

## **NATURA 2000 Sites - Hunting and Trapping**

BirdLife Malta (BLM)'s latest crude attempt to influence the electorate makes one wonder who really is 'directing' BirdLife Malta.

In his statement to the media regarding NATURA 2000 Sites, BLM's Executive Director, Mr. Steve Micklewright, admits that "Almost all of these protected nature areas are (or should be) accessible to the public, either by public roads and footpaths, or as nature parks and reserves." Therefore, it is completely incorrect for him to assert at the same time that "hunters and trappers have been allowed to rule the roost in the Maltese countryside". In case Mr. Micklewright, a UK national, is ignorant of the fact, BLM's UK partners, the RSPB, even permit hunting in some of their bird reserves or sanctuaries, also NATURA 2000 designated sites. Furthermore, Mr. Micklewright should be aware that in the UK various forms of hunting may be legally practised 24/7 throughout the whole year, so why should he come to Malta and militantly try to abolish our recreational socio-cultural hunting and trapping passions.

BLM's demand that Malta's designated NATURA 2000 sites be declared no-hunting zones is pure nonsense. Most of the land within NATURA 2000 is privately owned mostly by people whose way of life is hunting and trapping. In effect, this means they are also major stakeholders, and consequently their interests must be taken into consideration and respected. Whereas such zones are not totally protected, they are amenable to hunting and trapping since these activities are perfectly compatible in such zones, unlike what Mr. Micklewright would have the uninformed general public believe!

We refer Mr. Micklewright to the hereunder link which regards an EU FACE (Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation in the EU) project "NATURA 2000 and Sustainable Hunting in Europe" co-financed by the European Commission, in partnership (20%) with ELO, the European Landowners' Organisation, and with the support of none other than BLM's partners, BirdLife International. The Federation for Hunting and Conservation – Malta (FKNK) was an active participant in said project:

[http://www.huntinginmalta.org.mt/uploads/90/892/NATURA\\_2000\\_Write-up\\_in\\_English-October\\_2007.pdf](http://www.huntinginmalta.org.mt/uploads/90/892/NATURA_2000_Write-up_in_English-October_2007.pdf)

Contrary to what BLM believe, this project proves beyond doubt that activities such as hunting and trapping may continue on NATURA 2000 sites as long as they are compatible with its conservation objectives. Moreover, since all NATURA 2000 sites will be placed under specific management, all activities, including hunting and trapping, will have to be legally practised and controlled, an ideal situation for the good of biodiversity conservation, that, though, BLM are too myopic to see.

Lino Farrugia  
Secretary General

