

ali

Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli

Conservation News from Italy



- LIPU 50th Anniversary
- Anti-poaching in Sardinia
- Black Woodpecker in the Apennines
- Project support for 2015

Spring 2015



Photo Gallery

Tony Harris writes of his friend and fellow bird watcher in Sicily, Pierluigi Vinci, hiding behind his camera, left, – but photographers are like that!

Pierluigi created the excellent images of Peregrine Falcon and Sardinian Warbler below and the Cetti's Warbler on the front cover



This issue is different

Editorial

David Lingard

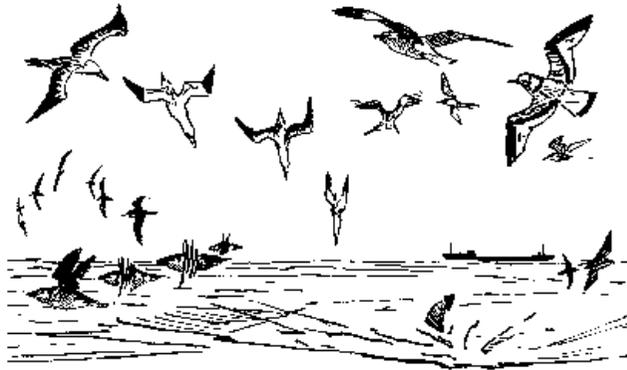
A few words of explanation will, I hope, make that statement clearer. The normal production of the *Ali* in English requires a choice of articles from the Italian newsletter, their translation and their editing into the format which I hope we all enjoy.

It was different this time because LIPU is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year and has produced a special edition of the *Ali* which contains the history of the organisation, but the length of this item would fill our *Ali* four times over. With no “normal” articles available we’ve resorted to translating some pieces from the Italian web site which we think are interesting – I hope you will agree. I am also very grateful for two items from members, contributions like this are always very welcome – please keep them coming in.

We hope to publish an abridged version of the history of LIPU in a future edition of the *Ali* because it is very interesting and you’ll be surprised just how much the early days were influenced by English men and women.

It’s a busy time of the year because 2015 is not just the British General Election, it is also the year to elect those who will guide LIPU for the next three years. There is more on this later in this issue. For us, it is also busy as we launch our one and only appeal of the year, and we hope that you will support it with the same generosity as in previous years, again there is more on a later page.

Finally, another Spring is almost on us and as the birds, which we all love, are about to embark on another season of raising young, we can be sure that our work in this country is helping those in Italy and this is all thanks to you, the members of LIPU-UK. Avanti!



FORESTE CASENTINESI – HOME OF THE BLACK WOODPECKER

A Marsh Tit hops from branch to branch opposite the Ridracoli Waters Ecomuseum. Not far from there, the Black Woodpecker’s nesting season has just ended leaving behind empty nests dug in the most ancient tree logs.

In keeping with the BirdWild Destination project, on 4th October the Foreste Casentinesi National Park, a natural gem preserving one of the oldest forests in Italy, together with LIPU-Birdlife Italy and L’Altra Romagna and Delta 2000 Local Action Groups (LAG) organised a seminar on forest and bird conservation.

Europe has lost many forests, especially the most ancient ones and this does not help the hole-nesting species ...

In this majestic natural setting, to the south of Bologna and north east of Florence, softened by the first, timid touch of yellow of early Autumn, the presenters take turns and explain the crucial role of forests in the safeguard of biodiversity and the earth’s health.

Nowadays, although forests cover 10 million hectares, 30% of the Italian territory, and are increasing at 1% a year their environmental quality is not high. “They have little biodiversity because many Italian forests used to be intensely exploited copses, so it will take many centuries before they can become ancient again”, explains Gianluca Piovesan from Tuscia University, Viterbo. Over the centuries, Europe has lost many forests, especially the most ancient ones and this does not help the hole-nesting species in need of old logs rich in clefts and cavities. The warning has been relaunched by Claudio Celada, LIPU’s Conservation Director, who said, “The structure of our forests is too simple to host rich biodiversity and ancient forests occupy a very small area. Although many forest bird species are in a good conservation status, it is necessary to highlight that some particularly “needy” species are at risk. This is the case for the Hazel Grouse, the Capercaillie, the Collared Flycatcher and Sardinia’s Goshawk.”



