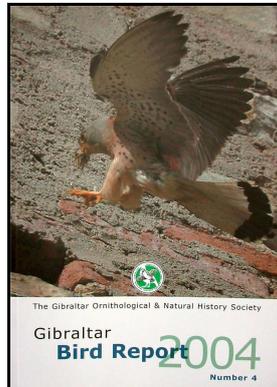


30 December 2005

2004 Bird Report Published

The 2004 Gibraltar Bird Report has just been published and will shortly be sent to Members and to addressees on the circulation list for publications. Further copies, and previous issues, are [available](#) at £3.50 each.



The 2004 Bird Report is once again edited by Dr Ernest Garcia who has also contributed the 2004 Systematic List and a review of records of significance from the Gibraltar hinterland (2001-2004) which have not been previously published.

The Bird Report also includes the 2004 Gibraltar Ringing Report, a description of a white-breasted European Robin at Jews' Gate, and short communications on movements of Short-toed Eagles as tracked by satellite, tree nesting swifts and mimicry by Spotless Starlings.

28 December 2005

CLIMATE CHANGE CAVE STUDY IN GIBRALTAR

The Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society (GONHS) and Royal Holloway University of London have been awarded a grant of £98,000 by the UK's Natural Environment Research Council (NERC).

This grant will help in an already started research project studying climate change.

The GONHS and The Royal Holloway are project partners in this project which adds to the growing number of collaborative research projects being undertaken by GONHS in various fields with universities around the world.



Project title

Fidelity of speleothem climate proxies: an inter-annual calibration against the instrumental record in Gibraltar and prospects for climate hindcasting.

Project partners: Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society's Caves and Cliffs Section.
Contact Person: JP Latin. Tel 58009329 cavesandcliffs [at gonhs.org](mailto:cavesandcliffs@gonhs.org).

Principle Investigator:

Dr Dave Paterson Matthey Royal Holloway University of London. Geology Department.

Co investigators:

Prof Ian Fairchild (University of Birmingham) internationally known expert on speleothem and cave science,

Prof Tim Atkinson (University College London) Tim is an internationally known expert on hydrology and climate change.

Project Summary:

Speleothem (a name given to stalactites, stalagmites and others types of calcium carbonate decorations found in caves) form by the action of rain water percolating through soil and bedrock into the cave environment and these deposits grow undisturbed for many thousands of years. Stalagmites grow as successive layers in response to seasonal changes in rainfall amount and can be accurately dated. Natural isotopes of oxygen (^{18}O and ^{16}O) in rainwater are an important indicator of temperature and atmospheric circulation patterns and are preserved in stalagmite carbonate inherited from rainwater. The oxygen isotope changes recorded in stalagmite can be measured year by year providing unique information on climate change going back many tens of thousands of years.

Speleothem oxygen isotope records have great potential in reconstructing past climates yet surprisingly, the climate record deduced from speleothem has never been directly compared with real weather records to see how well they really work! The objective of this project is to compare speleothem climate indicators with the longest combined meteorological and rainfall isotope

records currently available: rainfall and temperature observations have been recorded in Gibraltar since 1791 and the oxygen isotope compositions of monthly rain isotope have been measured since 1961. A pilot study of active stalagmite formation in Gibraltar shows regular seasonal oscillations in isotopes and trace elements which allow the years to be counted and its climate signal directly compared with the historical weather record with great accuracy. The results of this test will enable the natural cycles in the past climate of Gibraltar to be constructed with more confidence and will help create more accurate weather forecasts in the future.

Project Objectives:

The objectives of the project (simplified) can be summarized as....

To obtain seasonal climate records from an actively growing speleothem at for as long a period as possible.

Through a program of cave monitoring and site tests, to determine the controls on stalagmite growth and track the pathway of incoming rainfall to the cave environment.

To compare and calibrate results with the 200 year meteorological record in Gibraltar.

To trace back temperature and rainfall patterns back into the past to track the history of the North Atlantic Oscillation (NAO) which controls the long term temperature and rainfall patterns across all of NW Europe.

The results of this work will enable climate modelers to better predict the future behavior of the NAO and its impact on water availability in Iberia and elsewhere in Europe.

New work will include:

Continued monthly monitoring of cave air and water chemistry

Installation of continuous monitoring systems for temperature, drip rate and air CO2 concentration

Surveying of water catchments and undertaking groundwater tracing experiments

Sampling of a new stalagmite specimen for climate analysis.

