

Local council takes aim at Valletta pigeons



Pigeons fly over Valletta, oblivious to a law specifically enacted to reduce their numbers.
Photo: Darrin Zammit Lupi

Valletta's pigeons are facing hard times as a new by-law issued by the local council targets a reduction in the population of these pesky birds.

The law makes it illegal to feed pigeons in the city and it calls on owners of uninhabited buildings to bar all entrances to prevent pigeons from nesting there – at the risk of a €46 fine.

Coming into effect on April 22, the law is intended to cut down the pigeon population in Valletta, which according to Mayor Alexiei Dingli is causing a lot of corrosive damage to buildings.

A second offence incurs a €76 fine while a continuous contravention is subject to a daily fine of €12.

"The problem is big, they damage buildings and monuments, and it's difficult to put spikes on everything," Dr Dingli said.

The biggest problem, the mayor said, was around gardens and the bastions, where the birds found places to nest.

"We've got nothing against pigeons but against their droppings and the damage they do," the mayor said.


It could have been worse for the pigeons, however. The council, Dr Dingli said, was also considering introducing a couple of falcons to prey on what some consider as "feathered rats".

But the €3,000 cost was too much, considering the risk that the birds of prey might decide to move elsewhere.

The by-law specifically excludes domesticated pigeons and pigeon breeders.

Floriana, Msida, Sliema, Pieta', Hamrun and Gżira have enacted similar legislation.


Comments

Johnny Xerri(2 hours, 30 minutes ago) 

To anyone saying that such animals should be left alone.... I say this has come way too late.

The problem of these birds started with irresponsible breeders who would at times let their pigeons fly without bothering to check if all returned. Missing pigeons would start to colonise uninhabited areas and inaccessible bastions. The population expanded and they started to breed with the rock dove. Such breeding ensured that the rock dove in its pure bloodline is as hard to find in Malta as perhaps oil.

The gov instead of ensuring measures to reduce feral pigeon populations from all areas in Malta...by declaring it a pest that hunters could catch...and re-introduce the Rock Dove...what does our almighty gov do? Remove the Rock Dove from the protected list and open a season for it from 1st september till 31st january...and keep the feral pigeon protected all year round? Instead of using the hunter for conservation scope...he uses a season to ensure that the Rock Dove is totally eliminated.

George Vella(13 hours, 53 minutes ago) 

As I know it in Milan, Italy, they had the same problem. What they did was that they did not trap or kill the pigeons, but fed them on certain food that made their eggs unfertilised. Thus reducing the population. In Victoria, Gozo they have the same problem.

Raymond Sammut(6 hours, 55 minutes ago)


The method you refer to is controversial because it could have a deleterious effect on other species through the food chain.

Trapping and destroying the feral birds helps to alleviate the problem without risks to other animals.


The main problem lies in the fact that when the Valletta Council decreases the pigeon population, other younger pigeons also start to migrate and establish themselves while they find less competition from the birds that had been destroyed.

Ultimately, the Valletta Council can only eliminate the problem through hygiene. That is, impose heavy fines on people and/or entities who litter in such a way so as to provide the bird colony with a feeding ground.


I think it is reasonable to suggest that through a combination of trapping and hygiene, the Valletta Council can safely and economically manage the feral bird population with significant success.

Raymond Sammut(23 hours, 40 minutes ago) 


All that is needed is to design effective traps, and to install these traps at suitable locations, so that these feral birds can be captured and destroyed. It is incomprehensible that such an action has never been taken by the authorities.

carmel borg(1 day ago) 

Sur Sindku ghax ma tmurx dawra mar ring round ezatt maddawra ta hdejn 2 22 u tara tigieg jigru qalb il karozzi lussuzi ta dawk is sinjuri li joghqodu hemm taht u sinjuri ta veru tafx

carmel borg(1 day ago) 


About 6 to 8 months ago I phoned Valletta Local Council complaining about two rooms used for pigeons situated at the car park near the House of the Four Winds. (not more than 100 meters away.) Somebody (male) working at the council replied that he lives in St Paul's street and every morning he has to wash his car because of the pigeons and cut the telephone. Hbieb tal hbieb? MAYOR Please Note

M. Tabone(1 day, 4 hours ago) 


Li ghogbitni f'dan kollu hu li 'The bye law specifically excludes domesticated pigeons and pigeon breeders!!' Jaqaw dawn ikakku l-ghasel u l-vitamini? Mhux xorta jhammgu u jmorru fuq l-arjals tat-televivixins? Mhux xorta hsara jaghmlu? Jew dawn jittrenjawhom fejn ghandhom jaghmlu l-affarijiet tagghom!! U ajma! Din dahka ta! Halluhom jghixu povri hamiem! Jekk isir tindif spiss hmieg wisq ma jingabarx u hsara ma ssirx! Jew ligi tghodd ghal kulhadd jew ghal hadd!

