

2010 News

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11 December 2010

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Society was held on Friday 10 December.

At the meeting the General Secretary, Dr John Cortes, presented a summary of accounts and the Society's Annual Report for 2010.

In his Report, the General Secretary highlighted the main activities of GONHS during the past year. Among the items covered were:

- Successful rehabilitation work by the Bird of Prey Unit and the start of the new tagging programme;
- Numbers of publications in different fields, including the naming of newly discovered invertebrates and a chapter in a major Cave Science book;
- Concern that early season culling by FERA could have caused one of the lowest Peregrine fledging successes ever recorded;
- A successful conservation Seminar organised in M'diq, Morocco in May;
- Seminar and exhibition organised in connection with International year of Biodiversity 2010;
- Involvement in developing HM Government's Biodiversity Strategy for the Overseas Territories and the Junta de Andalucia's Biodiversity strategy.

The two main activities highlighted for 2011 were an initiative to prevent the extinction of the Barbary Partridge from Gibraltar and the continuing campaign to stop the setting up of a Dolphinarium in Gibraltar.

Under the Society's 2005 Constitution, elections to Council are held every two years, so none were held at this AGM.

The meeting ended with a series of questions and answers from the members on conservation issues, and was followed by festive drinks.

3 December 2010

Tagged Vultures Fly

The two tagged Griffon Vultures released from the top of the Rock today after rehabilitation by the GONHS Bird of Prey Unit flew strongly. K2 a female, (which had been in Gibraltar's Town Centre for several days until it was captured on 12 November) went off immediately, while K1, a male that was taken in on 20 October, took about 2 hours before it set off.

Both attracted the attention of gulls, but were able to soar high and out of sight. K2 seemed to be heading south towards the Straits, while K1 appeared to head north into the Spanish mainland.

Ideally the release would have been in suitable habitat near vulture colonies in nearby Spain, but the Spanish frontier authorities no longer allow passage of birds through. GONHS is working with The Government in an attempt to resolve this situation.



K1 poses while K2 gets ready to go - it took off moments after the picture was taken



K1 thinks it through - it left about two hours later!

8 November 2010

Energy Symposium

The Gibraltar Group of Professional Engineers is hosting a symposium on Thursday 18 November at 6pm at the John Mackintosh Hall on the subject 'Energy Beyond 2040'. It will be addressed by Dr Nigel Burton, President of the Institution of Engineering and Technology, by Davis Bingham of Parsons Brinckerhoff Ltd., consultants on the new power station proposed for Gibraltar, and Juan Gari, of the Atlantis Resources Corporation, and expert on tidal current turbines.

The Symposium aims to look at Gibraltar's power supply options when oil reserves are further diminished and beyond the projected lifespan of the proposed new power station.

The Symposium is open to the public and should be of interest to GONHS Members.



26 October 2010

Biodiversity Workshops at Botanic Gardens

The Alameda Wildlife Conservation Park within the Botanic Gardens, set up initially by

GONHS volunteers, will be holding a series of workshops for children during the midterm break.

GONHS is supporting this event, and encourages members to spread the word.

Full details are on the Botanic Gardens [website](#).

22 October 2010

Western Beach Sewage Protest

GONHS, together with the Environmental Safety Group and Friends of the Earth have initiated a campaign of protest against the dumping of untreated sewage into the sea around Gibraltar. This campaign has been prompted by the recent opening of a sewage outflow by the neighbouring Spanish town of La Linea just metres north of the border and adjacent to Western Beach. This has already resulted in the beach being declared unfit for bathing by the Gibraltar Environmental Agency.

The campaign will include a petition, and there was a [protest](#) at the site today.

The sea off Western Beach retains some of the sandy seabed typical of that area of the Bay. There are also several sewage outflows in Gibraltar itself, including the major one at Europa Point.

Western beach retains a small area of sand dune vegetation (which should not be affected by the sewage) although the greater part was bulldozed two years ago by the Tourist Board.

27 August 2010

Animal Planet returns to The Cove

Animal Planet will today be screening 'Blood Dolphins' a return to 'The Cove', made famous by the award winning film by Ric O'Barry. More details and the Animal Planet Schedule can be accessed on the links below:

<http://animal.discovery.com/tv/blood-dolphins/>

<http://animal.discovery.com/tv-schedules/series.html?paid=15.15325.129776.39584.1>

Please note that this applies to the US channel. The clip can still be accessed from the link above. We will monitor the programming for showing in the UK channel which can be accessed from Gibraltar.

21 August 2010

Guardian carries explosive story

The Guardian today carried an article on the explosions set off by British Forces Gibraltar in the sea on the east side of the Rock, reported below on this page. It appears in the printed newspaper, with an extended report on the [online](#) version. The Ministry of Defence, the Gibraltar Federation of Sea Anglers and GONHS are all quoted in what is a balanced and fair appraisal of the situation by the Guardian's Caroline Davies.