To conclude:

This cave will be the one of the most intensely studied cave systems using state of the art geochemical analysis ever.

15 December 2005

**Talk by International Bird of Prey Expert
Roy Dennis in Gibraltar**

International expert on birds of prey, Roy Dennis, of the [Highland Foundation for Wildlife](#), was in Gibraltar this week visiting GONHS, and gave an illustrated talk on Thursday 15th December on bird of prey migration from Scotland to Africa as well as on raptor re-introduction projects in Scotland.

Roy Dennis is well known for running a satellite tracking programme in which he has been able to follow ospreys, honey buzzards and marsh harriers from their nesting grounds in Scotland through Europe and the Mediterranean to African winter quarters. He has also been deeply involved in many successful conservation projects to re-introduce birds of prey, such as ospreys, red kites and white-tailed sea eagles into Scotland.

During Roy's visit possible future projects involving raptor conservation and satellite tracking were discussed.

7 December 2005

GIBRALTAR BIODIVERSITY YEAR 2006

The 2010 Biodiversity Target

The Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society (GONHS), which is thirty years old this January, has declared 2006 its GIBRALTAR BIODIVERSITY YEAR and hopes that individuals and organisations will join in its celebration of Gibraltar's Biodiversity and its efforts to protect and enhance it.

The New Year will be an important one for biodiversity conservation in Gibraltar. GONHS hopes to complete its Biodiversity Action Plan and promote its publications (including the recently launched Biodiversity poster) and activities, most of which will have a Biodiversity theme in 2006. It is also in contact with the Ministry for the Environment which is expected to support the Biodiversity initiative.

The 2010 Biodiversity Target

GONHS has in the meantime officially enrolled in Countdown 2010, a movement to halt all loss of biodiversity by 2010 – and there are only four years to go.

Globally, biological diversity is being lost at an alarming rate. The recent findings of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment show that 70% of all ecosystem services worldwide are in decline and species are extinct up to 1,000 times the normal rate.

The target to "**halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010**" is Europe's response to this alarming loss, originating from the 2001 EU Summit in Gothenburg.

Countdown 2010's Goal:

All European governments, at every level, have taken the necessary actions to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010.

Objectives:

To encourage and support the full implementation of all existing relevant legislation and international binding commitments;

To champion and support the full implementation of all necessary actions, in particular in the Message from Malahide and Kyiv Resolution on Biodiversity,

To demonstrate clearly what progress Europe is making to meet the 2010 commitment.

Launched in May 2004, Countdown 2010 combines efforts to achieve the 2010 biodiversity target within a powerful network of active members, including governments, cities and regions, and civil society organisations. Several countries, including Italy, Norway and the United Kingdom, have already reconfirmed their determination to halt the

loss of biodiversity and declared their support for the Countdown 2010 initiative.

GONHS will work towards these aims in Gibraltar in 2006 and beyond.



2 December 2005

GONHS LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE

The Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society (GONHS) has launched its new website at www.gonhs.org.

Designed by Ivan Hernandez and Charles Perez, it is user-friendly site which includes a great deal of information about the Society as well as about Gibraltar's flora and fauna.

The website is still being expanded, but already holds lists of plants and animals found in Gibraltar, including flowering plants and ferns, beetles (with some stunning photographs of certain species), butterflies, amphibians, reptiles, mammals and birds.

The GONHS annual programme for 2006 is on line on the site, as well as an on-line membership form, news of events, projects and other activities, publications, etc.

GONHS Press Releases will also be posted on the site, as well as comments by the Society on matters relevant to ecology, nature conservation, and the environment in General.

24 November 2005

MOROCCAN BUZZARDS IN TOWN

First long-stay European record

The Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society (GONHS) has made public the presence in Gibraltar since the end of August of two Long-legged Buzzards *Buteo rufinus cirtensis*. They are medium-sized birds of prey which feed chiefly on small mammals and birds by hunting over open ground, or from a perch.

The two birds, which can regularly be seen throughout the Upper Rock, the east side and even over built-up areas, seem to have established a territory in Gibraltar, and are behaving like a pair, displaying to each other and carrying out mock food-passes in the air.

While the species, increasingly common in Morocco within sight of Gibraltar, does occur on the north side of the Strait every year, this is the first known record of a pair holding a territory on European soil. If they were

to remain to breed on the Rock, it would be the first record of this subspecies nesting in Europe and could represent the beginning of a colonisation from the south.

