

OUR NATIONAL IDENTITY

National Emblem

The Maltese Coat-of-Arms consists of a shield showing a heraldic representation of the National Flag of Malta. Above the shield there is a mural crown in gold with sally port and eight turrets (five only being visible), representing the fortifications of Malta and denoting a city state. Around the shield there is a wreath of two interlaced branches, olive on the left and palm on the right which are symbols of peace and traditionally associated with Malta. They are all in their proper colours and tied at the base with a white ribbon having a red background upon which are written the words "Repubblika ta' Malta" in black.



The President's Flag

The Presidential Flag of Malta was introduced on 12th December 1988. The flag is flown on the President's official residences and offices and on all occasions when s/he is present. It has the same characteristics of the National Flag and it consists of a blue field with the Emblem of Malta at the centre with a Maltese Cross in gold at each corner.



National motto -

Virtute et Constantia
(Power and Consistency)



BRONZE ARROW

National Poet – Dun Karm Psaila **(18 October 1871 – 13 October 1961)**

Born at Haż-Żebbuġ, was a Maltese writer and poet, sometimes called 'the bard of Malta'.

He was educated at the Seminary between the years 1885 and 1894 and then proceeded to study philosophy in 1888 and theology in 1890 at the University of Malta. He was ordained priest in 1894.

From 1895 to 1921 he taught various subjects at the Seminary: Italian, Latin, English, arithmetic, geography, cosmography, ecclesiastical history and Christian archaeology.

In 1921 he was appointed assistant librarian at the National Library of Malta and in 1923 director of circulating libraries, a post he held till his retirement in 1936.

In 1921, Albert Laferla, the director of education, asked Dun Karm to compose some verses to a music score by Robert Sammut. The Innu Malti was sung for the first time in 1923 at Manoel theatre.

In 1941 it was officially designated the national anthem, a status confirmed by the Constitution at Independence in 1964.

In 1921 Dun Karm was one of the founding members of the Għaqda tal-Kittieba tal-Malti. His first poem in Maltese was 'Quddiem Xbieha tal-Madonna', which appeared in the first issue of the Maltese periodical Il-Ħabib.

Dun Karm often found poetic expression in his solitude, which was eventually accompanied by a high degree of spiritual balance. His poetry reflects a background of village life crowned with an atmosphere of family feelings and it also portrays the Maltese countryside with a perspective imagination.

He also compiled a dictionary between 1947 and 1955 in three volumes, Dizzjunarju Ingliz u Malti.



Glossary of terms

Evergreen tree:

A tree which is green all year round and does not shed its leaves.

Maquis shrubland:

This is a type of environment which is found mostly in valley sides and bottoms. It consists of densely growing evergreen shrubs such as holm oak, kermes oak, tree heath, sage, juniper, buckthorn, spurge olive and myrtle.

Endangered Species:

Species in danger of extinction.

Endemic Species:

Species found only in the Maltese islands.

National Bird: Il-Merill – (Blue Rock Thrush)

Name:

Blue Rock Thrush – Merill

Latin Name:

Monticola solitarius

Length:

Approx. 20-23 cms

Mass:

Approx. 37-70 grams

Description:

The blue rock-thrush is a small and attractive bird, named for the distinctive deep blue colouration of the male, which is slightly brighter around the eyes, head and throat, and darker and browner on the wings and tail. On the other hand, the female is duller, most often a



Male

brownish blue-grey above, streaked buff and brown on the lower parts of the face and upper chest, with buff-brown barring on the lower breast and under tail. The juvenile is dark brown, lacking any blue tone to the plumage, and is more strongly spotted and scaled than the female. It hatches in March and May and lays from 5 to 7 eggs. The male bird sings from the top of the cliffs next to his nest in the nesting season. It has a very melodious song.

Habitat:

The blue rock-thrush breeds mainly on cliffs, in rocky valleys, on crags, outcrops, sea cliffs and rocky coasts. Depending on the location and the subspecies, the blue rock-thrush can be found from sea level up to elevations of 4,200 meters. Wintering habitat is more varied, however it is still often associated with areas of bare rock, and includes foothills, valleys, towns, olive groves, gardens and areas of woody vegetation on rocky slopes.

Diet:

Worms, grasshoppers, snails, and small lizards.

Declared:

It has been declared national bird in 1971.