Understandably, the rich presence of ancient trees allows the Foreste Casentinesi Natural Park to host species such as the Black Woodpecker, the Goshawk, the Wood Warbler, the Treecreeper and the Crested Tit. “The Black Woodpecker returned in 2000 and is

quickly spreading throughout the park”, announces Nevio Agostini, member of the National Park’s Research and Conservation promotional unit. According to Guido Tellini Florenzano of Dream Italia, the country is in a “dynamic situation in which forests are getting old, thus increasing the number of forest birds while farmlands and pastures are decreasing, thus leading to the extinction of the Wheatear and the decline of the Cirl Bunting.”

The LIFE Tib project too, currently carried out in the province of Varese, is trying to improve the quality of forests in the green corridor connecting the Ticino Valley to Campo dei Fiori, “by increasing the woody necromass that can maintain or boost biodiversity”, explains Sara Barbieri of the province of Varese. Mosaici Mediterranei (Mediterranean Mosaics) is an interesting forest conservation and promotion project from Fontecchio, L’Aquila. Speaking about the project, Marco Polvani of the Ilex Cooperative noted, “the local population, associations and various institutions learnt more about forests, the active adoption of trails and the sustainable use of biomass derived from artificial reforestation.”

Many trees in Italy, then, but often of poor quality. There is still much to do for the Italian forests to be “ancient” again and be rich in that biodiversity that man has taken away over the centuries. One of the objectives of the BirdWild Destination project is to safeguard the Foreste Casentinesi also through the crucial promotion of its natural and cultural riches, which can attract sustainable tourism and persuade visitors of their relevance and value.

The day continued with a guided tour to the nearby Ridracoli Dam. Tens of Crag Martins swooped

over the top of the dam and told us that nature is astonishing, even where you least expect it. Guided by tour leader Pierpaolo Ceccarelli, participants discovered an area that, although artificially made to store drinking water for the Romagna region, is very interesting both for its landscape and its wildlife.

The following day, 5th October, was dedicated to Eurobirdwatch 2014, organised by LIPU in the millennial Campigna Forest. From the Burraia ridge meadows, the trail led through beech and spruce-fir trees of colossal dimensions, often ancient-looking, habitat of many forest birds, among them the Black Woodpecker. The last part of the tour took place in the monumental Campigna spruce-fir forest, home of the Treecreeper whose 200-300 breeding pairs make it the most important population in the northern Apennines.



A SICILIAN BIRDWATCHER AND PHOTOGRAPHER: PIERLUIGI VINCI

by Tony Harris

As soon as I arrived in Sicily, nearly 30 years ago, I realized what a privilege it had been to be a bird watcher in Britain. We had everything at our disposal; walks, talks, bird hides and bird tables in the garden just brimming with birds. Even living in south-west London the garden was always full and some birds would even eat from the hand. But life for the few

Pierluigi took part in an anti-poaching camp in Sicily, aimed at protecting the nest site of a rare raptor ...

Sicilian birdwatchers was, and is, a different story altogether. Hunting and poaching have been rife here and though, thankfully now in decline, are still common practices. While I was following a local group around Richmond park, my Sicilian friends were protesting against often violent and always armed hunters. Pierluigi Vinci is just one of these people whose passion has always overcome the odds.

Pierluigi was born in Lombardy in 1970 and came to Sicily, his parents' native land in 1979. His passion and love for nature has been with him as far as he can remember, so much so that his mother, a primary school teacher, bought him the first part of the De Agostini Encyclopedia "the Life of Animals", before he even started school in 1976. His desire to read what was written under those wonderful photographs soon had him reading and from then on he devoured all the works by the great Felix Rodriguez De La Fuente.

He was so enthused by what he was reading that, not only did he memorize everything about the animals but also their scientific names and their often Greek origins.

Later, in the 1980s, he took to reading all the nature magazines Italy had to offer such as *Airone*, *Oasis*, *Silva*, forever enchanted by the photographs and illustrations as well as all the information about the animals and their ethology.

