

27th June 2009

Statement for immediate release...

BirdLife Malta Plot Revealed

Cuckoos and Wild Rabbits...

On the 30th May 2009 the Federation for Hunting & Conservation – Malta (FKNK) informed the Head of the Administrative Law Enforcement, Inspector Alex Miruzzi that FKNK members had been observing two cuckoos on a regular basis in those weeks at their Reserve of Mizieb and that BirdLife Malta were also monitoring the birds. The FKNK added that that same week the daily the Times carried an article which read that the RSPB have added the cuckoo on their list of endangered bird species in the UK, however its status in Europe remains very healthy. In full knowledge that BirdLife's next target was rabbit hunting which season was due to open come 1st June, the FKNK further informed Mr. Miruzzi with their suspicion that in the following days BirdLife Malta would inform the public that the cuckoos at Mizieb had been shot by some rabbit hunter. At this stage, the FKNK confirms to the astonished public that rabbits Do Not Have Wings.

Yesterday in a Media release BirdLife Malta stated "...now that the rabbit hunting season has opened,..." and "...there have been reports that the pair of Cuckoos in Mizieb have also been shot."

The Wild Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*), can be found in most parts of the world where it is hunted, snared, etc., at all times, even by lamping at night, for most part of the year since in most countries it is even classified as a pest species. Malta is one of less than a handful of countries where the wild rabbit is protected for five months of the year.

Breeding Birds...

In the same Media release BirdLife also "...revealed footage and photographs of a dead Black-winged Stilt at the Ghadira Nature Reserve, which had been shot early on the morning of the 25th June." Whilst as always the FKNK condemns any shooting of a protected species, and without questioning the authentic material of the footage and if BirdLife employees have some special permit that empowers them to handle protected species, one can't help noting the astonishing coincidence of this report.

In the local News Bulletin on national TV, on the eve of the 25th June an FKNK official demonstrated where for the third year in succession bee-eaters were breeding, besides a pair of peregrine falcons and a further two pairs of kestrels that have also always bred regularly in such small numbers over the years, and which latter news discredited BirdLife's recent announcement that a pair of kestrels has bred on the Maltese Islands for the first time in 15 years.

The FKNK is kept continuously updated about the status, breeding and quantity of Malta's birds through its network of thousands of members who carry out observations on their hunting lands all over the Maltese islands throughout the year. The status of Malta's birds, quantity, breeding etc., can be viewed on FKNK's Check-List updated June 2008 at:
http://www.huntinginmalta.org.mt/uploads/24/375/FKNK_MALTA_WILD_BIRDS_CHEC K-LIST_JUNE_2008.xls

Contrary to their arbitrary belief, Malta's Birds Do Not belong to BirdLife Malta...

The FKNK is also aware that BirdLife Malta are demanding that they be informed as to the whereabouts of any breeding birds. The FKNK feels that it is not in Birdlife Malta's interest to be aware of such issues and further believes that such information would only result in a negative outcome with some more photos and sensationalistic stories. So the FKNK will not reveal the whereabouts of such breeding birds to anyone, which birds will surely benefit from continuing to live together with hunters and trappers as the Shearwater in Mellieha has done for centuries.

Lino Farrugia
Secretary - FKNK