Ray Buhagiar(1 day, 2 hours ago)


Prosit. Domestic pigeons are also a pest. We can't even enjoy our roof garden.

peter barbara(1 day, 5 hours ago) 

About time too,you should have done it ages ago. as usual following the example taken by your suburb..

M.Cucciardi(1 day, 5 hours ago) 

'The by-law specifically excludes domesticated pigeons and pigeon breeders.' Naturally - since owners/ breeders have the right to vote...What an ignorant and intolerant individual the average Maltese seems to be!

Steve Zammit(1 day, 5 hours ago) 

Its better the Valletta Local Council address other fellow Maltese citizens that throw garbage in the street, dispose of their bus tickets as soon as they arrive at the terminus on the floor, people urinating, all the garbage galore around the bastions, bottles everywhere and not to forget; food remains along the pavements. Oh come on? A few pigeons and dropping annoy you so much?

Before you point at the pigeons and blame them for their droppings and damage that they do, see how yourselves keep our villages and the way many of us keep on dirtying and polluting our own country. It seems that all creatures in Malta are considered as "pests" when we forget that the only real pest is us and our disrespectful and unsustainable ways!

And BTW there was a time when Malta had healthy populations of Barn Owl, Common Kestrels and Peregrine Falcons, which all prey on pigeons and rodents....but they were all targeted and wiped out by irresponsible hunters years back. Maybe if WE give the chance for these species to re-establish new breeding populations we would see a reduction in the feral pigeon population.

F.Farrugia(1 day, 5 hours ago)

This is HILLARIOUS.`` WE`VE GOT NOTHING AGAINST PIGEONS BUT AGAINST THEIR DROPPINGS. It`s like saying,`` we have nothing agianst people who steal or kill but against stealing and killing. Bhall dak li qallu mhux l-istess. Just beating aganst the bush. Imsieken il-beltin li ser ikollhom ihalsu dawn il-multi intortament.

c dimech(1 day, 7 hours ago)

Daqs San Frangisk jhobbu t-tjur . Ghax ma jghidux li biex jiffrankaw xi marka fuq xi glekk,jew fuq xi karozza u mhux joqghod iwahhal fil-monumenti . Dan qatt mar Venezja jew Londra.

Charles J. Buttigieg(1 day, 8 hours ago)

Put a dozen Maltese hunters geared up with shot guns, the pigeons will fly away for their lives well before the hunters start shooting.

Dylan Olliver(1 day, 10 hours ago)

Finally ! However, I ask, if pigeons are "rats of the air", why are they not killed?

mario nicholas pace(1 day, 10 hours ago)

I suggest that the council takes care of the filth that human beings leave like urinating wherever they like and other rubbish they leave behind . Starvation of these pigeons is really christian like. This is total hypocrisy.

S. Martin(1 day, 10 hours ago)

Quote: "Floriana, Msida, Sliema, Pieta', Hamrun and Gzira have enacted similar legislation."

It would be interesting to know how many offenders were caught and brought to book. Don't bother checking..... probably just a handful.

I hope this would not end up as another useless by-aw by yet another local council with no enforcement whatsoever!

wally vella-zarb(1 day, 10 hours ago)

Perhaps the FKNK can help...

A.Muscat(1 day, 11 hours ago)

I SUGGEST THAT HUNTERS DO THE JOB .OR ELSE BIRDLIFE.

Paul Borg(1 day, 11 hours ago)

Sur Sindku, mhux ahjar int u ta madwarek tikkoncentraw fuq it tiswijiet tal bankini residenzjali u t toroq. Kulltant tohorgu b xi buffunata biex taraw kif se tlaqqtu lira. Aktar min hekk ghadek ma tajtx konferma fuq kif se tinbidel ir rotta ghal gewwa l Belt wara li tinhatt it triq ta bieb il belt. L ewwel il qtates , issa l Hamiem. Nahseb ahjar twarrbu intkhom kollha. Il hmieg tindif ghandu bzonn, mhux irqad fil karozzi !!!!!!! Get real kid !

