

Osprey ringed in Germany found shot in Malta

Title

An Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* ringed in Germany as part of a conservation project was recovered by the ALE and BirdLife Malta (BirdLife Partner) yesterday afternoon, shortly after being illegally shot in the Salina Bird Sanctuary. The Osprey had a numbered metal ring identifying it as a bird from Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Germany.

The bird was ringed as a chick in its nest on 25 June this year, as part of a conservation project by the NABU (BirdLife in Germany), together with the Forestry Commission, Nature Conservation Authorities, Power Line Companies and around 200 volunteers. Ospreys suffered population declines throughout Europe and have been the focus of many conservation projects.

In the 1970?s there were only around 70 pairs in Germany. However, following conservation projects run in all German states, this number has now risen to around 550 Osprey pairs. Ospreys are on the German Red List of Breeding Birds, meaning that they are species of conservation concern in Germany.

BirdLife Malta received a call at around 14:15 from a birdwatcher who reported that an Osprey had flown into the Salina Bird Sanctuary. Shortly afterwards, BirdLife received a report that a shot had been fired on the bird. BirdLife Malta immediately informed the ALE and sent teams to the Bird Sanctuary to search for the bird. The injured Osprey was found after it had struggled in the water and managed to ground itself on some vegetation adjacent to the walls of the salt pans. BirdLife Malta Campaigns Coordinator Geoffrey Saliba went into the water to rescue the shot protected bird before he handed it over to the ALE.

?This Osprey was shot in a Bird Sanctuary, in broad daylight, next to a main road and surrounded by residential areas, minutes after it arrived? said Geoffrey Saliba. ?This is outrageous but this is the fate many protected species meet when they come to Malta. We welcome the ALE?s apprehension of two illegal hunters suspected to be implicated in this crime, and hope they will be dealt with to the fullest extent of the law if found guilty.?

The bird was taken to a vet who confirmed that it was suffering from a badly broken wing as a result of the gunshot injury. The Osprey has been sent to the German wildlife rehabilitation centre of Kirchwald by Maltese authorities. Dr Markus Nipkow, Head Ornithologist for NABU, said ?We have invested many resources into conserving Ospreys here in Germany. But our conservation efforts in Germany are threatened by illegal hunting in Malta.? Ospreys are rare migrants over Malta.

Over the past week BirdLife Malta has recorded the shooting or killing of a range of other rare protected migrant species, including S Short-toed Snake-eagle *Circaetus gallicus*, Lesser Spotted Eagle *Aquila pomarina* and Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*.