19 November 2005

GONHS CONCERNED ABOUT CHEMICAL SMELLS

Challenge to the bunkering companies

The Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society (GONHS) notes with concern the current public exchanges on benzene emissions and the smell of chemicals experienced in parts of Gibraltar.

Regardless of what levels of benzene are legally acceptable or recommended by international bodies, and of the relationship between these and the smells, the fact remains that benzene peaks are dangerous and the smells are worrying as they could imply the presence of other harmful products.

International guidelines serve to regulate emissions and are arrived at as a compromise between what the ideal situation is (*i.e.* no artificial chemicals) and what industry prefers (a high concentration of emissions). It is also true to say that, regardless of a long term average, a series of high peaks is cause for concern. There is no harm, and indeed a great deal of good, in requiring standards to be higher than recommended in this and any other environmental consideration.

GONHS is aware from its own investigations that certain products involved in the bunkering process may cause such smells, particularly in cases of fuels with a high sulphur content.

GONHS urges Government to spare no effort to trace the origins of both the benzene peaks and the smells and take the necessary remedial action.

However, if they are to be respected as true contributors to Gibraltar's well-being, the bunkering companies must be prepared to be scrutinised and to be accountable. It is therefore important that the bunkering companies reassure the Community, which includes ordinary citizens, organisations and Government, that their operations do not cause negative environmental effects. GONHS therefore challenges to bunkering companies to enter the debate and produce evidence that their operations are not producing these emissions and, if they are, that they are taking urgent steps to correct this.

16 November 2005

BIODIVERSITY POSTER LAUNCHED

GONHS launched its new Biodiversity Poster at the John Mackintosh Hall on 15th November. The poster, designed by Charles Perez and printed by Roca-Graphics, depicts a wide selection of Gibraltar's wildlife, both plants and animals. These include common species like the Snapdragon and the Iberian Wall Lizard, typical species like the Gibraltar Candytuft and rarer ones like the Bullfinch. It includes species formerly common, like the Cattle Egret which used to frequent the isthmus before it got built over several decades ago. It was funded by the Overseas Territories Environmental Programme of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office.

The message on the poster is:

"Gibraltar's Biodiversity is rich and varied and can be even more diverse. It's up to all of us to ensure its enhancement and its survival into the future."

At the presentation, GONHS General Secretary John Cortes explained the aims of the Gibraltar Biodiversity Project and the preparation of the Biodiversity Action Plan. He also outlined plans to prepare a simplified action plan and worksheets aimed at schools.

Above all he stressed the title of the poster: "Biodiversity Matters".



The Biodiversity Team at the launch;
John Cortes, Charles Perez, Keith Bensusan, Leslie Linares.

16 November 2005

TALK ON INSECTS AND PLANTS

Following the launch of the Biodiversity Poster, Invertebrate Section Co-ordinator Keith Bensusan gave an illustrated talk entitled *Insects and Plants* in which he explored the interrelationships of these organisms with each other and with their environment. Vividly illustrated with photographs of insects, plants and habitats, by Leslie Linares, Charles Perez and Keith himself, the hour-long presentation was extremely well received by the audience that filled the Charles Hunt Room in the John Mackintosh Hall.



Keith Bensusan in action.

This was the last of the 2005 series of talks. The 2006 programme will be published soon.

13 November 2005

NATURE NEWS PUBLISHED



GONHS in campaign to save Moroccan marshland

The Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society (GONHS) has just published the autumn issue of Gibraltar Nature News, its bi-annual news magazine, produced for the second time in full colour.

This edition features a number of articles generated by the GONHS Biodiversity Team, including the results of plant and animal surveys in various parts of Gibraltar.

The main feature is an appeal for support in protecting the Smir lagoon and marshes, where GONHS has been working with the Rabat Scientific Institute, and which is threatened with development.

Many other items of news and environmental and natural history interest are included.

Gibraltar Nature News is distributed free to GONHS members and can be purchased for 50p at various outlets.

Gibraltar Nature News is on sale (£0.50) at The Nature Shop, Casemates, and at the Botanic Garden Reception on Grand Parade. Copies can be ordered from overseas and will be posted at a cost of £1.50. Send order by email to naturenews@gonhs.org. The Spring 2005 issue can be downloaded from the [Publications](#) page on this site.

12 November 2005

TALK ON INSECTS AND PLANTS

Keith Bensusan, co-ordinator of the GONHS Invertebrate Studies Section will be giving a talk entitled Insects and Plants next Tuesday 15th November at the John Mackintosh Hall at 8.30pm.

