



Strange Creatures

The British bird lover is an unusual creature - some would say eccentric, but I think that the best description might be someone who really and truly cares about birds. Not just British birds and not just those migrating to our shores but birds wherever they may be on this imperfect planet.

Each August the British Bird-watching Fair is held beside Rutland Water, this year was the 17th and, if the past is a guide, it will probably be the most successful yet. That success is usually measured in the funds collected - the Birdfair, as it is always known, does not make a profit, all funds are given to a BirdLife partner project of real importance.

In 1989 it was the "Stop the Massacre" campaign, the same theme we adopt each year, and then it raised £3,500 to help the Maltese Ornithological Society in their brave and difficult work. Last year the preservation of the dry forest of northern Peru benefited from a cheque for £164,000 and this took the total raised since 1989 to a tremendous total of £1,288,000!

I am proud to hail from Yorkshire, where the inhabitants have been described as being "like a Scot after the removal of the generosity gene" and each year I marvel at the commitment to birds shown by the thousands who attend the fair. They come from all over the country, patiently trek from the car parks to pay £10 to enter a field, in some years muddy, to walk around marquees where all they can do is spend more money! These are the people who make it all worth while, these are the people who stop and talk and ask how our work is going, the people who give us donations to cover the cost of attending the fair.



To the 22 visitors who felt strongly enough about our cause to join us when there are so many other worthy causes out there all competing for support, I would like to offer a warm welcome to LIPU.

Coincidentally, 1989 was the year of our foundation in the British section and since then we, too have been successful in supporting, year after year, LIPU projects in Italy. Consistently we have campaigned on the theme of, "Stop the Massacre" and have seen real progress although much remains to be done. Like the Birdfair, we don't make a profit, and we have now raised over half a million pounds with a good part of that forming the nucleus of a fund to tackle a really substantial project such as a nature reserve. Like the Birdfair, all this is possible because British bird lovers are prepared to think beyond our shores and help make a difference to the birds no matter where they are. I thank you all.



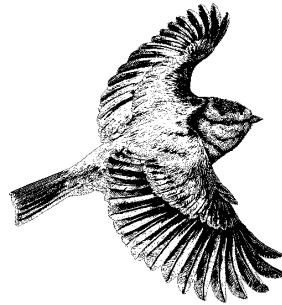
FROM THE PRESIDENT OF LIPU

Giuliano Tallone

Individualism has resulted in economic and cultural changes that have contributed to the thoughtless exploitation of the environment. For this reason we must face the fact that our priorities must be education and raising awareness.

Recently I have been considering the relationship between individualism and the environment. We live in a society in which more and more attention is paid to the demands of the individual and less and less to shared values. Politics works in favour of individuals. I am using the word politics in its original meaning, which comes from the Greek word 'polis' meaning city. That is "A space carved from uncivilised nature, occupied, built and developed according to the principles, both material and spiritual, by which that society functioned". In Greek thought man's full potential could only be fully realised within the protective and equitable confines of the city. To the Greeks the mountains and forests represented the exact opposite to the city which they saw as their true environment. Therefore politics came to be synonymous with urban life and the places where men lived together and saw natural resources as only of value for economic ends. The Romans, too, had the same understanding of the relationship between 'the wood and the city' Where now is the 'wood' in our world when

every square metre of our land is exploited, planted, built over, and filled with pylons, roads, dams and wind farms? Even the distant tropical forests, which at one time stretched from ocean to ocean in South America, Asia and Africa, where the explorers of the nineteenth century searched for the sources of great rivers, are today eroded, burnt down and felled. This is not only to obtain oil or valuable wood but for banal uses such as making wood pulp that, once in Europe, becomes toilet paper.

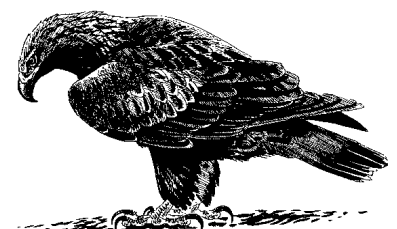


This is not just a general observation. BirdLife International is in the middle of a campaign to prevent the exploitation of 100,000 hectares of forest in Sumatra, Indonesia, which support 235 species of birds and 32 mammals, including 7 species of cat and 5 of monkeys. The trees would end up as paper in our country.

Today the relationships are reversed. It is not the city that holds out against nature but nature that has to take refuge from the growth of the city.

Where does individualism come into this? In a world where the pace of consumerism is such that even children want smaller and

smaller mobile phones, cars are made even faster only to stand in traffic jams and designer clothes are worn for one evening the individual can do little. He seeks in his own sphere to provide a good quality of life for himself and his family. Some (many) also try to contribute to society at large, becoming informed, and taking part in the life of the community. He may join organisations, like ours, which try to improve, if only a little, the world in which we live. However, many (too many) think only of their own good such as those who build illegally along our coasts and wait for the amnesty. Others simply ignore the impact they make on where they live, the rubbish they leave and the animals they shoot. This is the reason why environmental education (or simply, 'education') is central to the work of LIPU, why we think that developing awareness and understanding is the best, perhaps the only way, of saving the natural world. Perhaps in the battle against poaching, the Moses Project in Venice or the bridge over the Straits of Messina, we are looking for ways to convince those who think personal gain and short term profit are all that matter, that there is another way and that the good of all is more important than that of each individual.



MOSE, BOTH USELESS AND DAMAGING TO VENICE

It will not save Venice, and at the same time will cause environmental damage to the lagoon

by Federico Antinori, LIPU Venezia

On November 4th 1966 unprecedented floods submerged Venice and the city of the lagoon was within a breath of extinction; since that traumatic day there have been many studies and projects to ensure her future safety.

The Mose project (*Modulo Sperimentale Elettromeccanico*), proposes the construction of a series of sluice gates across the lagoon entrances to regulate tidal flows and resolve the problem, it is hoped, at a stroke. Opened by President Berlusconi on May 14th 2003, the works are proceeding at a furious pace.

So everything's fine then?

In reality, the project has been the focus for bitter denunciations and debate from the outset. LIPU, Italia Nostra, the WWF, the VAS and all the major local environmental organisations have always opposed it, as being grandiose, ineffective and dangerous for Venice and the lagoon, while the VIA, the national environmental impact commission, felt that its effects were of such importance as to reject it in ringing terms on December 9th 1998.