And then he came across Bertel Bruun's "Birds of Europe", that plunged him into the wonderful world of bird watching. From then on he spent hours observing the birds around him, even just from his window, comparing his own observations with those

of the book, which he took with him wherever he went.

Pierluigi first became interested in photography in 2006, a natural progression of a passion that now allowed him to capture those moments in the life of a bird or animal or the habitat in which they lived.

In characteristic modesty, he would never consider himself a photographer but prefers to define himself as "a naturalist who likes taking photos" which he sees simply as a way to tip toe as an observer into the lives of birds and animals and show as many people as possible what he has seen as a way to contribute to the spreading of awareness about nature and the environment. In order to do this he often makes use of Facebook as a way to divulge information and photographs quickly and in particular uses a well-known nature photography forum. He has also held several photography exhibitions in his home town of Milazzo, Sicily, both on his own and with others.

In 2014 Pierluigi took part in an anti-poaching camp in Sicily, aimed at protecting the nest site of a rare raptor, an experience he says was an important one since even as a child he had always wanted to take an active part in nature conservation and bird protection.

People such as Pierluigi are the modern pioneers of Sicilian bird watching. It is thanks to him and to those like him that many species can finally begin to feel safer in their natural surroundings.



GREEN SCHOOLS: THE DRAFT LEGISLATION

Creating vegetable patches, gardens and bird-gardens in Italian schools, so that pupils can spend longer outdoors and in contact with nature so as to grow up in a healthier fashion.

Senator Monica Cirinnà of the Partito democratico today presented to the Senate a draft for legislation, supported by LIPU-BirdLife Italia, for the renewal of the study of nature in our schools. It is set out in the draft that there be government recognition that green spaces within school precincts form “a fundamental element of educational progress and a formative part of primary schooling”, introducing these principles not only into new-build projects by the Regions and Communes but also in all cases of refitting, restructuring and safety works of academic institutions housing primary schools.

The meeting was introduced by LIPU President Fulvio Mamone Capria with contributions from Senator Francesca Puglisi, head of the Pd group at the commission for Public Education and Heritage, Anna Oliverio Ferraris, professor of Developmental Psychology at La Sapienza University, and the architect Gianluca Mora, from the committee of the Parma architectural association, and the results of a survey conducted by LIPU in spring 2014 among teachers, parents and school governors from the whole of Italy were presented.

The survey shows that over 90% of those interviewed thought that children should spend free time outdoors, and that this can improve their concentration (78%), their creativity (90%), and communication between them (81%). A large

... which will ensure that children have time outdoors in gardens and green spaces.

majority of teachers however do not believe having children outside is completely safe due to the inadequacy of school yards and grounds.

“The current state of our school building stock, cut off from nature and green spaces, is worrying, and profoundly lowers the quality of educational life”, declares LIPU President Fulvio Mamone Capria, “If we therefore make it a matter of urgency to redevelop our educational facilities, along with a programme of bringing schools back to nature, this could increase the well-being of pupils, while improving the quality of socialisation and learning while guaranteeing them the contact with nature that decades of urban development in thrall to “cementification” have denied them. For this reason our appeal goes with all possible force to the Prime Minister Matteo Renzi: to the programme *scuole belle*, *scuole nuove* and *scuole sicure* (beautiful, new and safe schools) add *scuole verdi*, green schools. For the future of our children it is indeed essential”.



The draft legislation presented by Senator Cirinnà follows the example of the American campaign “No child left inside” which has led to legislation from the US government and funding which will ensure that children have time outdoors in gardens and green spaces. Among other experiments on similar lines that LIPU has flagged up at the international level is the school of Boulogne Billancourt in Paris, with the Forest Kindergarten, held in the woods, and the Forest School (lessons in green spaces). In

Italy, as Gianluca Mora has shown, LIPU has pointed out the Lama Sud experiment at Ravenna, which makes the green approach central to education, Romarzollo Arco in Trento province, as well as the Shagree project in Bari, which has turned the roof of a secondary school into a garden which serves both for learning and as a social space.



ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Not only to observe, but to live for nature. LIPU has been one of the first organisations in Italy to go into schools with projects for environmental education. We nowadays approach education in a many different ways: meeting students and children, debating, working together, creating situations that allow them to live nature to the full.

Environmental education is one of LIPU's missions. It is key to facing up to the ecological crisis and the means to promote the knowledge, respect and love of nature.

The natural world offers so many ways and means to form emotional bonds. To lie down in the fields and watch the waving of the trees, to discover the microscopic life in a droplet of water, the scent of the ground after warm summer rain: moments of deep connection with the natural world that can awaken

LIPU is developing its educational programme not for schools but with schools ...

in all of us, infants, children and adults alike, a true sensitivity towards it. Through this we gain a better life and understanding of things, joined to a deeper and truer understanding of our place on the earth.

Activities with schools

<http://www.lipu.it/insegnanti-per-la-natura>

“Not only to observe, but to live for nature”: it is according to this principle that LIPU's proposals for environmental education are based.

It is a somewhat different experience from the traditional one, that gives information about animals and plants in a purely descriptive manner, holding them at times at a distance.

Environmental education however should bring the real life of nature to children, create intense and meaningful bonds between them and nature, so that they may grow to know and love it better.

LIPU is developing its educational programme not for schools but with schools, because only by working together is it possible to stimulate critical thought in young and older children, so that they may become citizens capable of understanding and putting a value of what they see in their country and its environment.

LIPU young

<http://www.lipu.it/lipu-young>

For the young and young adults from 15-30.
Are you a fan of nature? Do you like animals? Are

you under 30? Nature needs you! You can take part in various LIPU projects, see many animals at close range, meet people of your own age and interests and learn beautiful, unique and interesting things about nature. Many of LIPU's national and local groups have activities that will suit you. Come and discover them, click here! www.lipu.it/lipu-young



LIPU kids, Dedicated to children

<http://www.lipu.it/kids#campiestivi>

Are you curious about the behaviour of different animal species? Would you like to know all about them? Would you like to play with those of your age who have the same passion? Then this is the place for you. Nature needs you!



WHO WILL SAVE THE UGLY DUCKLING?

Who will save the ugly duckling from the serious risk it is facing? Of course, we are not really talking about ducklings but vultures. Despite their undeserved bad reputation, vultures are neither ugly

Ninety-nine per cent of two species of vulture were wiped out.

nor wicked but majestic, fascinating creatures of great ecological value.

Among them are the gigantic, solitary Bearded Vulture, or Lammergeier, that nests high up among the rocks, the majestic Griffon Vulture that has inspired legends and folk tales and the little Egyptian Vulture with its black and white livery, of which only nine pairs breed in Italy.

The efforts of LIPU to save these large but vulnerable birds from the many threats that they face have seen good results which risk being frustrated because of one thing - Diclofenac.

Diclofenac is a medicine used as an anti-inflammatory for humans and now being marketed for veterinary use in Europe. This happened in India and the results were dramatic. Ninety-nine per cent of two species of vulture were wiped out. Almost all vultures died.

The vultures eat the carcasses of grazing animals left out in the open. When these animals have been treated with Diclofenac, the birds directly ingest it. It causes a kidney failure and they suffer a painful death



It is not just a problem for vultures, of which only a few remain in Italy, but also for other large raptors which will eat carrion such as the Imperial Eagle and Red and Black Kites.

We must convince Europe to change its mind, ban the veterinary use of Diclofenac, and persuade the pharmaceutical companies to promote the alternative which is not harmful to birds. We must strive to make the press and the public aware of the problem.

It will be necessary for LIPU to prepare rescue centres for a new and difficult task, that of taking in and treating birds that are suffering from ingesting the drug.

Help us to save the vultures and other large raptors that are under such threat. They are not ugly ducklings neither are they unpleasant and ugly animals but splendid birds that rule the skies and play, in a totally fascinating way, their vital role in the natural world.

BIRDS IN ABRUZZO

by Rebecca Coombes

In 2005 we bought an old stone house situated on the edge of one of Abruzzo's National Parks, see map on p31. Part of the attraction was the peaceful location among abandoned olive groves and oak woods.

