugo Faralli, LIPU Oases and Reserves Manager

Research carried out by LIPU Cave Gaggio Oasis, Venice.

Turtles' paradise

Some researchers from the University of Florence have carried out a study in the LIPU Cave Gaggio Oasis and in other national sites to analyse the population of the Pond Slider (*Trachemys scripta*), an invasive turtle naturalised in Italy. This important study, which includes the analysis of samples gathered from the countries of origin (in North

America) will be used to collect useful information for the conservation of our European Pond Turtle (*Emys orbicularis*). It was indeed this study that confirmed the presence of a significant number of European Pond Turtles in the Gaggio area. An oasis not just for birds: a small but important shelter in the context of intensive farming and widespread urbanisation, which offer fewer and fewer water streams suitable for this species. LIPU Venice will promote a project for the ethical containment of the American turtle, to favour the population of the European one which has declined in recent years.

Important projects for LIPU Capitanata in Puglia.

The Lesser Kestrel and the Manor Farm

Thirteen chicks were born in 2013. LIPU Capitanata continues safeguarding the Black Stork population which nests in the Ofanto and Cervaro basins as well as the breeding sites which are still threatened by wind farms and water systems. LIPU Capitanata is also committed to protect Lesser Kestrels in the Tavoliere delle Puglie's fields and in other areas where they are threatened by energy plants and the degradation of farms.

The ultimate objective is to preserve a rural environment for this flagship species and safeguard the wonderful architectural examples of the ancient rural civilisation, such as the abandoned or semi-derelict farms. These farms are also the favourite spots of Lesser Kestrels and Rollers, whose population in the Daunian Tavoliere is

among the most important ones in Italy. For further information:
www.lipucapitanata.it

The LIPU Trento Wildlife Rescue Centre has healed and freed a Northern Bald Ibis

A non-fatal impact

A young Northern Bald Ibis was flying with a fellow bird when he hit some wires in Masi di Cavalese, Trentino. The misadventure ended well thanks to the local forest rangers and some Austrian researchers who managed to rescue the bruised bird and then took him to the Wildlife Rescue Centre in Trento. This species is also object of a reintroduction project carried out by the Waldrappteam Institute.

No fractures for the rare bird, only a light bruise on the left shoulder which was healed after a couple of days of rest. Finally, on 13th September the Northern Bald Ibis was freed in the surroundings of Brunico to continue its flight.

The story of Divo, the celebrity bat, was published thanks to LIPU's help

A 'human' mother

They have been on Earth for 52 million years and in Italy they have been protected since 1939. Nonetheless, they are still an endangered species due to false myths and taboos which are hard to

break down. In their favour, naturalist Alessandra Tommasini and journalist Marco D'Amico have written *Il pipistrello divo e la mamma umana* (English: *Divo, the celebrity bat and the human mother*), a short story sponsored by LIPU, the Italian Chiroptera Research Group (GIRC) and the Bat Conservation Association and published by Taphros. The story is about Divo, a Kuhl's Pipistrelle who describes his first three months of life: from the fall from his shelter to the moment in which he can finally taste freedom thanks to the help of his 'human' mother Alessandra. For further information: www.tutelapipistrelli.it
E-mail: pipistrelli@gmail.com (Price: Euro 6.90)



The 20th monitoring camp organised by LIPU Pedemontana Trevigiana has come to an end

Thirteen thousand Honey Buzzards migrating

The key day was 31st August, when almost 3000 migrating birds passed by. After all, the Colli Asolani route is among the most important ones for the migration of the Honey Buzzard. It was here, indeed, that the LIPU Pedemontana Trevigiana organised the 20th monitoring camp to observe the post-breeding migration of birds of prey.

As far as the Colle St. Giorgio monitoring station is

concerned, 11,225 thousand Honey Buzzards were observed along with 70 Buzzards, 18 Marsh Harriers, 16 Black Kites, 3 Short-toed Eagles, 2 Sparrowhawks and 9 Black Storks. The camp started on 15th August and ended on 5th September. Besides Colle St. Giorgio, the other monitoring stations were on the Mt. Tomba (IBA of the Grappa Mastiff) and at the Monfumo castles. Overall, over 13000 Honey Buzzards were observed.

NEWS FROM LIPU-UK

Financial uncertainty

Since the financial crisis of 2008 the view of the banking sector has changed almost beyond recognition. Institutions previously seen as safe and secure have turned out to be gamblers and a few have paid the ultimate price and disappeared altogether.

In the face of this, LIPU-UK has been happy to use the services of the Co-operative Bank for a number of reasons - it had always provided excellent day to day banking service, it has an Ethical Policy and in some ways could be described as almost boring. Tragically, it found itself married to a struggling Building Society and now the group is in the process of being "restructured" in order to stay in business.

This is an opportunity to share with you some of the factors which affect banking for charities, but, first let's consider the safety of our funds because nothing is more important than that. We have split our assets and spread the deposits across a set of banks, all of which are covered by the Financial Services

Compensation Scheme (FSCS) and none of these banks holds more than the maximum covered by the scheme.

It is extraordinarily difficult to find a bank or building society which will even accept charity funds and those that do usually treat the funds as a business account with very poor returns. In view of this, and because we have deposit accounts in place with five banks, we intend to continue to bank with the Co-op as long as it is safe to do so and we will continue to take full advantage of the FSCS for as long as is necessary. I hope this report offers comfort and reassurance in the current climate of uncertainty.

TAIL FEATHERS

To close on a cheerful note I can report that all the projects which we are supporting in 2013 are going well and we have decided to embark on our most ambitious commitment yet in the coming year. More details of this exciting challenge in the next issue of Ali.

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

Line drawings are used by permission of the RSPB and photographs are © Luigi Sebastiani – Montagu's Harrier and Michele Mendi for the Lesser Kestrel.



Northern Bald Ibis is in the news (above and see p 12 & 27) as the species enjoys a successful breeding season in Morocco. Below: A group photo of staff, volunteers and helpers at Paludi di Brabbia as they celebrate 30 years as a protected reserve.



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Moment of triumph and joy as a Buzzard is released at the LIPU Reserve of Ostiglia.