Since that time, the associations have presented their case to the Regional Administrative Tribunal (TAR) for the Veneto, and arranged demonstrations and debates, while LIPU has presented the EU Commission with a detailed exposure of its violations of the Community's Birds and Habitats Directives.

However, there are huge political and economic forces at play here, and we know all too well that without accurate and well-disseminated information, it will be almost impossible to halt the avalanche of concrete now poised over the lagoon.

The Mose project (and notice the spin given by the acronym, that makes subconscious images arise of Moses holding back the waters of the Red Sea), is equalled in its environmental harmfulness and other hidden costs only by the bridge over the Straits of Messina, but has aroused no interest in the national media. In this issue of "Ali", we seek to break through the wall of silence and systematic disinformation that surrounds this behemoth.

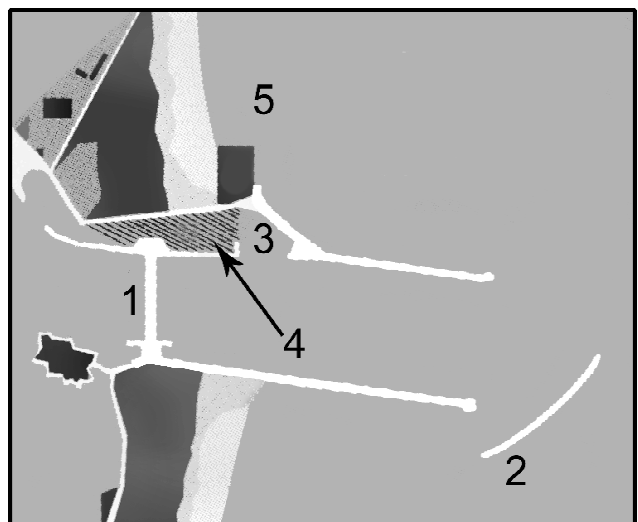
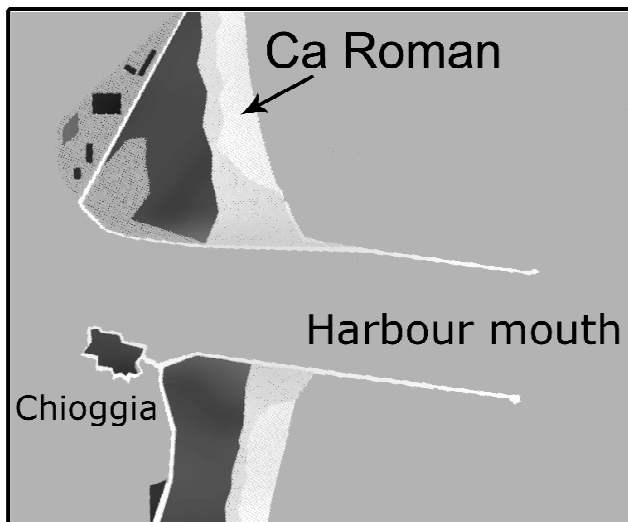
Ca' ROMAN - AN OASIS UNDER SIEGE

Both those who are already devotees of LIPU's Ca' Roman Oasis, and those who have not yet seen it, should make haste to go there. The work on the Mose project has already started, and threatens to have a devastating and permanent impact on this pristine site.

- Three hectares of the seaward side, beach and dunes, (the most important part of the Oasis, with insects unique to the world, and with nesting Little Tern and Kentish Plover) will be dug out to make a harbour.
- It is proposed to erect a huge 7-hectare platform in front of the beach for the construction of the 38 caissons wanted for the project. This will result in a process of sand erosion on its north side on the one hand, and on the other of the degradation of the dunes facing the platform.
- For at least ten years machinery and hundreds of workers will be trampling all over the Oasis. The noise and dust of the works will result (and we are already seeing some evidence of it) in the scaring off and loss of many of Ca' Roman's migrating and nesting birds.

It is unbelievable that the integrity, indeed the very future, of this precious site could be endangered at a time when its exceptional natural importance has been recognised at an international level (Ca' Roman is a Site of Community Importance) and when the Commune of Venice itself has devoted considerable funds to its development.

All must mobilise quickly to defend Ca' Roman, or it will be the end for this unique and beautiful place.



The diagrams above show the Chioggia area as it is now (left) and what the future holds.

Key to picture on the right

1. Sluice gates.
2. Reef of rock.
3. Harbour refuge.
4. Area to be removed.
5. Building site.

There will be similar works at the two other entrances to the Venice lagoon.

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A PROJECT THAT MUST BE HALTED

by Fabio Cavallo and Federico Antinori. LIPU Venezia

The *Magistrato alle Acque* and the New Venice Consortium (the group which dreamed up the project) have always put reassuring images of Mose before us: a wall of shields rising up gently from the waves to defend Venice from flooding, and sinking as gently back down again once the danger has passed, vanishing back into

the depths in such a way as one would scarcely suspect their existence. But is it really so?

The system has the dimensions of a leviathan. Each sluice gate weighs 350 tonnes and at 30 by 20 by 4 metres is the size of a palace. A score of them will be needed for each barrier (Malamocco, Chioggia, and two at the Lido). The gates will be set on the seabed at each entrance behind caissons (each like a 12000 tonne Lego brick) poised 12 metres under the surface.

The old defences will have to be supplemented with huge walls of reinforced concrete and new breakwaters.

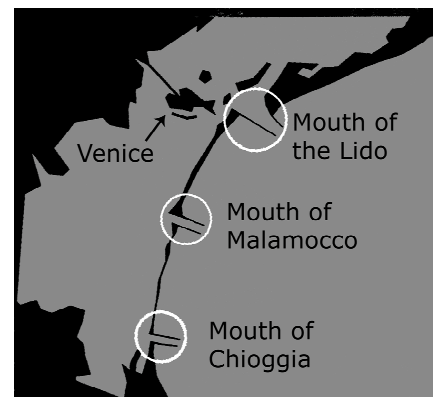
The sea bed at the lagoon entrances is to be stabilised by the fixing of thousands of concrete posts to a depth of tens of metres.

Shipping due to pass into the lagoon at times when the barriers are raised will be accommodated in a harbour at Ca' Roman or locks at Punta Sabbioni.

The Lido entrance will be divided into two by the raising of an artificial island the size of a dozen football pitches, rising four metres above the sea, and on that will be constructions 7 metres high.

The whole appearance of the lagoon will thus be profoundly altered and will remain so for the whole 100-year life of the project.