The talk will be illustrated with some stunning close-up photographs of plants, insects and their interactions. It will deal with the diversity of insect life in Gibraltar and its importance, and how close the relationship is between insects and plants.

The talk will follow the launch of the 'Biodiversity Matters' poster, part of the GONHS Biodiversity Project.

11 November 2005

GONHS AT MAJOR CAMPO ECOLOGY CONFERENCE



The Opening Ceremony of the Jimena Conference with Dr John Cortes on the extreme left

The Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society (GONHS) was present this weekend at the VII Jornadas de Flora, Fauna y Ecología, organised by the Instituto de Estudios Campogibraltareses and held at Jimena de la Frontera.

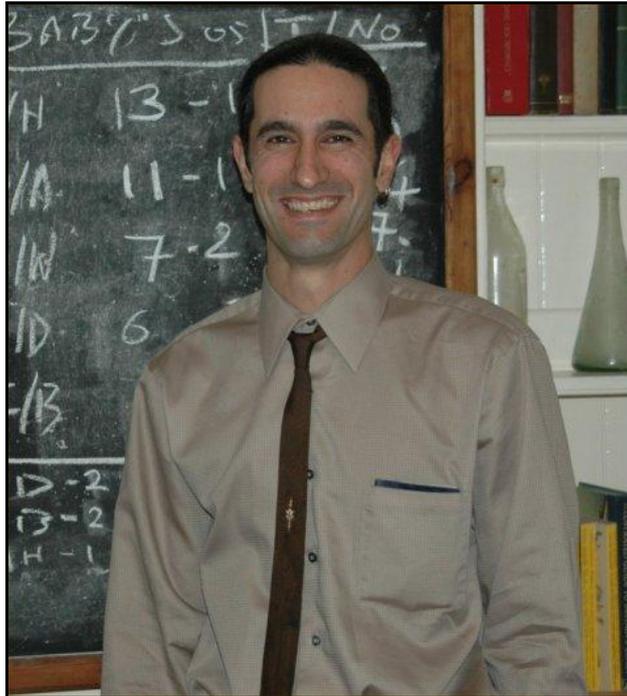
The Opening Ceremony, held on Friday evening, saw GONHS General Secretary Dr John Cortes at the presiding table together with Juan Montedeoca, Mancomunidad President, and the Mayor of Jimena, as well as the Director of the Instituto, Mario Ocaña.

GONHS members were involved in three presentations at the Conference.

In the first, which made headlines in Saturday's Europa Sur, Eric Shaw and Alfonso Gallardo Mayenco looked at the unsustainable way in which San Roque is developing, at the expense of natural sites and water courses, stating that 20% of the area's water resources are being consumed by golf courses.

Later, Keith Bensusan and John Cortes described the decline of the threatened Lesser Kestrel as a nesting species on the Rock, suggesting ways in which cross-border co-operation between Gibraltar and La Linea could possibly halt this decline.

In a paper co-authored with Eric Shaw and John Cortes, Agustin Fuentes, Professor of Anthropology at Notre Dame University in Indiana, USA, looked at the ecology of the Barbary Macaques on the Rock as conditioned by their interactions with humans and their combined effect on the rest of the ecology of the Upper Rock.



Professor Agustin Fuentes of Notre Dame University, Indiana, USA

9 November 2005

GONHS PRAISED BY SENIOR BIRDLIFE OFFICIAL

“GONHS is one of the strongest BirdLife Partners”

The Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society has been highlighted by former Head of the European Division of the major international nature conservation organisation, BirdLife International. In a circular to all constituent members of the Partnership, which covers most countries in Europe and around the world, Canan Orhun, who retires this month after six years at the head of the BirdLife operation in Europe, has given top praise to GONHS, the BirdLife Partner in Gibraltar.

Canan Orhun, who before taking on the BirdLife role was deputy head of the main nature conservation organisation in Turkey, worked closely with GONHS in organising the 2001 European Partnership Meeting which was held in Gibraltar, and which BirdLife Chief Executive Dr Mike Rands described as the “best ever Partnership Meeting”. Her first contact with the Gibraltar organisation was at the previous partnership meeting in Segovia, Spain, which was attended by GONHS members John Cortes and Charles Perez.