National Fish: Bużaqq – (Killifish)

Name: Killifish – Bużaqq
Latin: *Aphanius fasciatus*
Length: Male = 10cm, Females = 9cm

Description: The overall colour of the male is aquamarine, darker on the back and lighter on the belly. The side is adorned with 0-15 dark vertical bars. The dorsal fin has a dark edge and the tail fin is banded. Other fins are yellowish. The female shows lighter colours than the male and the bars on her body are much narrower than those of the male, also her fins are clear. The fin colouration and number of vertical bars may vary according to the locality, though this may reflect environmental conditions rather than genetic variation. They are considered weak swimmers.

Habitat: Lives in brackish water in small shallow inlets.

Diet: Primarily on aquatic arthropods such as insect (mosquito) larvae, aquatic crustaceans and worms.

Others: The Maltese race is probably endemic. Can be found at L-Għadira and Is-Simar nature reserves.

Declared: It has never been officially declared as the national fish.



Male



Female

National Plant: Widnet il-Baħar – (Maltese Rock Centaury)

Name: Maltese rock Centaury – Widnet il-Baħar

Latin: *Palaeocyamus crassifolius*

Length: Approx. 50-70 cm

Description: This is a shrub whose leaves are smooth and rather fleshy. Flowering occurs from May to July, with each stalk bearing a single flower head consisting of many purple tubular florets.

Habitat: This perennial shrub is confined to coralline limestone seaside cliffs and scree, growing in full sun.

Others: This is considered to be an endemic plant. It is critically endangered. Indeed, it is protected through both national and international legislation. Special areas of conservation have been designated to further protect this species and its habitat. It is found on the cliffs of Wied Babu, Fawwara, Dingli, Ta Cenc and Dwejra

Declared: It has been declared national plant in 1971.



Maltese Rock Centaury



Maltese Rock Centaury during Pollination



National Tree: L-Għargħar - (Sandarac)

Name:	Sandarac – Siġra ta' L-Għargħar
Latin:	Tetraclinis articulata
Length:	approx. 6-15 meters
Width:	approx. 0.5-1 meters

Description: It is a small, slow-growing, evergreen tree whose branches are covered by scale-like leaves (resembling needles). It produces two types of cones (female cones and male cones). The male cones are about 3mm whilst female cones grow up to 15mm. When the male cones are mature and full of pollen, it is dispersed by the slightest movement, thus this tree is wind pollinated. The female cones start to form at the same time as the male cones. At first they look like a four-pointed star in the middle of which is a shiny droplet, sticky to the touch. This is called a 'pollen drop' and its sticky substance helps the male pollen to stick to it so that fertilization can take place. The fertilized cone will continue to develop over the next 8 months. The cones are green at first, but when they mature they turn brown and open with four petal-like sides of about 15mm. The seeds are small and have a papery wing on each side. These wings help the seed to be dispersed by wind.

Habitat: Lives in areas of maquis shrubland, especially on slopes of coralline limestone.

Others: Today it is very rare to see it in the wild and it is an endangered species since humans are destroying its wild habitat. In Europe it is found only in Malta and in Southern Spain. In Malta wild specimens are found in few areas including Maqluba (Qrendi) and Mellieħa. It was believed to grow in abundance a long time ago in Malta, as is evident from places like Hal Għargħur and San Ġwann tal-Għargħar, which got their name from this tree. In order to help in the survival of this species in Malta, it is recently being used in agricultural and afforestation projects.

Declared: It has been declared national tree in January 1992



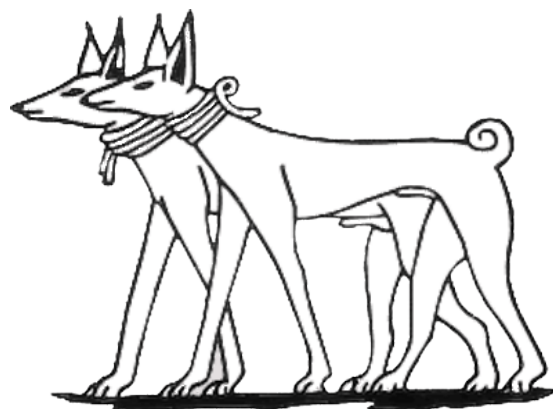
National Dog: Kelb tal-Fenek - (Pharaoh Hound)

Name :	Pharaoh Hound – Kelb tal-fenek
Latin:	Canis lupus familiaris
Height:	58.4 – 63.5 cm (Adult Male), 53.3 – 61 cm (Adult Female)
Mass:	20 – 25 kg (Adult)

Description: The Pharaoh hound is highly appreciated by the local farmers as an outstanding rabbit hunter, as a guard dog to accompany goat and sheep on their way to the meadows and to retrieve any kind of feathered prey. The coat is fine and short, the colour varies from shades of red to a range of a tan to a deep chestnut and all shades in between. Its eyes are always amber, and should complement the coat colour. They are born with blue eyes, which change to a light gold or yellow colour during early puppyhood and then begin to darken well into adulthood. The nose, whiskers, nails, paw-pads, and eye-rims should also be the same colour as the coat. They also have a unique trait of “blushing” when excited or happy, with their ears and nose becoming bright pink.