It is also important to raise the issue of the doubts over the New Venice Consortium's technical capacity to complete the works. The danger is that in a few years we may find ourselves faced with a maimed lagoon and a city still threatened by the waters.



MOSE: TRUE OR FALSE?

Mose will prevent Venice's high tides.

False, the Mose system operates only in the event of tides of over 110 centimetres. In 2003 for example, there were a hundred floodings, all below this level, so the system would not have been used and the inconveniences to the Venetians would still have occurred.

Mose is an outmoded system.

True, a recent study from the National Research Council showed that Mose, which had its conception in the early 70s, would fail to protect Venice from the tides that would result from the rise in sea-level that climatic models are now predicting for this century.

Mose will not damage the environment of the lagoon.

False, the project plans excavations of the seabed at the Malamocco entrance, and a deepening of those of the Lido and Chioggia. There will thus be a more rapid interchange of waters in the lagoon, aggravating the erosion of shoals and islets already taking place.

Habitats essential to the sustenance and breeding of many bird species will disappear. The lagoon will become deeper and more uniform, a routine arm of the sea, with dramatic changes for its flora and fauna.

Mose is essential for Venice's salvation.

False, without the protection of its sand banks and little islands, whose cushioning effect damps down the height and speed of the tides, Venice will be subjected to ever more frequent and violent floodings.

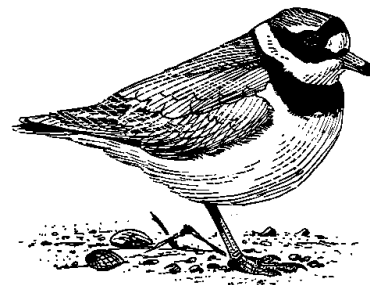
Mose will drain the State's funding for Venice.

True, the costs of Mose are monstrous: 4000 million Euros, with another 10 million a year for maintenance, which will take away all the resources earmarked for removing pollution from the lagoon, from the maintenance of the fabric of the city (dredging of canals, raising the banks ...), and will put at risk even the funds aimed at the socio-economic regeneration of the city, such as nursery schools and the restoration of public and private buildings.

There Is No Alternative to Mose.

False, it would be possible swiftly to set in motion experimental and reversible works which by reducing the peaks of the high tides by 20 centimetres, could begin to shield Venice from flooding within a couple of years.

These works however have a grave defect: they cost too little and perhaps for that reason are not being considered!



ECOMAFIA - THE FIGHT BACK BEGINS

Some of the most environmentally aware prosecutors are working alongside LIPU in the fight against ecological crime.

by Rino Esposito, LIPU national councillor

Environmental crime in our country is on the increase. In 2004 the forces of law and order counted as many as 25,469 individual crimes, most of them committed in Campania. These numbers confirm that traffic in illegal waste, illegal construction and traffic in protected species continue to be very profitable for both ordinary and organised criminals. In contrast to their very high profits, the risks run by those who damage the environment are still next to nothing. It is necessary to introduce new legislation for crimes against the environment.

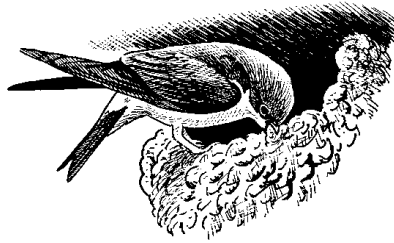
The Council of Europe has been saying this for some time, and they have issued an important directive, which calls on member countries to introduce into their own legislation adequate penal sanctions to protect the environment. But still Italy has done

nothing! LIPU does a lot of work in the courtrooms, with its lawyers and volunteers, who gather proof against environmental criminals, such as illegal extractors of sand, polluters, poachers and waste traffickers. In one such trial we were lucky enough to meet Prosecutor Donato Ceglie, who has made one of our dreams come true: to stop the killing of migratory birds in the pools of the Domitian coast, in the province of Caserta; to put an end to Mafia control in these areas; and to return them to the community.

THE LIPU INTERVIEW

Donato Ceglie is a courageous man, who has been active for many years as a prosecutor against the ecomafia. A native of Napoli, he is State Prosecutor at Santa Maria Capua Vetere, an area dominated by the most violent and aggressive of organised criminals - the Casalesi clan. It was he who seized and had demolished the village of Coppola Pinetamare in Castelvoturno, a town symbolic of illegal construction. He has taken part in the most important investigations into illegal quarrying and the tipping of toxic waste, both run by the Camorra. It was thanks to him that the slaughter of migratory birds on the Domitian coast was tackled for the first time in a thorough and proper way, acting with the invaluable help of Officer Ultimo of the Carabinieri. Because of this, LIPU chose to honour him as part of their fortieth anniversary celebrations, held last May in Rome.

LIPU - Doctor Ceglie, what is the current situation in Italy concerning environmental crime? Is the current law and law enforcement sufficient to stop the problem?



D.C. - The situation is very serious, both because of the great criminal interest in environmental issues, such as the “cement cycle” (all the way from the illegal extraction of building materials, up to illegal construction), the “waste cycle” (which causes enormous damage to the ecosystem), and also because of the outrageous policy of amnesties for illegal construction, which encourages breaking the law to the detriment of the environment. Laws by themselves are not enough to prevent environmental crime. We need effective police, and specialised prosecutors, however we have been greatly helped by the passing of article 53/bis into law, which punishes illegal trafficking in waste. Still, the police and the judiciary intervene only when the crime has already been committed, and the damage to the environment has already been done. All levels of government need to take a more active stance in the early stages when the damage can be prevented,

but they are not always up to the task.

LIPU - You are concerned with environmental offences in an area ruled by the Mafia, and where there is a certain indifference towards common land. What is your experience of this, and how do you think things could be improved?

D.C. - The Camorra runs the illegal traffic in waste and the “cement cycle”, has vested interests in quarries and it is clear that they control the whole area, both from an economic and military point of view. The province of Caserta is an extreme example of environmental and economic crime, which has devastating effects on the whole area. For years the population has kept quiet, and has only recently become aware of these problems, thanks in part to environmental campaigners.

