

2018 BLUE FLAG ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITIES

pauline dingli



Malta
Tourism Authority



Theme for 2018

We care, do you?



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MTA'S BLUE FLAG ACTIVITIES 2018

WE CARE – DO YOU?

TEN years of Blue Flag Awards for Malta and 12 years of Blue Flag environmental activities organised by the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA). Developments over the years have seen an increase in the Mediterranean weather temperatures including heat waves which have resulted in the postponement or cancellation and a rethink of certain activities held on the sand, in particular during school hours where the UV rays reached their maximum on a daily basis.

Awareness of the effects of plastic on the marine fauna is worldwide and the MTA joined in campaigns for the wellbeing of our seas through various activities including the emphasis given to crowds on the beaches during the Turtle Releases following their rehabilitation periods.

Activities and awareness campaigns, this year included the participation of senior citizens, and persons with special needs including children. The activities organised were fun activities that normally leave a positive, lasting impact on the minds of participants. The main theme used this year throughout all activities was: We Care – Do You!



The Maltese endemic fresh-water crab – *Il-Qabru*

Golden Bay

1. Turtles Awareness and Turtle Release Gnejna Bay

Gnejna Bay was the first beach on the islands to host a turtle nest. In 2016, this was the first experience for the general public to learn about the nesting of the species and the protection it requires for a successful hatching. The nest protected with a low hoarding was well monitored against disturbance from people, vehicles and anthropogenic activities throughout its incubation days. For this reason Gnejna Bay was selected for the release of the turtles that were being rehabilitated, following their injuries. In 2018, 101 hatchlings made their way to the sea in mid-August. These were laid by a loggerhead turtle on June 25th. Two adult turtles were released during the same period, with the hope that they will return to lay their eggs on



the same beach. Nature Trust Malta gave an overview on the turtles, their injuries, what caused them and how the general public can prevent other injuries to marine fauna.

2. Golden Bay Posedonia Banquettes and Second Turtle Release of the season



Golden Bay was another beach selected for a turtle release. This beach saw the successful hatching during 2017 and was an ideal location to give the freedom to these turtles. On the day of the release part of the beach was covered in *Posedonia oceanica* leaves that washed up on the sand. The team took this opportunity to explain the importance that this flora has on the beach processes and on the marine coastal micro species.

3. Sand Dune Biodiversity

The sand dunes at Golden Bay are the few remnant coastal dunes on the Islands and their particular flora, flowering in the dry season, is rare. A number of small groups were taken to the area during summer to explain the role and importance of the dunes within the beach processes. For the general public the flowers are only the visible element of the sand dune system and the explanation of the beach processes was always welcomed.



4. Golden Bay Visitor Centre Activity



Golden Bay visitor centre is full of information on the national flora, avifauna, fauna, cetaceans and the environment in general. Although events organised with different groups focus on one subject, the curator always explains on the other environmental features exhibited in the centre. A video of Golden Bay within the Majjistral Nature and History Park consolidates all environmental issues and elements discussed. A deck of cards with Maltese flora was donated to all participants and explained near the sand dunes.

5. Beach Audit at Golden Bay



All MTA managed beaches have a standard checklist of beach management operations that is often monitored and reviewed. As a Blue Flag beach, audits at Golden Bay take place frequently and for this reason the beach crew are made well aware of the Code of Conduct, the Blue Flag criteria, the local council by-law and the specific requirements of every beach. This event started with the beach audits and ended with a team building exercise near the coffee shop.

Ghadira Bay – Mellieha

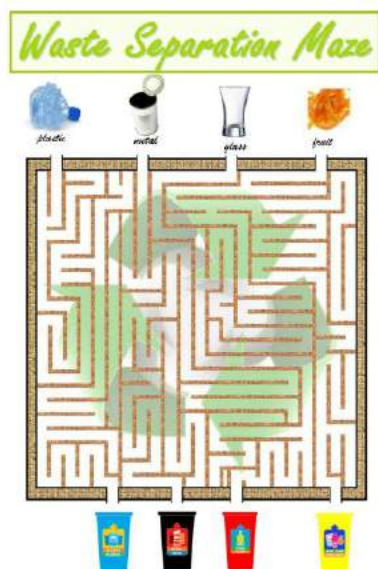
1. Marfa Walk



The Malta Tourism Authority created a set of walks, some of which are coastal walks. Marfa Walk was selected for this activity with families including children and pets. The group enjoyed the interesting geological indents that formed into natural pocket beaches. It was a walk safe from traffic and free from emissions.