Our first trip to the house took place in May and, drinking a celebration glass of wine, outside, around dusk we were transported by the sound of a single Nightingale calling from some nearby trees. As darkness closed in, hundreds of fireflies lit up just like fairy lights at Christmas. Darkness also heralded the arrival of several owls who seemed very put out

to find us in what they clearly regarded as their own territory. Tawny Owls and Barn Owls are both fairly common but the one we saw and heard the most was the Little Owl.

The lower slopes of the Maiella Mountains are carpeted with unspoilt meadows and are a magnet to butterflies. Many types of Abruzzo flowering plants are unknown to me but two particular varieties are a form of wild Delphinium and a tiny dark purple Aquilegia. These insect rich meadows provide both feeding and breeding sites for many bird species. One that I have yet to see, but have heard many times, is the Quail with its "wet-my-lips" call. Unfortunately the Quail attracts hunters and I often catch sight of a single guy sneaking away when he catches sight of me with my binoculars. It's sad that these hunters are killing the birds in Spring when they are laying eggs and feeding young.



As well as the Nightingale, another bird which announces the coming of Summer is the Golden Oriole. I love to hear the wonderful song of the orioles rising from the deep ravine by our house. It seems strange to me that such a beautiful, melodic bird can produce such unlovely and certainly untuneful young! As Summer draws on, the birds become not only silent but also invisible and it is not until the sun sets that nature reappears, with the owls and the bats.

By late September, most of the migrants are returning to their wintering grounds leaving a pair of precocious Robins to rule the roost in the garden. This is the time of year when I keep my eyes and ears

open for the flocks of Bee-eaters that gather in the ravine then fly off up the valley. We hardly see them at all at any other time, so it's a real occasion to watch them pass by and to hear their calls. Birds of prey are common with Buzzards (both Honey and Common) being the easiest to spot. Sparrowhawks and falcons are spotted if we are very lucky, zooming after prey.

I suppose the main difference between "our" Abruzzo garden birds and those in Cornwall is that the Abbruzese are so hard to spot! Feeding birds isn't something that Italians tend to go in for and most gardens are besieged by hordes of very hungry (and mainly stray) cats. So birds seem to regard gardens as danger zones. Another factor is the sheer amount of wild food to be found around our house in Abruzzo compared with Cornwall.. The abandoned fields and olive groves have never been treated with chemicals so birds probably don't need to come into gardens looking for food. Returning from Abruzzo the abundance of birds in my Cornish garden always amazes me, and in Abruzzo it takes time to get used to the "absence" of bird life around the house.

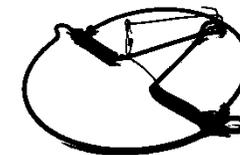
However, regardless of the difficulties involved in actually spotting the birds I still find the times I spend in Abruzzo totally magical and the memories help tide me over a grey Cornish winter!

Info on Abruzzo: Abruzzo is just south of Le Marche and is easily reached from Rome. There are several National Parks and many smaller regional ones where there are still wolves and bears. Spring and Autumn are the ideal times to visit. My blog is at: myabruzzohome@blogspot.com

THREE THOUSAND TRAPS REMOVED FROM SULCIS WOODS

Nearly 3,000 traps for the illegal capture of small birds have been confiscated, along with a bird-trapping net, and a hand-crafted shotgun loaded with buckshot cartridges.

The anti-poaching camp organised by LIPU - BirdLife Italy in the province of Cagliari has been a great success. Running from 7 to 21 December in the neighbourhood of Pula, Capoterra, Assemini, and Uta, the participants were twenty LIPU volunteers from Sardinia and other Italian regions, with support from agents of the Environmental, Forestry and Surveillance Corps of Sardinia. The camp formed part of the project "LIFE+ Safe Haven for Wild Birds" which aims to raise awareness of poaching within the local community. The volunteers discovered many small migratory birds dead in traps set by illegal hunters, including Robins, Blackbirds, Blackcaps and thrushes. In the Pula area volunteers also discovered two deer, only a few hours after a slow and agonising death in snares laid on paths.