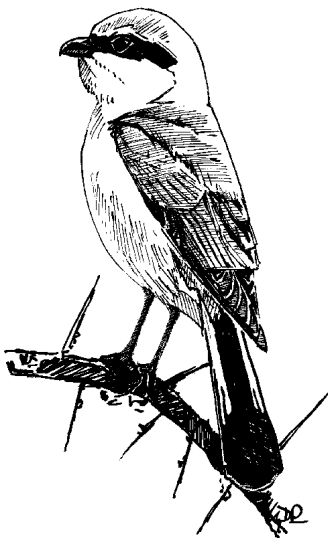
LIPU - What is your opinion on the definition of waste given by the Italian parliament, which differs from the European Union Directive (and has earned us condemnation from the European Court of Justice), and on the risks of decriminalising many environmental offences?

D.C. - This confirms that on some issues (such as the environment, and accident prevention) our government sometimes departs from the directives given by European legislation. The decriminalisation will certainly weaken the fight against the ecomafia. It is no accident that we are the country that the European

Court of Justice has sanctioned the most.

LIPU – Last January, you coordinated operation Free Flight, one of the most important investigations into the illegal killing of birds, on the Domitian coast. Do you think it will ever be possible to give these areas back to the community, and to turn them into a protected reserve where Black-winged Stilts and Avocets can stop and rest, without risk?

D.C. – Even while we are speaking, cabinet is completing an agreement between the state and the Coppola company, which will return the illegal construction at Coppola Pinetamare to public ownership. I hope that the same thing will happen to the land seized by criminals and turned into illegal hunting grounds, so that it can be enjoyed by the community, and become an area where migratory birds can rest and find shelter. But this is a task for the public administration – to use our natural resources well, for the benefit of everyone.



FURTHER DELAYS TO UNREGULATED HUNTING

But many Regions are allowing worse hunting calendars, with few exceptions.

by Marco Gustin

Extremist Italian hunters were very upbeat in December 2002. They were anticipating changes to the law within months. However, their proposals to contort 157/92 have now met with another delay. Discussion is now at an end and it should have been voted on in Parliament in July. That did not happen. It was decided to introduce it again in the autumn, but then there will be little time left and it is looking more and more unlikely that the proposals will be approved. LIPU has opposed the proposed changes from the beginning. It would, however, be an opportune moment to find out how 157 has been working, how far it has been correctly applied and how wildlife in Italy can be further protected.

Now a new emergency has arisen, as it seems to do every year: the regional hunting calendars and all their horrors. Many of the Regions have authorised more hunting days, especially for Turtledoves and Quail, but sometimes for all species on the hunting list, as in Basilicata this year. Many Regions are also allowing the shooting of species that recent scientific studies have shown to be in decline. An increasing number of species are also being inserted in derogation, in violation of the rules of

derogation. But there are also some positive signs, too. Sardinia has reduced the hunting calendar by six days, is not authorising a pre-opening period and, especially, has introduced two weeks of no-hunting in October. This is a good step forward, and an example that one hopes other Regions will follow.



DEVELOPMENT OF A RESERVE

LIPU management of Biviere di Gela has had strategic importance both in the sphere of land conservation and on an international level

by Emilio Giudice

The ancient Coccianico Lake in Biviere is set in a complex of imposing dunes, which extend from the sea shore towards the Gela Plain on the southern coast of Sicily. Aquatic birds have always used this area in their migration from Africa. The beauty of these places remained inviolate over thousands of years until the 1950s, when the discovery of oil in that region brought about an accelerated process of industrialisation which devastated the land: today Gela is known for the phenomena of pollution, unlawful building and Mafia. As a result of this, more than twenty years ago LIPU embarked upon a long battle to protect the ancient Coccianico

Lake. In 1987, at LIPU's suggestion, the Biviere di Gela was declared a Wetland Zone of International Importance in accordance with the Ramsar Convention. In 1991, again at LIPU's suggestion, it was included in the plan for Protected Areas in the Region of Sicily, and at the end of 1997 it became an official Nature Reserve, entrusted to our Association.

What we have done

A large part of the work undertaken by LIPU personnel concerned monitoring and taking a census of the birds, as well as management. In January 1998, just after the establishment of the Reserve, in the first census of overwintering aquatic birds just 600 were counted, and in 2003 there were 3,500 individuals, including ducks, waders and cormorants. In 1999 the data collected allowed an area of 500 hectares at Biviere to be included in the IBA (Important Bird Areas). In 2002, when the IBAs and the data collected were revised, an area of another 39,000 hectares over the whole Gela Plain was identified and eventually formed the ZPS (Zone for Special Protection). In this way the first Management Plan in Sicily was being worked out for sites included in the Nature Network 2000. During those years Biviere, which was entrusted to LIPU in conditions of total neglect and devastation, tested to the utmost the optimism of all those people with strong ideals who work together to safeguard this area. There is

evidence that the presence of LIPU personnel carrying out census and these more "weighty" activities has cut the number of infractions from about 200 annually in the 90s to sporadic incidents in 2004. Equipped with technical data, LIPU has established permanent communications with the Environment Minister which have produced some significant results, amongst which are the removal of waste (inside and immediately outside the Reserve); a co-financing of a LIFE Nature project for the Sicily Region with a contribution from the Commune of Gela; and a formal pledge by the Consortium of Bonifacio to respect the water levels of Biviere. In addition, all community financing amounting to several million euros was blocked ("inexplicably") for cultivation under glass, which is a particularly intensive form of agriculture and the main cause of the destruction of biodiversity and ecosystems in the wetlands and the dune system.



Current projects

In 2003 LIPU put forward two important projects. One concerns the restoration of an old farmhouse, which will become the headquarters of the Reserve and

a natural history museum. The other concerns the development of a nature path with hides linked to it and information panels; two equipped areas one of which will facilitate school visits, and a car park at the entrance to the Reserve. At the same time the Sicily Region financed the project to reintroduce the Purple Gallinule.

...and the new Management Plan

Over the last few years many efforts have been concentrated on the development of the Management Plan for the Reserve, which provides for its elevation to a whole ZPS, with projects to improve all the natural habitats especially the wetlands. Today the main objective is, therefore, the installation of ZPS status over the whole IBA of Biviere and the Gela Plain, a land and sea area of about 39,000 hectares, with the aim of protecting one of the most important migration corridors for aquatic birds in the Mediterranean. After seven years of censuses carried out by LIPU personnel, it was established that about 40,000 birds cross the area in the middle of spring (with peaks in some years reaching about 60,000 birds). More than 90% of the aquatic migrants are ducks and among those the Ferruginous Duck is particularly important with about 2,000 individuals. The management of a Nature Reserve by LIPU has had strategic importance for conservation both in the region and internationally. The future holds a great challenge: to restore to

the territory of the Gela Plain the rightful cultural and environmental respect which those who wanted non-sustainable developments in that corner of Sicily have always denied. LIPU will take up this challenge.