10 August 2010

Tagged Griffon details



Griffon Vulture

Photo: C DM Parody

Details have now been received about the Griffon Vulture with yellow wing tags that was photographed by C DM Parody on 10th June 2010, arriving at Europa Point after spending the winter in Africa (photo on home page). It was a young female bird that had been taken into care at the Centro de Recuperación de Fauna Silvestre de La Alfranca (Zaragoza). After a period of recuperation the bird was ringed and tagged by Jorge Rucio and Gonzalo Gil and released at a feeding station for the vultures at Monegrillo, Zaragoza (41° 36' 41" N, 0° 22' 12" W) on the 19th October 2009.

The bird was ringed with a metallic ring, number 110823, and provided with the distinct yellow wing tags as seen in the photograph. This method of wing tagging has proved instrumental in allowing observers to submit the details of the birds movements without having to trap the bird. It is currently being used on species of large raptors and other birds in Spain under the 'Programa AUS' where they currently have 1418 birds tagged.

8 August 2010

Forces explosion kills fish

An underwater explosion off Europa Point on Friday morning resulted in the death of large numbers of fish of various species. These were allegedly gathered up rapidly and even placed on sale in the local market. Photographs of the fish can be seen on the [Angling for Change](#) Facebook page run by the Gibraltar Federation of Sea Anglers.

After much discussion in the late 1990s, when such events were regular, GONHS had established an agreed procedure with the MOD which, among other reassurances, would reduce the number of explosions to essential activities only, would limit the areas where they would be carried out, reduce the charge to a minimum, require a survey of the area and advance notice to be given of any proposed explosions.

These procedures were not followed on this occasion - the first such instance for many years. In any event, the area is now a Site of Community Interest under the EU Habitats

Directive, so that even the agreed procedure would no longer be valid as stricter protection needs to apply.

GONHS immediately protested to the MOD where it received a sympathetic, informal reply, and awaits further communication.

20 July 2010

Conure nest confirmed



A view of Gibraltar Town with the Theatre Royal in the centre J.Cortes

Free-flying South American Blue-crowned Conures have been present in Gibraltar since early 2002. Nesting has been very strongly suggested in the past through the occasional appearance of additional birds in juvenile plumage. It is only in the last few months, however, that their nesting site has been located. This was communicated to GONHS first by neighbours, and then by construction workers demolishing the site of the old Theatre Royal in the centre of Gibraltar Town.

This building has long been derelict, and the site undisturbed, and the Conures, which are hole-nesters were using holes in the walls as nest sites, possibly in the absence of mature trees with suitable cavities. In fact, the last site to be used held up the works for a short period in June as construction workers jealously guarded the nest until the three young fledged.

Although not native, most people have welcomed the addition of the species, which frequents gardens and, as there is no agriculture in Gibraltar, is not a pest.

The conures will now need to find alternative nest holes if they are to continue to nest in Gibraltar.



Adult arrives outside the nest



*Three young Blue-crowned Conures in
nest hole*

Photos M. Abhudarham



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World Environment Day

The Society will be manning a stand at the World Environment day event organised by the Ministry for the Environment at Casemates Square. This will be at Casemates Square, Gibraltar, from 10am to 1pm. In this International Biodiversity Year, GONHS will be displaying photographs of problems facing Gibraltar's biodiversity as well as making reference to the Society's ongoing campaign to stop plans for a dolphinarium in Gibraltar.

15 May 2010



International Year of Biodiversity

2010 is the International Year of Biodiversity, and a number of special events have been organised.

A Photographic Exhibition will be open from Monday 17th to Friday 21st May at the John Mackintosh Hall. This will show a selection of Gibraltar's Biodiversity as well as dangers and threats it faces.

On Thursday 20th May at 6.30pm also at the John Mackintosh Hall there will be a talk on Biodiversity in Gibraltar.

On Saturday morning 22nd May, World Biodiversity Day, there will be a number of events at the Botanic Gardens, starting with Bird Ringing and Bird Watching from 8am, and a Bird of Prey display from 10am.

At 11am there will be a tour of the Botanic Gardens starting at 11am at the George Don Gates.

12 May 2010

Campaign against Dolphinarium launched on Facebook

GONHS has launched a Facebook Campaign aimed at gathering support in stopping proposals to set up a Dolphinarium in Gibraltar. The plans include the capturing of wild Bottle-nosed Dolphins in the Pacific off Japan (which the proponents call "The Asian Market"), to fit 18 of them and 9 Sea Lions into Rosia Bay.

GONHS will shortly be making a full statement on the proposals and why it strongly objects to the idea. It has already made its position known to the Government of Gibraltar to which the proposal has been made by developers.

Watch this space, and in the meantime please join the Facebook Group and encourage others to do so. We managed 500 members in 24 hours!

**Click [here](#), and also follow the links on Facebook!
and Click [here](#) for an interview by GONHS 's Eric Shaw on GBC Television's Newswatch.**

1 January 2010

New Outings Programme 2010

The new outings programme for 2010 can be found in the [events page](#). Among the popular outing venues, the programme includes a new site at the Rio Genal, where participants will be able to enjoy spectacular scenery in woodlands along this river, where there will be many migrant birds making their way along the valley among the flower laden hillsides. Hopefully the popular Mushroom outing will take place weather permitting, as last years was cancelled due to extrem.e dry conditions.