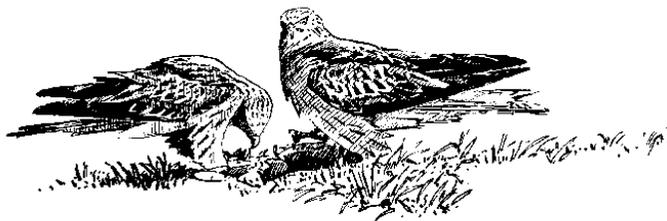


It was heartening to see 18 pupils from the Assemini school help with trap clearance, working alongside LIPU and the Forestry Corps. They did important work in clearing the killing paths, which are armed with nylon wires in the trees to trap birds and snares to trap mammals. Equally heartening was the "Safe

Haven for Wild Birds” day, which took place on 6 December in the Molentargius Saline Park, Cagliari. Many families with children joined in excursions, workshops, and the release of waterbirds into the wild.

“Thanks to the appointment of some of our volunteers as police auxiliaries, and close co-operation with the local forces of law and order” - said Gigliola Magliocco, LIPU camp manager - “we were able to reach areas which would otherwise have been inaccessible, and to carry out a very effective operation. I would like to send a big thank you to all the volunteers who participated in this important event, and hope that we can all meet in the coming weeks to continue our work of protecting nature and making people aware of the seriousness of environmental crime.”

“It was a thrilling experience which has produced excellent results” - declared LIPU president Fulvio Mamone Capria, following his attendance during the first week of the camp. “This was a joint effort between LIPU and the Environmental, Forestry and Surveillance Corps, who we would like to thank for their commitment in tackling this ugly phenomenon of poaching, a plague on this beautiful land, so rich in biodiversity and in nature.”



GOGREEN

GoGreen takes young people through various stages of cultural and more importantly, personal growth by undertaking voluntary activities.

The project GoGreen - volunteers for nature - is aimed at 14-17 year-olds, at present in three regions: in Lombardy, Lazio and Sicily a group of adolescents has been created who for more than a year go through a course of personal development outside the context of formal education.

GoGreen is a pathway that aims at instilling values into the participating teenagers, through activities such as maintaining footpaths, censuses of plants and animals and care of injured wild animals, organisation of guided tours, and the organisation and management of natural play areas, but with the aim also, in addition to the context of the natural world, of creating a group of volunteers well-trained and responsible in their dealings with the environment and with others.



The idea of voluntary service for nature and the environment is of recent formation, based on individual and group work outdoors, that engages the participants physically, intellectually and emotionally. It is based on the conviction that the best way definitively to learn new modes of behaviour is through direct experience.

Starting in spring 2012, the three currently active groups have carried out many activities among nature

and filmed their progress to tell their story. This became a documentary presented at a special meeting at the end of 2013.

The project was financed by the Youth Ministry under the title “Young Protagonists”.

To learn more visit the site Gogreenlipu.it or follow it on facebook: [gogreenlipu](https://www.facebook.com/gogreenlipu)

SPRING ALIVE!

Spring alive! is a major project of environmental education, a monitoring operation involving more than 30 countries in Europe, Africa and the Middle East, with the participation of children, young adults, families, schools and the general public.

The project will be rolled out simultaneously from February 1st to June 22nd in all the countries of Europe and some of the Middle East, while in autumn it will head for South Africa and other African countries.

Welcome in Spring with children and schools in the great event for LIPU and all of Europe!

How it works

Children, families and schools in all countries participating in the project are invited to observe and record on a specially created website, www.springalive.net the arrival of five species of birds that announce the arrival of spring: White Storks, Cuckoos, Swallows, Swifts and Bee-eaters.

... it will be possible to track the changes in the arrival dates of migratory birds and thereby understand better the effect of climate change on migration.

All that has to be done is to record on www.springalive.net the year's first sightings of these five birds, Barn Swallow, Swift, White Stork, Cuckoo and Bee-eater. The sightings record thus created will help to update the maps of Italy and the rest of Europe, showing the progress of Spring across our country and the whole continent.

By using the data gathered by all those participating in the project it will be possible to track the changes in the arrival dates of migratory birds and thereby understand better the effect of climate change on migration. Spring alive is very much a “Citizen Science” project: real science in which people in all walks of life can play their part.