2. Waste Separation Maze Games

Wasteserve Malta and Mellieha primary school were invited to collaborate on an event on the beach at Mellieha Bay. The teachers prepared the students on waste separation on beaches and the beach games were organised to put into practice what was discussed in the classroom. A promoter from Wasteserve explained while the maze was spread on the sand where the students were to race. Bunches of clean waste were placed at the start and the team leaders had to run with the item across the maze to the row of coloured bags that were placed at the finish. It was a fun game that students enjoyed and that is repeated annually as part of the waste separation campaign. A book on waste separation was given to students to take home to their families.



3. Creation of Fish in Salt Plates

The topic of this activity was clean seas free from micro plastics. This fun activity with groups of children lasted a number of hours since the children wanted to create more and more fish plates. Some materials used were recycled within the same groups following an explanation of the importance of reuse. The smiles on their

faces and the competition between them made the activity more interesting. The blue flag programme was also highlighted when the T shirts were being handed out to them.



4. Beach Newsletter 2018

The beach newsletter is issued annually to convey the services being offered to beach users, the code of conduct for sustainable use of the coast as well as the environmental campaigns organised on all beaches around the Islands. The 15 pages of the publication were created in user-friendly colours to have a positive impact. It was distributed on websites by e mail and in all beach offices.



5. Ghadira reading and painting games

The games started with the distribution of the Blue Flag T shirts to attract beach users to come and join the fun. Following the Blue Flag talk on its sustainable benefits the participants were given a book about the natural environment of Pembroke Park. The book has quizzes and games that were done in a team spirit. They were also encouraged to go to the park and enjoy its natural beauty without leaving the footpaths.



6. Ghadira Nature Reserve and flamingo migrations

For the first time in many years Malta experienced a flock of wild flamingoes and storks that migrated over the Islands and stopped at the Ghadira nature reserve for a long rest before continuing with their journey. MTA took this wonderful opportunity to organise groups to go inside the nature reserve, within the hides and the visitor centre so that people could see and enjoy the flamingoes in a natural environment. The visitor centre guide gave a comprehensive explanation of the life style of flamingoes.



St George's Bay: 10 YEARS OF BLUE FLAG

1. Blue Flag Presentation to Scouts

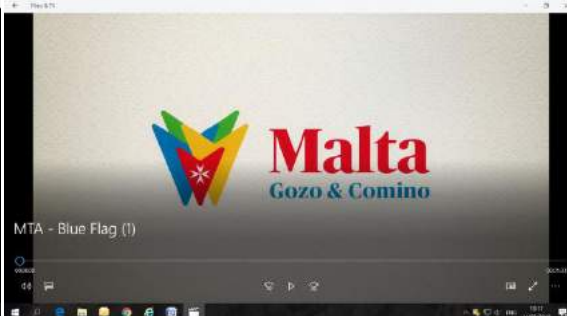
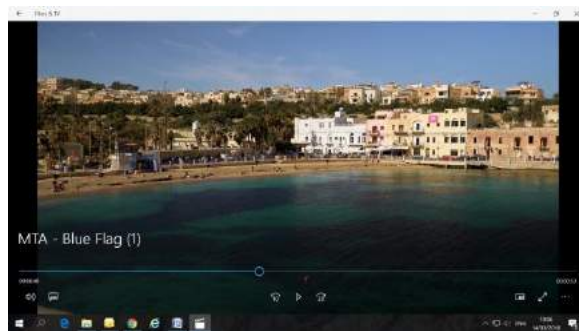
A short beach seminar was organised for a group of boy scouts. Mark explained the Blue Flag, its environmental aspect, FEE and all its programmes. The beach code of conduct, the prestigious awards, environmental events held by the Malta Tourism Authority and the role that people have for a sustainable future.



2. Blue Flag Beaches Video 2018

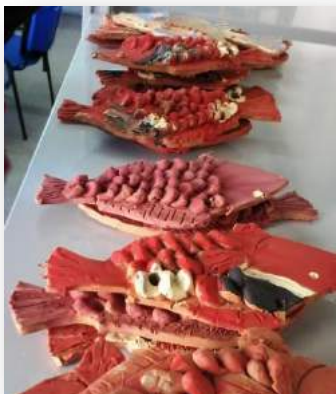
The Malta Tourism Authority created a video highlighting the beaches being managed, sustainable management and the prestigious awards that the beaches received in 2018. It was distributed on social media including the websites of the Authority.