WHEN BUSINESS LOVES NATURE

If we talk about social responsibility of business, the furniture firm Mazzali, a long-time ally of LIPU, is an example to emulate.

by Maristella Filippucci

The concepts of social responsibility and sustainable development are becoming increasingly the pattern of the new industrial outlook. Searching for coherent and constructive partnership with the territory then becomes an important means by which to construct this new entrepreneurial vision. "There will be no business in a dead planet" emphasises David Brower, the great and sympathetic ecologist, speaking of the relationship between industry and land - a richly significant phrase, and one of sad augury, to underline how the increase in social development and safeguard for the environment will ever increasingly become conditioning factors in industrial activity. Social responsibility as promoter of development should not be envisioned as simple expansion, but rather a strategic element which the business sees as part of the whole, capable of

involving all its members, employees, co-workers, shareholders, clients, suppliers, local community organisations, making them protagonists and participants in the process.

The holiday outing for Mazzali employees, which took place in June at the LIPU Oasis of Torrile, is a shining example. Mazzali is a furniture-making business which has tried to combine production with low environmental impact with practical projects developed with LIPU to favour and safeguard the environment. It is a firm that invests 0.75% of its receipts in environmental and social initiatives; for example a school in the Central African Republic and an orphanage in Ghana.

The success of the works outing seals a partnership with LIPU which since 1998 has seen many plans realised, the last an educational scheme for elementary schoolchildren. The holiday, opened to all family members, has seen children appreciating nature with curiosity and interest, while the "grown-ups" took part in a Birdwatching contest. But above all it wished to show how partnership between an organisation and a business may permit today a wider participation, involving all players and making cultural exchange possible.



PROJECTS

The Bittern returns to Colfiorito

The Bittern is a very rare heron, often solitary in its behaviour, which is particularly active at dusk. It nests in the densest reed beds, emitting a call rather like



the mooing of a cow or the noise made by blowing into an empty bottle and which can be heard at great distances. The new breeding territories are already occupied by the end of February a process accompanied by the characteristic calls, although at Colfiorito, a wet area above Foligno on the borders of Umbria and the Marches, such territories are held only from the beginning of April.

In Italy, the Bittern is considered to be partially resident as well as a regular wintering migrant and it has a distribution which is highly fragmented with a breeding population estimated at 50 to 70 pairs. In the marsh of Colfiorito, the Bittern only began to colonise the area at the beginning of the 90s mainly because in the past the reed bed was badly managed involving cutting

and burning twice a year. Bitterns nesting at such an altitude (c 750 metres) were in fact unknown in Italy and appear to be rare throughout Europe. At the present time the Colfiorito marsh is the only site in Umbria where the Bittern is definitely breeding and wintering, even in very cold winters. At the beginning of the 90s the population was thought to stand at 10 males occupying territories. After that the estimate of the breeding population levelled off leading one to suppose that the habitat was completely occupied with a replacement capacity coming from elsewhere in the ecosystem. But in 2003, after a particularly cold winter, the species was no longer thought to be breeding, while in 2004 and 2005 the population of Bitterns seems to have recovered resulting in renewed breeding with an estimated 8 to 9 booming males. LIPU has dedicated a considerable effort over the last 6-7 years in the Colfiorito area, firstly with the LIFE project "Urgent action to conserve various Sites of Community Importance in the Commune of Foligno". This project had as one of its aims, the improvement of the habitat and the development of intervention in the environmental management of this species in the Foligno area. This year a research project has been set up with the province of Perugia, on the monitoring of breeding pairs.

The Conservation of the Species lies in the Marsh

The Bittern is restricted to shallow bodies of water; marshes,

ponds, lake shores and the banks of big rivers but at the same time it colonises man-made wetlands such as flooded gravel pits, water purifying plants and overflow and expansion tanks. In Colfiorito it favours the edges of thick reed even in quite deep water and for breeding above all beds of rushes. The marginal areas with *Glyceria maxima* and *Phalaris arundinacea* as well as the flooded meadows seem to be used exclusively for feeding. It is in fact relatively easy to observe them at the edge of small clear patches, of canals and of pools in old peat cuttings. Here they hunt mostly amphibians and small fish. However, especially in the winter season, they also hunt small mammals that they stalk with great skill in the meadows within the marsh. In addition they find large worms under the stubble of farmers' fields or under late cut grass.



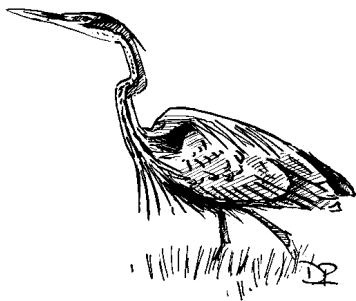
40 YEARS OF LIPU- LIPU YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW

Species conservation status, and the new environmental challenges at the centre of LIPU's 40th Assembly.

by Elena d'Andrea

In order to face the big challenges to biodiversity and bird conservation, LIPU will have to remain, in the next 40 years, up to date, open, and organised. The conference "The Sky and the Earth: conservation status of avifauna", which took place in Rome at the same time as LIPU's Assembly, was highly symbolic, and an important occasion to discuss and reflect upon bird conservation. However, neither LIPU, nor the world-renowned scientists present at the conference could consider only the current threats that numerous species of birds face. Precise and focused conservation strategies have followed the identification of the biggest threats to birds (deforestation, climate change, intensive agriculture), and of those species that are most vulnerable (long-range migrants, and some alpine species). Debbie Pain (RSPB) and Stephen Willis (University of Durham) presented the African IBA (Important Bird Areas) project, which focuses on the use of satellite images to predict the consequences of climate change. Franz Bairlain (Institute for Avian Research, Volgelwarte), and Fernando Spina (Istituto della Fauna Selvatica) underlined the need for detailed knowledge on the single species' migratory habits, in particular of long-distance migratory species, which particularly depend on their innate behaviours, and that are not able to adapt readily to sudden environmental changes brought by climate change. Images of the deforestation activity taking place in the tropics, and presented by

Hans-Jürgen Stibig (Joint Research Centre, European Commission), showed the rapidity of this phenomenon, but also the possibility of monitoring it with high precision; an important aspect where public opinion and prevention of illegal deforestation are involved. The importance of rigorous ornithological data has been stressed. These data, together with European community policies, are the key to the conservation of birds in the European Union.



