SPRING HUNTING 2011 REPORT

Malta Environment and Planning Authority May 2011

Background

In accordance with Legal Notice 124 of 2011-Conservation of Wild Birds (Declaration on a Derogation for a 2011 Spring Hunting Season for Turtledove and Quail) Regulations, 2011 the spring hunting season opened between the 13th and the 30th April 2011 (excluding Sundays and public holidays) and each licensed hunter was allowed a daily bag limit of one bird and a seasonal limit of four birds.

In addition, the Spring Hunting Licence set an overall national bag limit of 2,500 for Quail and 9,000 for Turtledove.

Spring Hunting Licences Issued in 2011

In 2011, the Malta Environment and Planning Authority received a total of 5,661 formal requests to obtain a spring hunting licence. Out of these, 17 applications were considered to be invalid, since these applicants did not hold a valid 2011 hunting license (*Licence to carry a firearm for the purpose of bird hunting on land*) upon the closing date of the Spring Hunting Licence application i.e. the 5th April 2011. Consequently, the Authority issued a total of 5,644 spring hunting permits for 2011.

Eligible hunters were to collect their personalised licence and corresponding armband by the 12th April, however this deadline was then extended until the 15th. Following this extension, two Special Hunting Licences still remained uncollected and it was thus deemed that these applicants were no longer interested in obtaining a spring hunting licence and thus their respective licences were withdrawn by MEPA. This implies that there were 5,642 hunters licensed accordingly for the 2011 spring hunting season. This is being summarised in the following table:

Number of applicants	5,661
Number of non-eligible applicants	17
(these had not paid for general hunting license for 2011)	
Therefore number of eligible applicants	5,644
Number of uncollected licenses	2
herefore during Spring 2011 there were 5,642 spring hunting licensees	

The spring hunting licence set a number of conditions for the 2011 Spring Hunting season, as provided in Legal Notice 221 of 2010, as amended and Legal Notice 124 of 2011. Apart from these conditions, licensed hunters were to also abide with the provisions laid down in the *Conservation of Wild Birds Regulations*, 2006 (Legal Notice79 of 2006, as amended).

The SMS System

According to the *Conservation of Wild Birds* (*Framework for applying a derogation opening a spring hunting season for Turtledoves and Quails*), 2010 - Legal Notice 221 of 2010, as amended, licensed hunters were obliged to inform the Competent Authority on the birds they hunted via an SMS. A blank SMS was to be sent to a specified number when a Turtledove was shot and to another number when a Quail was shot.

The Malta Environment and Planning Authority set up a system through which the SMSs sent on the set mobile numbers for Turtledove and Quail were logged on a daily basis. During the season, MEPA closely monitored this system, keeping note of different variables, including the number of each bird species caught per day and for the whole season.

Although third parties who did not have a hunting licence could not be prevented from sending an SMS, all of the SMSs received at MEPA's end were filtered accordingly, and only the SMSs from pre-registered mobile numbers, hence coupled with a licence holder, were considered for the computation of seasonal quotas. These numbers were being verified by MEPA on a daily basis.

The SMSs received by the Authority from unregistered mobile numbers were noted and not used for statistical purposes, also noting that these would not have major effects on the set quotas. The Authority also received a few text messages which were sent in error, as evidenced from their content. These were also considered as invalid and not used for statistical purposes.

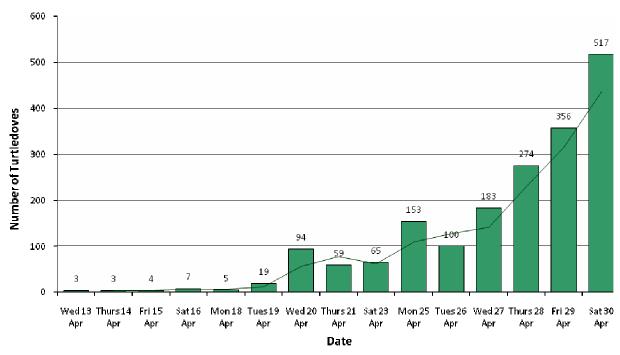
The Spring Hunting Season

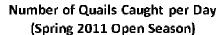
Following the collation and validation of the SMSs received, it transpired that during the 2011 Spring Hunting Season a total of 1,842 Turtledoves and 366 Quails were shot. The table below collates these hunts as received daily:

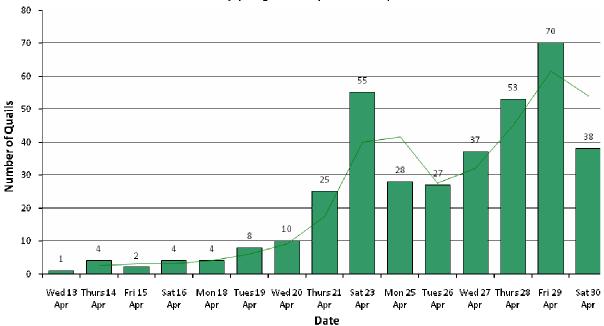
Date	Turtledove	Quail
Wednesday, 13 th April	3	1
Thursday, 14 th April 2011	3	4
Friday, 15 th April 2011	4	2
Saturday, 16 th April 2011	7	4

Sunday, 17 th April 2011 - Closed Season	/	/
Monday, 18 th April 2011	5	4
Tuesday, 19 th April 2011	19	8
Wednesday, 20 th April 2011	94	10
Thursday, 21 st April 2011	59	25
Friday, 22 nd April 2011 - Good Friday - Closed Season	/	/
Saturday, 23 rd April 2011	65	55
Sunday, 24 th April 2011 – Closed Season	/	/
Monday, 25 th April 2011	153	28
Tuesday, 26 th April 2011	100	27
Wednesday, 27 th April 2011	183	37
Thursday, 28 th April 2011	274	53
Friday, 29 th April 2011	356	70
Saturday, 30 th April 2011	517	38
TOTALS	1,842	366

Number of Turtledoves Caught per Day (Spring 2011 Open Season)







As evidenced by the data being quoted in this report, the overall bag limits of 2,500 and 9,000 for the Quails and Turtledoves respectively, had not been reached by the end of the Spring Hunting Season 2011.

Enforcement during Spring Hunting

In total 44 police officials were appointed to carry out on-spot checks during the spring season. Such officials carried out checks to ensure that the licence conditions and the provisions of the relevant Regulations were being observed. These included:

- i) Verification of the general hunting permit (Carnet de Chasse);
- ii) Ensuring that the hunters carried their identification armband and were in possession of their spring hunting licence;
- iii) Ensuring that the bag limits and time restrictions were adhered to;
- iv) Ensuring that hunting was only carried out on turtledove and quail.

To aid the enforcement officials identify licensed spring hunters on the field, each licensee was provided with a bright orange identification armband bearing the licence number. Such armband was to be worn at all times by hunters when in search or in pursuit of birds.