

BREVI NOTE

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INTER-ISLANDS MOVEMENTS OF STORM-PETREL *HYDROBATES PELAGICUS*
MELITENSIS (*Aves Procellariiformes*) IN CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN

Movimenti inter-insulari dell'Uccello delle tempeste mediterraneo Hydrobates pelagicus melitensis (Aves Procellariiformes) nel Mediterraneo centrale

This short note reports on inter-islands movements between the two largest known colonies of Storm-petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* in the Mediterranean: Filfla (35°47'N,14°24'E), 5 km south of mainland Malta; and Marettimo (37°58'N,12°03'E), 37 km west of mainland Sicily. The distance between the two colonies is approximately 321 km.

The breeding of Storm-petrel on Filfla has been documented as early as mid-nineteenth century (SCHEMBRI, 1843) but no actual numbers were ever reported before mid-twentieth century. After a thorough search ROBERTS (1954) found only two breeding pairs on 29th June, 1952. In 1970, SULTANA & GAUCI estimated the Filfla colony at around 10,000 pairs, but in later years, numbers were noted to decline. This was due mainly to loss of habitat through erosion and storms, as well as the increase of the Yellow-legged Gull *Larus michabellis* colony on the islet in the 1970s. At the turn of the century the colony was estimated at 5,000-8,000 breeding pairs (BORG & SULTANA, 2002; RAINE *et al.*, 2009).

A total of 20,503 birds have been ringed on Filfla from 1968 to 2009, out of which 2,397 have been re-trapped at least once. The majority (20,462 birds) was ringed as adults and only 41 as pulli. The low number of pulli ringed reflects the difficult terrain on Filfla where birds nest among boulders and narrow crevices sometimes several metres deep. Adult birds are caught at night by mist-nets when they are leaving or returning to the colony.

The colony on Marettimo was first reported by KRAMPITZ (1956), who mentioned the presence of colonies along the north-western coast of the island. KRAPP (1970) confirmed previous observations and added a new colony inside La Grotta del Cammello, on the east coast. This last colony, not controlled in the following decade (MASSA & CATALISANO, 1986; LO VALVO & MASSA, 2000), has been rediscovered by ALBORES BARAJAS *et al.* (2008). A ringing project on the largest colony was initiated in 1986, the majority of birds ringed being chicks. A total of 5,810 birds (3,539 chicks and 2,271 adults) have been ringed on Marettimo from 1986 to 2009.

An adult bird ringed on 2nd July 1994 on Marettimo was found dead on Filfla on 2nd July 1998, four years later to the date, while two chicks ringed on Marettimo on 16th July 1987 and 19th July

2003 were controlled (caught and released) on Filfla on 15th July 1989 and 10th August 2009 respectively. An adult bird ringed on Filfla on 15th June 1991 was then controlled on Marettime on 14th July 1996.

Between 1972 and 1979 eight other Filfla ringed birds were recovered in Sicilian waters, mainly off the eastern coast; see Table below.

Ring No.	Age	Ringling Date	Ringling Site	Recovery Date	Recovery Site
697638	2	13.06.1970	Filfla	29.07.1976	S.Ionian Sea: 37°04'N;15°17' E (SR), Sicily
2114915	2	27.05.1972	Filfla	20.08.1972	Itala Marina: 38°03'N; 15°26'E (ME), Sicily
2120540	4	27.05.1972	Filfla	27.04.1975	Largo di Siracusa: 37°04'N; 15°16'E Sicily
2148091	4	28.06.1973	Filfla	24.07.1973	Pachino: 36°43'N; 15°06'E (SR), Sicily
2148353	4	28.06.1973	Filfla	15.04.1975	Ionian Sea: 38°30'N; 17°00'E (SR), Sicily
2126117	4	06.08.1973	Filfla	15.04.1975	25 km off Siracusa: 36°55'N; 15°25'E Sicily
2206646	2	01.07.1978	Filfla	07.04.1979	off Siracusa: 57°04'N; 5°18'E Sicily
S7347	4	15.06.1991	Filfla	14.07.1996	Marettime Is.: 37°58'N;12°04'E Sicily
KN03195	4	02.07.1994	Marettime	02.07.1998	Filfla, Malta (found dead)
K46821	1	16.07.1987	Marettime	15.07.1989	Filfla, Malta - Re-ringed S5939
KN16489	1	19.07.2003	Marettime	10.08.2009	Filfla, Malta

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