Other topics discussed during the meeting included the status of birds in the Alps, and in the Mediterranean area, as well as the case of the Bald Ibis (*Geronticus eremita*), a species that is world threatened, and for which a multidisciplinary action plan, working with local communities of Syria and Morocco, is needed. The scientific approach of this conference has opened new ways, and underlined the way forward for the next few years. It has also re-launched the scientific method as an important way of working for environmental policy decision-makers. The Forum "Forty years of Environmentalism", co-ordinated by Danilo Mainardi, Giuliano Tallone, and Danilo Selvaggi, has faced the theme of environmentalism, focusing on its history,

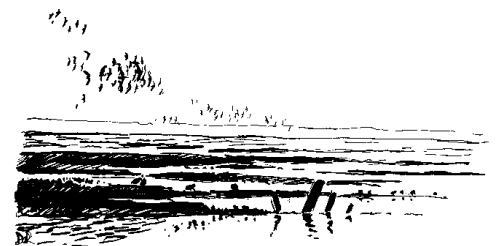
the present status of the movement, and especially the challenges that lay ahead. In a succession of more than thirty speakers, the directors of the main Italian associations, MPs, politicians, local administrators, and people involved in science of communication, touched on various topics. They all agreed on the need for a reorganisation of the ecologist movement, especially in the light of the heavy attacks on past ecological conquests, but also of social and cultural transformations of our time. As well as the stimulating points that emerged from the discussion, and contributions from some of the older members, the Forum has been useful in strengthening the spirit of unity exemplified by the co-ordination of various associations. LIPU's mission is now to defend, along with Universities, decision-makers, and public opinion, the credibility of a serious approach to conservation, where science, legislation, and socio-economic knowledge work together to remove any alibi for those who do not want to get involved. The abstract of the conference can be found at www.lipu.it.

PROTECTED AREAS: 1st WORLD MEETING

To have by 2015 a world-wide system of protected areas, representative of an ecological point of view and effectively managed.

This was the objective discussed at Montecatini, 13th - 21st June, at the first World Meeting of the

"Working Group for Protected Areas", envisaged by the Convention of Biodiversity (CBD) signed at Rio in 1992. LIPU has taken part in the work, with other representatives of Bird Life International. The stages were marked out, resulting in a master plan for protected areas (by 2006) which foresees new protected areas which may safeguard underrepresented ecosystems, such as marine areas and wilderness zones without protection. The master plan will analyse means of removing the worst existing threats (by 2008), ensuring adequate financing for protected areas (by 2008) and integrating them in a wider landscape context (2015).



BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL

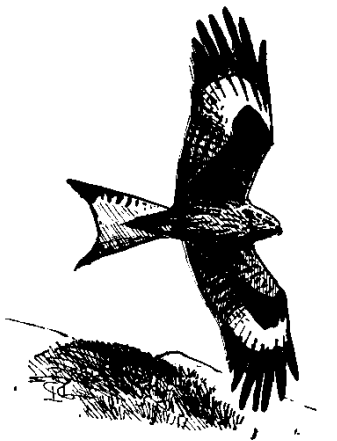
THE NEW LIST OF ENDANGERED BIRDS IN THE WORLD

A new species becomes extinct but others are "saved" or "rediscovered".

by Marco Lambertini

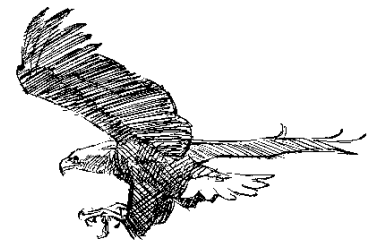
Some three years have passed since the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Durban, where the majority of

heads of state in the world met to discuss how to complement development and conservation. It is a little more than one year since more than 100 organisations of BirdLife International (including LIPU) met in the South African town to examine progress in bird conservation and planet biodiversity, and discuss future strategies. In the meantime some extraordinary facts have happened in the world of birds. Recently, in the richest country of the world, the USA, where there is said to be some 61 million people dedicated to the observation of wildlife, and mainly birdwatchers, a species of Woodpecker, believed extinct since before the second world war, has been rediscovered in a boggy forest of Arkansas. Almost as a parallel, in another corner of the same country, in the Hawaiian archipelago, a small, reserved, but nevertheless ecologically important and splendid forest bird, by the Polynesian name of Po'o-uli, is almost certainly extinct. The latest sad addition to the list of birds no longer sharing this planet with us!



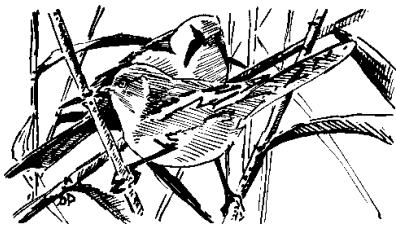
At global level and according to BirdLife's analysis of endangered birds of the world, in 2004, there is a significant improvement compared with 2000, in four species, which are evading the immediate risk of extinction. Amongst these is the beautiful Seychelles' Red breasted Magpie, an endemic bird of this enchanted archipelago. After more than twenty years of conservation efforts, including the management of a special natural reserve by Nature Seychelles (BirdLife Partner), the population of this specie has considerably increased. Europe also has a remarkable success story. The White-tailed Eagle, the most imposing bird of prey in Europe, has seen its population nearly double in the 90's, thus being lifted from the threatened species' list. At the root of this improvement: the protection of marshlands, diminished persecution and surveillance programmes. On the other hand nine species have been reported to be in a worse state of conservation, including the Azores' Bullfinch, one of the rarest and most threatened species of the world, with less than 300 individuals and in continuous decline. In spite of the success of Great Britain's reintroductions and the conservation activities in Spain, the Red Kite has continued to suffer from persecution and through the impact of intensive agriculture. Finally a worrying new entry in the red list is the showy European Roller, another victim of the intensification of agriculture. This brings the total of the threatened species across the world to 1212, one in every five

living birds. Another 788 species, are considered to be on the verge of being threatened, but not yet so rare to be at risk of extinction. However they are subject to a marked decline, which could soon spell danger for them. The data collated by BirdLife and presented to the politicians of the interested countries have already contributed to interesting developments. For example, the entire area of distribution of the Azores' Bullfinch has been designated as a Special Protection Zone by the Portuguese government.