<https://www.facebook.com/100010933879298/videos/561735434200914/?id=100010933879298>



2. Fish crafted in clay by children with special needs

Diversity is a priority with the MTA environmental activities and this one took clay craftsmen to a school of children with special needs. They loved touching and playing with the soft clay where they were assisted to create beautiful fish, starfish, and the *Lampuka* fish. The youngsters experimented with colours and when their artwork was fired the results were truly works of art. Photography of the youths was not allowed.



3. Exploring the coast and its resources

This Blue Flag activity was organised with a group of senior citizens. It was a day long activity where they enjoyed the beautiful landscaping of the Upper Barracca Gardens of Valletta as their meeting point. Then they descended by means of new escalators to the Grand Harbour where a boat trip took them to the three ancient cities. On landing, the group found a fun train waiting to take them for a tour of the coastal cities. The next stop was a visit to the science centre *Esplora* where they could enjoy environmental elements recreated through scientific experiments. These included the creation of clouds, wind and rain. They could also play with solar car models. The creation of Earth was emphasized on posters along the experiment halls. The activity received very positive feedback.





4. No to waste

This event was held in a classroom as part of the waste separation campaign. The children were encouraged to select what and how much they eat so as to avoid food waste. They were also informed on how to dispose of their food waste in a responsible manner. Sustainable beach management was included in the fun games followed by the creation of a chart on the subject.



5. Seminar for Beach Stakeholders

Sustainable Beach operations require the coordination between many stakeholders that work together for the ultimate success of operations. An annual seminar is organised by MTA inviting the beach crew, cleaners, lifeguards, Civil Protection, Health authorities and others that without their cooperation beach standards will not remain the same. During the seminar, beach upkeep is also discussed especially for areas where the beach is particularly environment sensitive.



Fond Ghadir Rocky Beach

1. Serenity of Spring Photographic Exhibition



A floral exhibition was organised at the Serenity Gardens of Santa Lucia to show the beauty of the natural environment of the Maltese Islands. Several activities were held on the premises and a deck of cards with the same topic were distributed during these activities. Participation included senior citizens, the locals of the town of Santa Lucia and the beach stakeholders during the above-mentioned seminar amongst others.

2. Fond Ghadir and Sliema Coast Clean-up

Sliema coast is a popular tourist hub, commercial and recreational area. The rocky coast offers a breathing space for such activities and the shore is frequented during all hours of the day. Before the start of the bathing season a general hand-picking clean-up of a significant coastal stretch was organised. 70 adults and 24 children participated, 50 of whom had never participated in a clean up before. Single use plastic awareness is on the rise and participation was generous. The final result is listed below. Cleansing Services Department sorted the waste on trucks and our appreciation goes to them too.

- Around 60kg of construction waste
- 37 black bags for landfill
- 6 bags of plastic bottles
- 7 bags of aluminum cans
- 12 bags other recyclables
- 250 glass bottles
- 35 syringes
- Another 60kg or so of metal waste

(Photos are not available due to postponement of the date and the photographer could not make it)

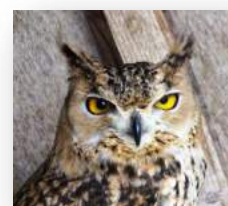
3. Maritime: Past present and future of the seas



An activity organised every summer is a visit to the coastal National Maritime Museum. Besides offering maritime information that goes back thousands of years, the exhibits are upgraded often and offer an interesting experience to the visitor. Mature people attending this activity commended the experience and praised the activity.

4. Biodiversity at the Falconry

The Falconry offers the possibility of getting close to birds of prey, hold them and feed them in flight. The Falconry installed information boards along the corridors where one can learn about the families of the wild fauna that resides on the fields around the farm. These include birds, grasshoppers, reptiles, crawling insects and much more. The best attraction was the friendly tiny owl that enjoyed roaming on everyone to have its soft feathers caressed.



5. T Shirt Painting with persons with special needs

A Blue Flag activity with autistic adults took place at their school at Mtarfa. Participants were given T shirts related to their sizes, blue flags, brushes, paint, aprons and all the necessary tools to assist their day of fun. More than 20 people participated and the helpers and clients showed their appreciation. They also inquired if they could keep all props for similar activities in the future.



Bugibba Perched Beach

1. Blue Flag awareness with secondary school students

Bugibba Perched beach was the second beach to obtain the Blue Flag on the Maltese Islands. Every year activities are held to explain the benefits that the Blue Flag has for sustainable development for now and for future generations. This activity was held with upper secondary students before the opening of the swimming season.



2. Beach Audit and clean up by beach crew

The beach crew is the first team of people on the beach to check every corner before the flags are raised each morning. It is imperative that they all know what their role is and what to look for. For this beach audit the crew voluntarily started a pre-season clean-up of Bugibba Perched Beach to conclude the Audit.