Vincent Galea(1 day, 12 hours ago)

For many time the only signs of life in Valetta is the flocks of cooing pigeons flying in and out.

Pamela Hansen(1 day, 12 hours ago) 

About time. But as well as the council fining people in uninhabited private residences, it should get rid of the two pigeon sheds next to the house of Four Winds. The place is a disgrace. What is the point of cleaning the bastions? These sheds are for kept pigeons not the birds finding somewhere to nest. If the council is serious about the issue, it should start by cleaning up that corner of Valletta.

Franco Farrugia(1 day, 12 hours ago) 

Those who are in authority and who thus are in duty bound to give an example, must ensure that no animal-cruelty is involved in any decision taken. Otherwise, I, for one, will break the law.


mario camilleri(1 day, 11 hours ago)

I agree 100%

Johnny Xerri(23 hours, 26 minutes ago)

yet another comment in which Franco Farrugia deems himself as being an institution above the country's law...well done!!!

You expect others to abide by laws that are to your liking...but then you do not want to abide laws that are not to your liking but to the liking of others...

Stefan Micallef(1 day, 12 hours ago) 

Pigeons and sparrows are pests,there should be a short harvest season for them,beacuse they do alot of harm,But in Malta the right option is never taken...

Joseph Schembri(1 day, 12 hours ago) 

A humane solution that is used elsewhere is feeding them food laced with contraceptive substances. A feeder can just go round Valletta once a day and scatter the feed. The pigeons will get used to the feeding spots and results will be seen in a few months time.

The chemical used in cities such as New York is Nicarbazin. It seems to have no effect on non bird species, does not bio accumulate, decomposes after a few days and appears to be safe. It might effect birds which are not pigeons but I do not think that we see any other bird species apart from sparrows in Valletta.

John Borg(1 day, 12 hours ago)

No Mr Schembri, according to Birdlife Malta, Valletta is a very important place for wagtails and thousands of them roost there. I don't remember the numbers but one Birdlife had counted them and ran into thousands, probably more than the pigeons.

Joseph Schembri(1 day, 12 hours ago)

I correct what I said about a human feeder. Elsewhere there are automatic feed dispensers that are placed on rooftops. Only a couple of dozen would be needed in Valletta. Also this has to be an ongoing process or at least used on and off as it seems that the pigeons in Malta can breed all year round. I have also read about some concerns about oestrogens ending up in water supplies destined for humans.

Joseph Schembri(1 day, 11 hours ago)

John, If I am not mistaken Wagtails are migratory. I don't know how long they stay here but the anti fertility chemicals need to be applied continuously for them to work so perhaps short time residents will be only minimally affected. I also suppose that feeders can be designed in a way so that they only target specific species because of size differences.

Stephen Koludrovic(1 day, 12 hours ago) 🗨️

Better to check with the EU first, to see if there is any law against the starving of pigeons. One never knows, we could get sued by some NGO from the animal rights brigade.

Claire Busuttil(1 day, 12 hours ago) 🗨️

Imma kif kollox jatih fastidju lil bniedem???

Pajjizi ohra, go bliet kbar hemm ruxxmata hammiem iduru, allura lil belt valletta biss qed jaghmlu hsara fil bini????

Min dejjem il hammiem kienu parti tradizzjonali mil belt valletta, jaghmlu parti minnha..... hadd ma jiehu gost jiehu xi gieh mil gholi kif jighd il malti.....imma come on.....halluwhom itiru!!

C Cassar(1 day, 12 hours ago)

These are a pest in all cities across Europe. Strict regulations have been in place in London for years. These birds spread nasty diseases and should not be fed or touched.

They might have been seen as 'traditional' in the past but now there is much more information and education regarding the dangers these birds can bring.

Smoking was 'traditional' in the past but through education we now realise it is very bad for human health and hence it's been banned from most places today.

Live, learn and educate yourself.

S. Zammit(1 day, 12 hours ago)

Pajjizi ohra wkoll jeqridu l-hammiem iridu. Fil-fatt tara vriegi irraq tal-metall fuq kull bini fi bliet bhal Firenze u Ruma biex ma jhallux ghasafar ibejtu.