What do these examples tell us? First of all, that the battle for biodiversity conservation on the planet is difficult and complex. They also confirm the gravity of the ecological crisis that the Earth is witnessing, because of the unsustainable and destructive model of development of human societies. However they also tell us that it is possible to achieve important results and, for many species, this means winning the battle against extinction. Perhaps they also show those of us who are fierce defenders of nature and activists in environmental associations, something we already know: never stop believing in dreams. In difficult times, when we are tempted to surrender to pessimism, faced with a galloping loss by nature at both

local and global level, these stories can only show us that when dreams are supported by passion, dedication, professionalism and a solid scientific base, they can come through. Saving the biodiversity of the world is our mission and our passion. Thanks to the members and donors of LIPU for supporting the battle. There is an exciting challenge and opportunity for our generation to reverse the global ecological crisis and to create a better world for birds, biodiversity and our children.



NEWS FROM LIPU

Nets destroyed in Gioia Tauro

The law has returned to woodlands in the Gioia Tauro Plain. Carabinieri and LIPU volunteers took action last May to remove nets and their retaining structures, sometimes 10 metres high, which the Calabrian Mafia was using in the area. It was the most recent event in a whole series of actions aimed at the protection of a natural environment under very serious threat. Gioia Tauro in the Province of Reggio Calabria is a very important natural resource. Millions of passerines, especially Thrushes and Hawfinches, depend on the area for winter feeding. The poachers had realised that the

birds were in the habit of moving twice each day between particular places and had erected their illegal nets on their flight paths. The Carabinieri of Cittanova have reported 15 offenders and confiscated 55 nets. The Reggio Calabria Branch of LIPU also requested the authorities to destroy them, which was granted.

Anti-poaching camp in Sardinia

LIPU is continuing its work to protect passerines from being illegally caught in the woodlands of the Province of Cagliari. From 29 October to 5 November the LIPU Branch of Reggio Calabria, in collaboration with LAC (League for the Abolition of Hunting), is organising a work camp to remove the traps that are everywhere in this area of Mediterranean scrubland, and to release any birds that may still be alive. It is hoped to organise a permanent anti-poaching group and get police authorities more involved. The work of the Sardinian Forest Rangers in this respect has been noteworthy, but the size of the problem there has made their task very difficult. The camp is free. Information from tel. 329 4228623; email: lipurc@libero.it; www.lipurc.3000.it

Anti-poaching camp at the Strait of Messina

The usual autumn camp will take place at the Straits: 17-19 September; 24-26 September; 1-3 October. Information from tel.

329 4228623; lipurc@libero.it; www.lipurc.3000.it



News from
LIPU-UK

A question I am often asked by members and others is, "Where can I go to see birds in the vicinity of..." and often the questioner believes that there is nowhere apart from reserves and "hot spots" where birds can be seen.

I have usually found that bird watching in Italy is similar to this country in that, if you are patient, the birds are there and can be seen if you are prepared to look and listen.

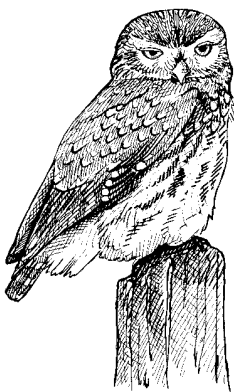
The following account by member, Dave Howlett of birds seen and heard during a family holiday in San Lorenzo near San Gimignano in Tuscany confirms my experience I think.

Observations in the vicinity of the San Lorenzo vineyard and winery, Tuscany between the 4th and 18th June 2005. (San Lorenzo is located approx 6km from San Gimignano off the Ulignano road).

The weather generally was fine with day-time temperatures in the mid-twenties with a hot day in the first week up to low thirties followed by thunderstorms.

San Lorenzo is a hilly area cultivated principally with vines and olive plantations. There was a field of wheat and several small fields set aside. There were several areas of woodland around this and the adjacent farms, and a nearby pond populated with (noisy!) frogs.

The farm house was a 14th century building with pantile roof. The latter supported several house sparrow nests with parent birds actively feeding young. The majority of the adult males were of the Italian sub species. Tree sparrows were also noted in a ratio of less than 1 in 20 to house sparrows. The eaves of the house supported several house martin nests, (6+), again very active.



An adjacent building in the winery, with a roof of similar construction to the farm house, housed a little owl with two chicks. The latter were well developed, being almost as large as the adult. A regular evening spectacle was a noisy contest between the adult owl and one of the local magpies, the latter being present in moderate numbers. A single barn owl was also seen.

Hooded crows were common and jays were regularly seen and heard in or around the woodland. Jackdaws were very common in the town, with an occasional sighting on the farm.

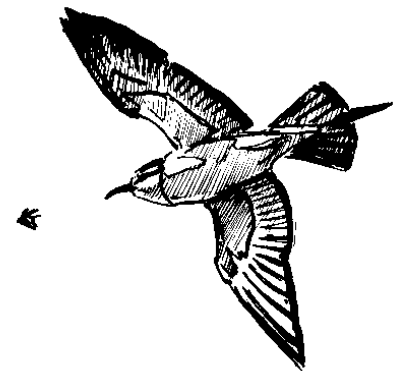
Turtle doves were also very common as were wood pigeons. Feral pigeons were often seen feeding in the stubble accompanied by an occasional stock dove. Collared doves seemed to stick to the town; there were relatively few seen in the countryside during my observations.

Swallows were plentiful and it was a pleasure to watch them swoop low over the swimming pool to drink. Swifts too were plentiful, with large colonies in the towns. I looked closely in the hope of seeing an alpine or a pallid, but I came to the conclusion that they were all common swifts.

Starlings were plentiful with many flocks of 20-30 birds passing over, containing many juveniles; they were regular feeders on the stubble. Blackbirds were common with many family groups and adults taking food to

young. Wrens too were frequently heard.

Green woodpeckers were heard on several occasions in the nearby woodland, but I had no sightings; a great spotted woodpecker was however seen. My wife, (the non-birder!) saw a golden oriole; (we stayed in an adjacent valley the previous year and they were quite plentiful) . Hoopoes were seen on about four occasions during our stay. Cuckoos were heard calling daily but none were seen.