3. Wild Flora event with Mayor and Local Council

A three-day seminar for foreigners was organised by the Mayor of Santa Lucia within the flora exhibition area of the park. Foreigners were given an overview of the natural flora of the Maltese islands and were each given a deck of cards with flora as a souvenir of the activity. They were impressed with the amount of different species that bloom on such a small archipelago.



4. Hagar Qim and Blue Grotto event

Hagar Qim is a pre-historic, megalithic temple that is listed with UNESCO as a World Heritage site. Blue Grotto is a system of natural caverns at sea level that is popular with tourists from all over the world. For this activity a group of locals were invited to re-visit the two important sites together and understand better their proximity and importance in Malta's development where the sea played an important role in the Islands' initial habitation before road networks were created.



5. Trekking on Comino and Exploring Cave Systems

Comino was once a haven for pirates where they used to hide their boats in the numerous caves found around Comino. They would attack their prey either while crossing between Islands or attack the villages during the night. In 1551 the entire population of Gozo was taken as slaves on galleys heading for Turkey. The few old people left behind had to seek refuge on Malta. Gozo remained deserted for years.

Today these caverns are interesting sites for diving, swimming, the study of geology, their micro climate, and the amazing colour of the water within.

One cave was protagonist in the film *The Count of Montekristo* where it was used as the famous treasure trove. Our Blue Flag activity took us trekking around Comino to explore the various interesting caves.





Qawra Point

1. Qawra Point environment awareness and anthropogenic impacts

The background of the adjacent photo shows a ship that was grounded by a large wave during a storm. It took the authorities several months to clean it to avoid a possible disaster through leakages of hydrocarbon. This location was selected for this group to understand better anthropogenic impacts. The people were encouraged to pick any refuse and debris that was encountered during the short walk along the coast. They were later given a Maltese traditional *ftira* to conclude the activity.



2. Salina Visitor Centre, salt production and plastic clean up

Salt production is on the decline in Europe and the trend is likewise on the Maltese Islands. Salina Bay's salt pan system is not being used for salt production but the visitor centre serves as an information centre and reminder of its glorious past. Salina now serves as a haven for bird watchers. The group attending this event were given a talk about the salt production of the area followed by a session of bird watching. Before leaving the group was shown the plastic collected during a clean-up from around the sea wall that receives floating debris from waves.



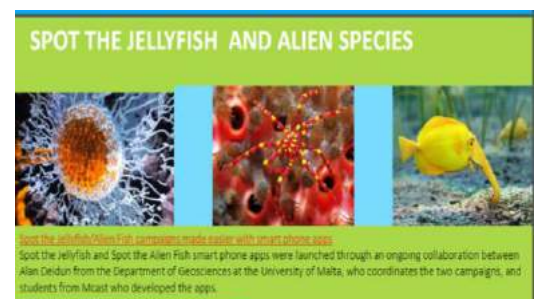
3. Aquarium with Senior Citizens

A group of senior citizens was divided into four and took turns to enter the aquarium and learn about marine species. While waiting outside, the groups were given details of the Blue Flag Programme, sustainable management and the role that the Malta Tourism Authority has in Malta's beach management.



4. Alien Species with the President of Malta at the National Aquarium

Secondary school students attended this event with the Hon. President of Malta and the Minister for Environment to revamp the campaign of Spot the Alien Species. The Mediterranean is experiencing an influx of alien species entering from the Red Sea, the Dardanelle Strait and the Atlantic Ocean. In an attempt to document such species, the University of Malta is working in collaboration with other Mediterranean countries to record sightings reported by fishermen and the public. Awareness is being disseminated amongst schools to report any sightings.





5. Gozo and Dwejra's geological features in the absence of the Azure Window

Following the collapse of the renowned Azure Window, many people's perception is that there is nothing else to see at Dwejra. Conversely, the inland sea, the Fungus Rock, the blue hole, endemic Gozo flora, ancient salt pans, freshwater spring, and the marine information centre are all points of interest in the area. Taking the people there and explain the geology, ecology, historic and cultural aspects of the site regenerates interest in locals and foreigners alike.



6. Gozo Valley Systems

Gozo has unique valley systems that are scarce in Malta. A small group of families were taken around the Island to experience the beauty of *Wied Mielah*, *Wied Hondoq* and *Wied il-Ghasri*. Participants enjoyed a dip in the warm blue sea while getting a feel of the fresh valley environment. A stop on the way to *Wied il-Ghasri* served to take home pure sea salt harvested on the day.



THE END