Educational and explanatory material can be downloaded directly in pdf format from the www.springalive.net website.



HUNTING: CHANGING THE WHOLE SYSTEM

The data is lacking and, so are any management plans; there are no controls and hunting takes place in periods which are not allowed against species which are under pressure.

Europe is laying bare Italian hunting and providing evidence of the gravest shortcomings and the

... our country is at fault over the duration of the hunting season in respect of various species of migratory birds which are being hunted on migration ...

numerous infractions of the law. LIPU-Birdlife Italy is commenting on the process, Pilot 6955, launched by the European Commission against Italy relating to the failure to put correctly into place various elements of the directive 2009/147 entitled "Birds". "The attention of the hunting community and of a number of regional administrations – affirms the President of LIPU, Fulvio Mamone Capria – is focussed entirely on the reduction of the hunting season for three species of birds, the Song Thrush, the Fieldfare and the Woodcock, quite properly decided by the Council of Ministers following the warning from the Ministry of the Environment.

The problem is, however, much wider and concerns numerous and serious objections which regard almost the whole system of Italian hunting. "Europe – explains the President – requires the Italian Authorities to make clear how they go about gathering and analysing the data on the killing of animals, how the mechanism for recording the details of kills on licence cards should be managed and monitored and if there exist detailed studies on the health and resilience of the populations of game species. Under all of which headings, as has been known for years, Italy has been wholly deficient and has, as yet, made no pretence at dealing with any despite the fact that it is a matter of the elements which are essential in allowing an evaluation to be made of the sustainability of the impact of hunting and hence its legality.



"What is more, our country is at fault over the duration of the hunting season in respect of various species of migratory birds which are being hunted on

migration which is forbidden under the community rules. No less of a concern then, is the number of aspects of conservation on which Europe wishes to know, for example, why numerous species are being hunted in Italy even though they are in a fragile state of conservation, such as the Skylark, the Quail, the Woodcock and the Ruff. Furthermore, do exist adequate and obligatory management plans exist in the case of the hunting of species on the danger list?



"And so, while the hunters are protesting because they have lost a few hours in the hunting of three species, it would be better if the whole system, the State, the Regions, stakeholders were to reflect on how to respond to the serious and very pertinent queries posed by the European Commission and to put into place real interventions. In this sense – concluded LIPU's President – due credit must be given to the Ministry of the Environment and to the Government, taking into account of course that this is only the first, appropriate act in a long series of interventions, indispensable if it wants to fundamentally correct the system and ensure that the European Commission, having taken the lid off the Pandora's box of Italian hunting, does not take punitive action against Italy. With the consequence, in the case that action is taken, that not only the hunting of thrushes but a great part of hunting in Italy could in the course of next year be suspended"

NEWS FROM LIPU-UK

LIPU Elections – this affects us all.

LIPU is required by its constitution to hold elections for its officers every three years. We are all full members of LIPU in Italy and if we joined before the end of January 2014 then we are entitled to vote in the election of officers.

In previous years, this mailing has caused some concern so, this year, after much discussion with our colleagues in Parma we have translated the papers into English to make life a little easier. To simplify the legal verification requirements we are making a change from previous years and the papers will be mailed directly from Italy in the near future. We understand that members in this country may not be familiar with the candidates, so there will be a short pen-picture of each candidate, and you are encouraged to cast your vote and return the form if you wish to exercise your right in this election.

For those who wish to cast their votes may I summarise a few points:

You may vote for up to 15 candidates for the Board of Directors and up to three candidates for each of the Board of Arbitrators and the Board of Auditors. The voting papers must be postmarked in the UK by 23 May 2015.

Despite the complexity of this process, it is essential that all members have the chance to cast their vote and the election would not be valid in law if these forms were not posted to you. I hope this explanation is clear and thank you for your understanding.

LIPU-UK Annual Draw - 2014

My thanks go to all who took part in our Annual Draw last year. The draw is important to us because it is simple to operate and generates useful income to support our aims. We believe that it offers attractive prizes but realise that it not to everyone's taste, so tickets are not sent to those who have said they don't want to receive them. Just over 200 people bought tickets – and that must give entrants a much better chance of winning than in other draws; the winners in 2014 were:

First Prize: £500 Mrs J Reed of London

Second Prize: £200 Mrs E Beswick of Norfolk

Third Prize: £100 Mr P A C Hunt of Surrey

Congratulations to the winners and to those who did not I would say, try again next year and even if you don't win you are helping our important work as I'll explain below.

