

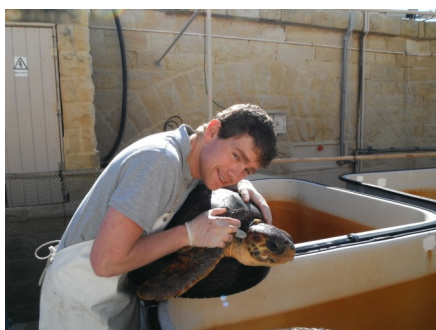
# Marine Turtle Conservation

Nature Trust Malta are currently heading a programme to rescue, rehabilitate and release injured turtles in conjunction with the Marine Rescue Unit and the San Lucjan Aquaculture Research Centre in Marsaxlokk. The project would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of the volunteers involved.

If a turtle is found at sea, members of the marine rescue unit are contacted to come and collect the animal and bring it safely to the San Lucjan Centre. There, under the careful supervision of Mr. Charles Sammut, veterinary surgeons and a group of volunteers from Nature Trust, the turtle is assessed, rehabilitated, cared for and re-released to the sea when it is back to full health.

There are currently three volunteers working with Mr. Sammut on a regular basis learning to how handle and care for the turtles that are brought to the centre for treatment. These committed volunteers spend three days a week washing, cleaning, medicating, measuring and weighing the turtles, as well as cleaning their tanks and equipment.

At present there are six turtles being rehabilitated and maintained at San Lucjan. Some of these turtles are ready for release when the local sea temperature reaches 21°C. The water temperature is too cold to release them at the moment. Others are being treated for wounds and infections and one turtle may never be released as she had pulmonitis in her left lung and cannot dive anymore. Therefore she would not be able to feed in the wild and would not survive.



Clockwise from top left:  
*Fajju, Letiz and Milli at  
San Lucjan*

## NATURE TRUST (MALTA)

▶ E-CIRCULAR 003

▶ JANUARY 2012

Nature Trust (Malta) was officially launched by His Excellency the President of the Republic on Friday 8 January 1999 following the merger between the Society for the Study and Conservation of Nature, Arbor and Verde. In 2001, the Marine Life Care Group also merged with Nature Trust (Malta)



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**NATURE TRUST MALTA is proud to inform its members that 2012 is the year of its 50th anniversary.**

**All events commemorating this occasion will be uploaded on our Facebook page and sent to all members by email.**

An ongoing event for the whole of 2012 is the Nature Photography of the Year Competition. For more information view our Facebook page

# Marine Turtle Conservation

Three species of Marine turtle may be found in the Mediterranean Sea around Malta's coastline. These are firstly dominated by the Loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*), followed by the Green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) and lastly the Leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*). All of these species are now listed as endangered by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). In fact, all marine turtle species on earth are in decline, either because of habitat destruction; the effects of global warming such as rising sea level, increasing air and land temperatures, changes in weather pattern and ocean currents; or because they become by-catch for fishing fleets. Moreover marine turtles are a long lived animal. They do not reach sexual maturity until ages of over twenty, and they also have high mortality rates in juveniles. Since the causes of these declines are so hard to mitigate and because of their life histories, every turtle rescued is of great importance to the species.



*Violeta at feeding time*

Nature Trust (Malta) is currently in the progress of developing a new wildlife rehabilitation centre at the Xrobb l-Ghagin Nature Park in Marsaxlokk which will cater for injured and sick marine turtles. This development is being carried out with the support of Air Malta.

When the centre is completed there should be space to accommodate up to thirty injured marine turtles at any one time. At the moment, only the most severe cases may be taken in as there are only nine tanks available for the animals at San Lucjan. As such, the annual turnover of turtle rescues could triple. Nature Trust and Air Malta are also in collaboration on the Adopt-A-Turtle Campaign which is aimed at raising awareness on marine turtle conservation. It is also helping to raise funds both to care and maintain for the injured turtles and towards building and maintaining the new wildlife centre at Xrobb L-Ghagin.