

seen offshore in winter but 43 were counted in one day in November 1976 off I-Ahrax. Prior to 1975 it was only recorded once between August and February but this could be due to the dearth of sea-bird watching. Small and medium-sized colonies are scattered along suitable cliffs and have been found in all the Islands including Comino and Cominotto. Most of these are in inaccessible boulder slopes or sheer cliffs along the sea-cliffs. Since the species is less vocal and more crepuscular than the Cory's Shearwater numbers are even harder to estimate. The largest known colony, situated in the northern part of Malta, is partly accessible and holds at least 250 pairs.

Birds visit the colonies from January. Unlike the Cory's Shearwater, which lingers near the nest site after alighting, the Manx Shearwater dashes into the burrow, very often flying straight into it. The birds mainly call during the early part of the breeding season and are rather secretive in the latter part. As with the Cory's Shearwater, they visit the colonies on moonless nights or after the moon disappears.

The single chalky-white egg is generally laid in late March or early April. It is usually laid on bare ground but sometimes on a few twigs. The nest-site may be beneath boulders, in self-excavated burrows, or in holes, crevices or fissures which may be several metres deep. Several pairs may use the same entrance of a cavern. The young hatch after about seven weeks and leave the colonies by mid-July. Fully grown young were still in burrows on 7 July 1977. In some years rats *Rattus* sp. or weasles *Mustela nivalis* kill most of the young in the accessible burrows at the above mentioned colony in the north of Malta. This has happened twice since this colony was discovered by the present writers in 1969. (Sultana & Gauci 1970a, 1970b; and previous Guide).

Only the race *P. puffinus yelkouan* has been recorded in Malta. It is suspected that much of the brownish tinge on the upperparts is caused by bleaching under the Mediterranean sun as young *yelkouan* birds handled for ringing a day or two before leaving the colony did not show any tinge of brown.

Three ringed birds recovered abroad indicate that after breeding/fledging birds leave to the east. An adult ringed on 21 May 1976 was found dead in Greece on 18 July of the same year. Two pulli were found dead in the Black Sea, one in August three years later and the other in June when a year old. Retraps show that birds use the same burrows year after year. The oldest bird so far (Manx Shearwaters were first ringed on Malta in 1969) was an adult when ringed and was retrapped ten years later.

Schembri, Wright, Despott and De Lucca all list the species as resident. Becker (1884) found it breeding in some numbers in a colony in a small area on Filfla and H.L.C. (1953) stated that it is found breeding beneath a tangle of plant growth at the foot of the cliff-face on that islet. Roberts could not confirm breeding anywhere on the Islands but recorded small parties offshore from May to September. Payne (1938) claimed that this species was numerous off the coasts in April 1936, but he did not record the Cory's Shearwater. Bannerman and Vella-Gaffiero (1976) suggested only a figure in excess of 100 pairs for the whole archipelago and some of their statements on its breeding biology and behaviour are confusing and unreliable.

#### STORM PETREL—/

Plate 3 opp. p. 48

Very common breeding on rubble slopes on elsewhere in the Island at Ta' Cenc, Gozo in a cave at Ghar Lap latter two may have on Filfla is extremely the population was indicates that earlier In May 1972 over 1; of net and it may be t ashore, flying about presumably return to been no observations in mid-May but by th

Freshly laid eggs speckles around the These are probably li the burrows from m frequently more thar or at the entrance of to the top of the isle below the cliffs. The occasionally may be outside the breeding at Delimara on 17 Je recovery was report unknown. Unlike she during moonlit night frequently among th replaced by the calls are frequently found or young in accessib a Herring Gull is at failed to catch one interfere with Stor close to each other.

From 1968 to 19 have been recovered a reported in December; Sea off the south-eas Filfla. One of these v rarely wander away frc as a rule only retrapp ten years after ringing