In her letter to all constituent birdlife organisations in Europe, the retiring official states:

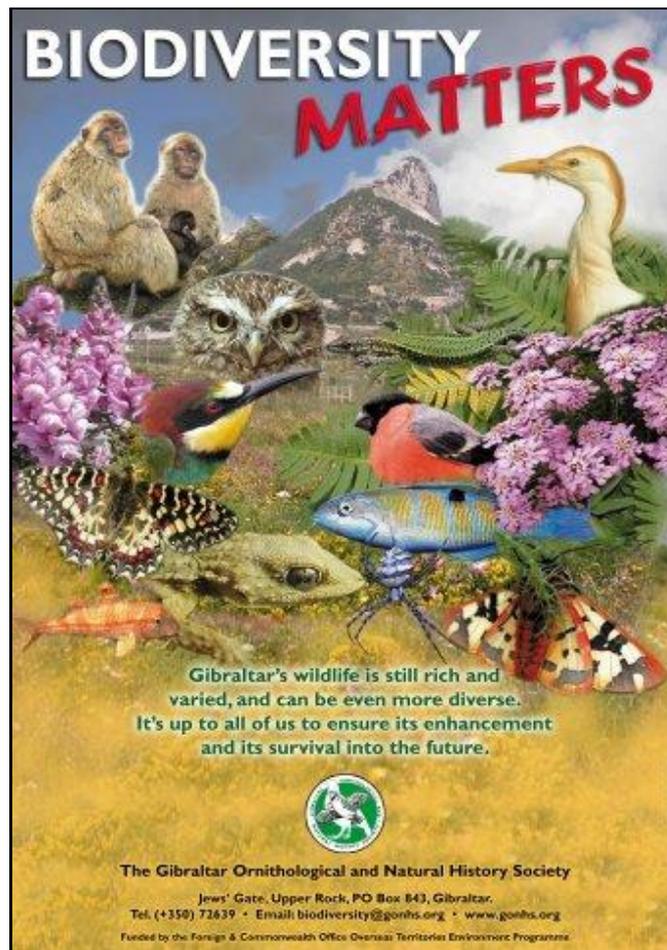
“Even before I started as Head of Department, back at the Segovia meeting in 1998, I met many BirdLife colleagues, at that time I was wearing the hat of Deputy Director General of DHKD (BirdLife Partner in Turkey). One of those friendships that started in Segovia is the one with John Cortes. Little did I know at that time that I would a year later join the Partnership wearing my new hat, and within a year of that start planning our Gibraltar meeting! Having known John since Segovia I knew that we would have an excellent working relationship, and with full trust in each

other our two teams put together the 2001 European Partnership Meeting, which Mike Rands told me was the best ever Partnership Meeting! Thanks John for all your support and friendship throughout the years, it is fabulous to know that one of our smallest Partners is actually one of our strongest!"

7 November 2005

GONHS LAUNCHES BIODIVERSITY POSTER

Talk on insects and plants



As part of its project to study and promote Gibraltar's Biodiversity, GONHS (The Gibraltar Ornithological & Natural History Society) will be launching its Biodiversity Poster next Tuesday 15th November at 8.30pm at the John Mackintosh Hall.

The poster, which shows a wide and colourful variety of Gibraltar's Biodiversity will be available free at the launch and subsequently at the Nature Shop both at Casemates and the Alameda Gardens.

Designed by Charles Perez, it is funded by the Biodiversity Action Plan Project, one of the projects under the Overseas Territories Environment Programme administered by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

The launch will be followed by a talk on the fascinating world of insects and plants, given by Keith Bensusan, GONHS Invertebrate Section co-ordinator.

19 September 2005

Clean Up the World Campaign

GONHS volunteers were involved in the Clean Up the World Campaign activities over the weekend of 17th and 18th September 2005, organised in Gibraltar by the Environmental Safety Group (ESG). The Botanic Gardens' vehicles provided transport and made 14 trips carrying Hottentot Fig *Carpobrotus edulis x acinaciformis* to the rubbish dump. The Society cleared this alien invasive species from "the Mound" at Europa Point. This has cleared up new habitat which should be quickly taken up by native species such as *Gynandris sysyrhincium* and *Romulea clusiana*.



Removing Carpobrotus at Europa Point

A stand with GONHS promotional literature was manned at John Mackintosh Square during the Saturday morning.

A spin off of the event will be the labelling of trees around the Rock, a joint project between GONHS, the ESG and the Gibraltar Botanic Gardens.



Part of the load at the dump