Mark Demicoli(1 day, 10 hours ago)

I visited several cities with pigeons, particularly Amsterdam and Munich. It is true that there are pigeons (btw way less than the amount there is in Valletta) but at least the councils and government manage to work it out wisely. All the historic statues and building façades are covered with a thin net fence, which is not so visible and protects. Also every single and imaginable place where birds can stay such as balconies, signs and even clocks are covered with spikes, I was really amazed by this, every single place is covered and you don't need to be afraid you'll be bombarded with droppings! I suggest a combination of falcons and building protection, no need to cover every place with spikes, but at least risky places such as Valletta's main door. This is nothing against pigeons but simple natural control with falcons.

Claire Busuttil(1 day, 8 hours ago)

@Cassar,

when a person is lacking in arguments, start being nasty and offensive, as you are doing....

u meta bniedem, jara li ma jistax jeleb jew jikmanda sitwazzjoni, jara x jaghmel, anke il hazin, tkun soluzzjoni ghalih.

Jekk il hammiem qed jaghmlu hsara, ok, naghmlu bhal ma isir fi bliet ohra baranin, namlu dawk il vireg zar mat tarf tal bini.....imma mhux tigu tejdu li igibu 3 falkuni ta halli joqtluhom.....imnalla il falkuni jiswew il flus, ghal kunsil!!


C Cassar(1 day, 4 hours ago)

You clearly haven't got a clue and I gave a way that you could educate yourself on this subject. However, you seem to ignore those that have better information and knowledge on this subject than yourself. Keep your head in the sand and stay uninformed.


Claire Busuttil(9 hours, 31 minutes ago)

@Cassar....oh please shut up!

I just hope that authorities have more heart than you! People like you, think that they are above everything, just because they are human, and they can speak!


Mario Farrugia(1 day, 13 hours ago) 

Well done Valletta Local Council. Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna has for many years called for the reduction and curtailment of the stray pigeons. Apart from being a veritable nuisance, especially their droppings they are the cause of much damage to our cultural heritage infrastructure. Furthermore, their eradication would make the presence of unsightly 'pigeon spikes' on heritage buildings unnecessary.

Paul Barrett(1 day, 13 hours ago) 


Are these vermin protected?

Just not feeding them in the City is not going to make any difference - they will just get food from somewhere else and fly back to the City to roost.


simon galea(1 day, 13 hours ago) 

The introduction of falcons is a great idea which was successful in other European cities. Peregrine falcons nest in buildings and do not leave the place once food is abundant. Apart from controlling the number of pigeons, the introduction of peregrine falcons can serve as an attraction!

I encourage the introduction of such.

Charles J. Buttigieg(1 day, 13 hours ago) 

Feed them birth pills. It's been tried and tested in other cities and it works.

ssammut(1 day, 13 hours ago) 


mr dingli. getting the falcons would be a great mistake, since they will be surely shot at, before any SMS is sent!

Anthony A Mifsud(1 day, 13 hours ago) 


A ha, so Pigeons are a pest now? BLM get ready to shoot, question! Do they have to pay that hefty €50.00 licence to shoot these pigeons?

Tony G. Grech(1 day, 7 hours ago)

I suggest to "adjust" the license at Eur50 per pigeon they shoot down instead of one time tax. That way, we will put the country's finances on solid ground...


C Agius(1 day, 13 hours ago) 

Egoism at its best

D. Farrugia(1 day, 13 hours ago) 

I would opt for the introduction of a pair of peregrine falcons. Come on the long-term benefit would by far outweigh the original cost. We spend thousands more for restoring the city and even on silly things such as official opening of a few jets of water in a piazza! If you plan the reintroduction sensibly, give time for the peregrines to acclimatise rather than just releasing them straight away, they won't fly off. And besides the peregrine was our national icon in by-gone days, bring it back!! Why

should they fly away when they have ample prey right in front of them?! Peregrines nest in cities so all odds are in their favour. This shows how short-sighted our decision makers tend to be. Or is the idea of earning more revenue more appealing?! Give this a serious thought as it is by far the most sensible option on all counts.

Joseph Fenech(1 day, 13 hours ago) 

I agree with the mayor 100%. But i doubt there is a way to get rid of all the pigeons !!!
