**ANNEX E TO**

**RAFOS/SEC/17**

**DATED 24 NOV 17**

**GIBEX 2017 JOINT SERVICES RINGING EXPEDITION REPORT**

**General**

A Joint Services Ringing Expedition was held on the Rock of Gibraltar covering the period 26th September – 10th October 2017, in response to an invitation from Dr Keith Bensusan, General Secretary of the Gibraltar Ornithological and Natural History Society (GONHS) and Director of Gibraltar Botanic Garden. The RAFOS sponsored expedition was open to and has been publicised to members of RAFOS, AOS and RNBWS. Gibraltar is an isthmus of 6.8sq kilometres from Southern Spain. Population of Gibraltar is 30,000 most of who live in the city and on the coastal fringe. Gibraltar is a UK Overseas Territory, with GBP the local currency, although Euros are accepted in most places. English is the official language and is spoken throughout. The expedition was co-ordinated and led by Lt Cdr Julia Springett RN (Ret’d). All ringing activities were conducted under the auspices of GONHS, to the standards laid down in the BTO Ringers Manual. GONHS supplied nets, poles, BTO rings and a Government of Gibraltar ringing permit.

**Aim**

The aim of the expedition had been agreed with GONHS, and was to catch, ring and collect biometric data from migrating birds. It was shown from the data collected in 2013 and 2015 that ringing patterns on the north of the Rock are not always reflected by data gathered from ringing at Jews’ Gate Bird Observatory. GONHS wished to continue to collect data from North of the Rock again this autumn. Supplementary aims were to record Raptor passage, and to participate in the BirdLife EuroBirdwatch.

**Process**

The nets were set within the Upper Rock Nature Reserve in an area secured by metal fencing known as Middle Hill. The nets were placed at intervals moving up the Rock, with an additional extended line along Governors’ Lookout face of the Rock. The suggested areas for setting the nets used on the previous two expeditions were used again, with an additional net placed close to the road where it was hoped Nightjars may be caught. Approximately 300 metres of nets were erected, and each net round was measured as a distance of 0.5 kilometres, and 65 metres up and down from the ringing station which was itself 210 metres above sea level. Apes could be seen from the area of ringing activity, the 2017 expedition suffered no interference from them. As with previous years, nets were erected in the garden at Bruce’s’ Farm (accommodation site); this time only two x nine metre with limited return on considerable effort.

**Weather conditions and routines**

Throughout the period of the expedition, with one exception, light easterly winds produced thick Levanter over the Rock which prevented the sun shining onto the nets. As a result ringing was carried out on a daily basis and no days were lost to high winds, but a brief northerly wind one day forced closure of all nets except 3. Easterly winds were also favourable for a steady stream of migrant birds, and as a result there were few birds re-trapped. Nets were opened before sunrise, and calls for night birds placed by the nets. Throughout the day the calls were varied to attract different species. All nets were open by 0730, and ringing ceased and nets were furled by 1400. Data was entered into IPMR on completion on a daily basis, using the terminal at Jews’ Gate Observatory.

**Results**

A total of 1358 new birds were ringed, and 24 re-trapped or Controlled from different ringing schemes, and there were a total of 29 species ringed. This compares most favourably against 2013 where 1143 birds were processed of 34 species over four weeks (twice the period), and 2015 where 832 were processed of 26 species. The highest daily total was 239 birds processed of which 208 were Blackcaps. Details are attached at Annex. Raptor passage was noticeably low throughout, mainly due to the direction of the wind. Of note were regular numbers of Booted Eagle and Sparrowhawks, with occasional Short- toed Eagle and Black Kite. Common Buzzard, Kestrel and Peregrine were seen, but in small numbers and assumed to be resident. Large passage of Hirundines was seen on several days.

The team participated with members of GONHS during the afternoon of 1st October with the BirdLife EuroBirdwatch sea watch from Europa Point. Over 300 Cory’s Shearwaters were feeding off the point chasing flying fish, together with Scopoli’s Shearwaters and Balearic Shearwaters in smaller numbers. A Great Shearwater was also spotted showing itself well. Other species recorded were Sandwich Terns, Black-headed Gull, Audouin’s Gull, Northern Gannet, Great Cormorant, Whimbrel, Common Sandpiper, Arctic Skua, and Great Skuas.

**Finance**

The Expedition was largely self financing: however, grants were made by both RAFOS and RNBWS of £250 from each, which was used for car rental, as no Service vehicle was forthcoming.

Expenditure was made on:

16 days car rental @ €23.46 per day = €375.36

Reel of chord €42.20

To £ at 1.05 = £397.50

Diesel and sundries £34.64

Total £ 440.14

This gives a surplus of £59.86 to be returned to RAFOS.

**Accommodation and Transport**

The accommodation was at Bruce’s’ Farm which is managed by Dr Eric Shaw on behalf of the Gibraltar Natural History Trust, and was found to be more than acceptable by way of location and facilities. Transportation of poles to and from the ringing site was provided by Dr Shaw and the Ape Management team. Daily transport to and from the ringing site, and all other transport was carried out in the hire car, together with transfers to the Airport.

**Participants**

Gp Capt Robin Springett, Lt Cdr Julia Springett, Lt Col Roger Dickey, Major Carl Powell, and CPO Mark Cutts, with local expertise and much appreciated support from Charlie Perez of GOHNS. Additional support was provided by Ann Powell. RNBWS member Cdr Stuart Lawrence, newly appointed to HQBF Gibraltar staff joined the team on several occasions. Minister for the Environment for the Government of Gibraltar, Dr John Cortes also gave his support to the Joint Expedition.

**Conclusion**

The aim of the Expedition was achieved, with much hard work and effort from the team, and the cooperation and support of GONHS. The numbers of birds processed was exceptionally high, due to favourable weather conditions, and positioning of the nets based on experience gained in the two previous Expeditions. Additionally, the donations received from RAFOS and RNBWS was much appreciated.

Appendix:

1 GIBEX 2017 Species List And Totals.

**APPENDIX 1 TO**

**ANNEX E TO**

**RAFOS/SEC/17**

**DATED 24 NOV 17**

**GIBEX 2017 – SPECIES LIST AND TOTALS**

Sparrowhawk 6

Collared Dove 2

Scops Owl 2

Nightjar 1

Red-necked Nightjar 4

Wryneck 1

Tree Pipit 1

Robin 42

Nightingale 2

Common Redstart 21

Song Thrush 2

Blackbird 22

Ring Ouzel 1

Garden Warbler 51

Blackcap 1025

Whitethroat 2

Orphean Warbler 3

Sardinian Warbler 41

Subalpine Warbler 6

Reed Warbler 6

Willow Warbler 19

Bonelli’s Warbler 1

Chiffchaff 10

Iberian Chiffchaff 15

Wren 4

Spotted Flycatcher 2

Pied Flycatcher 43

Blue Tit 16

Greenfinch 7

Total 1358

**Retrap/Control**

Redstart 1

Blackbird 7

Garden Warbler 1

Blackcap 10

Sardinian Warbler 1

Willow Warbler 1

Pied Flycatcher 1

Blue Tit 2

Total 24

**Species Total** 29