Habitat: The dogs are ideally to be kept inside farm yards, stables or dog houses and take them out only for hunting, which usually takes place in the nights during summertime. Similar to other working breeds, the Pharaoh Hound is not regarded as a pet, and it is not ideal to take them out on the promenade since they might be aggressive toward dogs of the same gender. Unfortunately they aren't suited to share a roof with small pets such as rabbits, cats, or dogs because they see them as prey.

Others: Based on DNA analysis, the breed has no link with Ancient Egypt. However, the popular myth holds that the breed is descended from the Tesem, one of the ancient Egyptian hunting dogs. The similarities of the breed to images of dogs found on the walls of ancient Egyptian tombs is striking. This myth proposes that the Pharaoh Hound was brought by the Phoenicians to Malta, where it has existed for over 2,000 years.



Some Other Endemic Species

Qabru – (Maltese Freshwater Crab)

Name : Maltese Freshwater Crab – Qabru (Grani tal-Ilma Helu)

Latin: Potamon fluviatile

Height: approx. 50 mm (Adults)

Description: It is a decapod (a crustacean with 10 legs). It is greenish-grey with some occasional orange-yellow patches, and an overall purple hue on the legs.

Habitat: Since it is an endemic species to the island and only exists in a handful of places on the island of Malta and in one place on the sister island of Gozo. The crabs live in holes between rocks or burrows that they dig into the clay. They have their burrows between two rocks that was about 1 meter above the water surface

Diet: The Maltese freshwater crab is carnivorous and feeds on other smaller animals such as tadpoles. It usually feeds after sunset.



Maltese Freshwater Crab



Old Maltese Lira 5c Coin



Ballotra – (Maltese Weasel)

Name : Maltese Weasel – Ballotra

Latin: *Mustela nivalis*

Length : Approx. 173 to 217 mm (Male), females normally are a bit smaller than the males. Their tails may be from 34 to 52 mm long.

Description: Weasels have a reputation for cleverness, quickness and guile. They have long, slender bodies, which enable them to follow their prey into burrows. Females usually have red or brown upper coats and white bellies. Weasels can live for 7 or 8 years.

Habitat: It can be found in fields, open woodland, bushy or rocky areas, parks and gardens, and high place.

Diet: Despite its small size, the weasel is a fierce hunter, capable of killing a rabbit five to ten times its own weight. Weasel feeds predominantly on mouse-like rodents, including mice, hamsters and rabbits. Furthermore it rarely eats frogs, fish, small birds and bird eggs. It usually does not attack adult hamsters and rats.



Maltese Weasel



Old Maltese Lira 1c Coin



ACTIVITY FACT SHEET

Suggestion:

This sections could be done in a practical session (ideally) with the cubs by showing and explaining to them directly either through an outdoor hike or else through a visit to the museum. Otherwise it can be done theoretically, if so make use of pictures to give cubs idea of the subject.



Activity: Visit to the Muzew ta l'istorja naturali (Mdina)



Objective: Learn about Maltese identity, flora and fauna



Time: 1-2 hours



Outline: Most cubs at this particular age have never visited a museum. They will appreciate more about our country uniqueness and wildlife diversity. After the activity you can create a small quiz related with the topic.



Equipment: First Aid Kit, Water, Consent forms, money for ticket.



Place: Museum



Group Size: Pack



3rd Parties: N/A

BRONZE ARROW



ACTIVITY FACT SHEET



During the Activity:



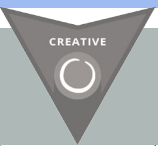
– Have the cubs discuss if they have ever seen any of the endemic species before, and if yes were. Also discuss how endemic species make our country different from others and the importance of keeping such species alive.



– This aspect is met through going around in the museum.



– This aspect is important since not everyone knows about our national country. Furthermore we must keep in mind that while giving them such information we must emphasize why such species are endangered and how to protect them.



– One can explore creative ideas with the cubs of how to help the endangered species.



– This can be emotional because it is worrying that most of our endemic flora (species) and habitats are endangered. On the other hand the experience can have positive emotions connected to it since the cubs are now more aware of their national identity.



– This visit gives the cubs the opportunity to become more aware of our beautiful endemic nature that surrounds us. Help them appreciate what we have and what makes us different from other countries.

BRONZE ARROW