Bee-eaters made a regular appearance, sometimes in groups of up to six. They had a favourite perch in a dead tree close by. A male Stonechat was regularly seen, usually in the same place, to the extent that I wondered if it was a single bird marking its territory. Goldfinch and Serin were both numerous and I enjoyed the accompaniment of their tinkling calls as I relaxed by the pool. Equally enjoyable at the pool side was the regular performance of a melodious warbler which selected a nearby oak tree as its singing post.

On the raptor front species were restricted during my observations to plentiful numbers of

common buzzard and on three occasions common kestrel.

Great tits were surprisingly uncommon; seen only on about three occasions. Similarly I did not see any robins, and heard only a few. Long tailed tits were seen on a couple of occasions and a blackcap was heard. A real pleasure was to listen to a nightingale singing in the woods at the bottom of the valley. Bringing up the rear on the local patch were pheasants.

Away from "home" the only additional species recorded at Castelvechio were skylark, Chiffchaff, chaffinch and a pair of nuthatches.

Not many "exotic" species to excite the "tick-listers" perhaps, but very pleasant within my "restricted sphere of operations"

On the non-bird front I was particularly pleased to see a porcupine one night near to the house, the first that I have seen in the wild. Roe deer also visited as did brown hares. I came across a snake which I tried to describe to Claudio Calvani, a truly excellent wildlife photographer, with a gallery in San Gimignano. Unfortunately his English and my Italian were practically non-existent, so we didn't get far. I can only describe it as about two metres long, slim head basically yellow body colour with back spots or blotches over the whole length.

It is always pleasing to see the different Non Government Organisations (NGOs), and there are many, working together to achieve their common aims and I print here a letter to Brian Horkley from Anna Giordano in Sicily.

Anna worked for LIPU in Sicily for many years and, often alone, confronted the poachers despite death threats and the fire bombing of her car. Now she works for WWF near Trapani but still spends time protecting the migrants on the Sicilian side of the Straits.

Her letter shows her dedication to the protection of wildlife and habitat and we all wish her well.

Dear Brian,

I'm Anna Giordano from Italy, I wrote about the bridge over the Straits of Messina, do you remember ?

The actions against the bridge are going on, but as we do since 1984, we organize also this year the international camp for the protection of the birds of prey and storks migrating through the Straits of Messina.

As you know (and thanks also to you !), since we started, the situation is really better but without us, poachers can start again to shoot the birds as in the past, During the first year of camp (1984), we counted about 3,100 raptors and storks and... 1100 shot !

In 2000, just a little bit less than 35,000 raptors and storks and 5 shots !

To be able to control as much as we can of the migratory area (and the poaching area), as you know, we must be many. Sometimes, the weather condition are good for the birds, they fly high and poachers cannot shoot them, other times, especially with wind from Africa, that blows very strong, the birds fly very low on the ground in a very spread area and over villages, single houses and poachers can shoot them. In these cases, if we are few, is impossible to prevent or to repress them and birds are killed.

I think that you can remember the strong wind from south, is really terrible for birds (and sometimes also for the persons). Usually in Calabria there are no problem with the poachers (the birds can arrive everywhere) but in Sicily it is the wind of death for them.

It would be important for us if you can spread word about our camp to your friends on your mailing list, if you can.

For what concern the bridge, police in Rome is investigating about the permit released by our Ministry of Environment to the bridge construction ! Great !

The environmental impact on a wetland area (Special protection Zone for the Birds directive) about which I wrote more than 85 pages to the EU commission (the bridge is violating the Bird and Habitat Directive) could not

allow the ministry to give the positive permit, but it did !

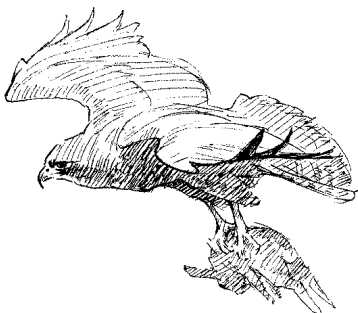
So, now police is investigating and of course, I will write another document about the violation of the bridge about the IBA of the Straits of Messina. I didn't, not yet, about ALL the IBA, because there are still many lack of information about the project in the rest of the area, anyway, the EU commission knows that the bridge construction will destroy also the rest of the protected area. And they have our detailed document about the terrible impact of the bridge on the bird migration.

Thank you very much for your help, I guess that we will send you another request of help against the bridge, together with LIPU - Birdlife International, but as we are still preparing this new action, we will let you know!

I hope that you can come back to Sicily, my house is still there waiting for you and all the friends of the birds !

Thanks again for all and please, if you need more information, let me know!

Greetings,
Anna Giordano



TAIL FEATHERS

I started this issue writing about the Birdfair, so I'll conclude on the same topic. There are over 300 exhibitors and the show is so popular that there is a waiting list for stands.

So many businesses and charities are represented that I cannot do justice to the scale of the event, but I will mention just a few.

*** Highly Recommended ***

Paul Doherty is a gifted video photographer and has his own business selling DVDs of birds from all over the world. Paul has been a supporter of LIPU-UK for many years and can supply a free preview disc if you call him on 01977 684666, or see www.birdvideodvd.com

Bird Holidays of Leeds is another friend of LIPU and offers trips to many places including Sardinia when the LIPU reserve of Carloforte is the highlight. Founder and member, Paul Willoughby can be contacted on 0113 3910510 and www.birdholidays.co.uk

So often we realise that the best way to save birds, and all wild creatures, is to save their habitat. A charity with this aim is the World Land Trust which buys land in places that matter and preserves it as valuable habitat. Like LIPU-UK their admin costs are held at around 10% of total expenditure. Call 0845 0454422 or see www.worldlandtrust.org

"Frammenti" is the title of our email bulletins, sent from time to time only to those who wish to receive them. This is in addition to the traditional newsletters - if you have email and would like to receive Frammenti as well, just send me an email and I'll put you on the list, except that...

You either love them or hate them but I cannot imagine doing this job without a computer. But, like all things they do occasionally go wrong and recently I had a problem with my email address lists.

If you were receiving Frammenti but didn't get one in September it may be that I don't have your current address - please get in touch and normal service will be resumed as soon as possible.

My thanks, as always go to the translators of this issue:

Cicely Adelson, Barbara Avery, Joanna Bazen, Ambra Burls, Daria Dadam, Caterina Paone, Peter Rafferty, John Walder and Brian Horkley.

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