A way to reduce costs

The postage rates are increasing again as I go to press and there is a very easy way that many of us can help to reduce the bill. If you have an email address and don't mind receiving routine mail like the invitation to renew your membership, then please send me an email at mail@lipu-uk.org and, together, we will save many stamps. I promise I will not disclose your address to anyone.

LIPU-UK ANNUAL APPEAL – 2015

Each year we ask Claudio Celada, the Conservation Director in Parma, to offer a list of projects which we might be able to help. It was a real pleasure, last October, to have Claudio attend our meeting and explain the merits of each of his candidates for our support in the coming year. He proposed to carry forward a small underspend from the previous year and, as reported in the Ali of Winter 2014, asked for urgent help in the purchase of a reedbed near Milan which was threatened by hunters - your trustees were willing and able to help and the reedbed has been saved.

Claudio continued to describe his proposals and your trustees agreed to support the following projects for 2015:

1. Anti-poaching both in Spring at the Messina Strait and, later in the year, in hills around Brescia.

This work was what LIPU-UK was founded for and, sadly, the need is still there even though the scale of poaching is nowhere near as bad as in the past. However, if the camps are cancelled there is a very real; fear that the bad days will return.

2. Anti-poaching to cover Sardinia.

This follows on from last year's successful Spring camp as well as the collection of traps in the Sulcis area in the Autumn. There is an account of this work earlier in this edition of the Ali.

3. Year 12 of monitoring the migration of raptors through Sicily.

As time has gone on, the value of this project has increased - both for the scientific data and for the early warning of raptors approaching the Messina Strait. This has improved the efficiency of the work of the LIPU volunteers and the Corpo Forestale in preventing poaching as the birds pass.

4. The work of the Recovery Centres, or bird hospitals, is without let up throughout the year and the running of the centres is expensive, we are happy to help with the cost of consumables.

5. Bonelli's Eagle protection in Sicily.

The Bonelli's Eagle is much prized by falconers and LIPU has mapped over 40 nesting territories of this wonderful bird in Sicily. Teams of volunteers will confirm the nesting sites in 2015 and mount guard over them to prevent theft of eggs or young.

Once again we have a balance between the protection and conservation of both resident and migrant birds and the research based science collecting data to prove the case when conservation is being debated. The lobbying of MPs and other decision makers is another aspect of LIPU's work and is a measure of the maturity of the organisation even though this is usually an uphill battle.

In addition to the generosity of members and friends, we are grateful for the valuable support we received from trusts and other grant-making bodies to our last appeal. I am pleased to be able to thank the following for their support:

The A S Butler Trust gave us £200, the Clare Lees Trust sent £300, the Shirley Pugh Foundation £300, the Valerie White Memorial Trust £250, the Peter Smith Trust for nature Conservation gave £1,000 and the GW Trust helped us with £300.

Bird clubs and groups also helped and we received £50 from the Gwent Ornithological Society, £42 from the Manx OS, the Wakefield Naturalists Society gave us £15 and the Stewartry Branch of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club raised £215 - my thanks to them all.

Another year of co-operation and very generous support by the AISPA, the Anglo-Italian Society for the Protection of Animals cannot go without acknowledgement. Our partnership with AISPA goes back to our foundation and, indeed the foundation of LIPU in Italy 50 year ago. This special bond between us gets stronger with time and long may it flourish - to AISPA and its members a heartfelt Thank You.

Finally, we ask this of you only once a year - please do what you can to make this appeal as successful as those in the past, every penny given will go to making life safer for the birds and over Italy - thank you.

My thanks, as always go to those who did the excellent work of translating this issue: **Joanna Bazen, Giusy Fazzina, Tony Harris, Caterina Paone, Peter Rafferty and John Walder.**



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**STOP THE MASSACRE
APPEAL 2015**

Please help us