

# LEARNING ABOUT FORESTS - MALTA



Issue No 3

## LEAF ... your gateway to outdoor learning!

Dear forest friends,

Welcome to the third issue of our newsletter.

The LEAF programme is now in it's 5th year and to date we have 12 schools which have been awarded with the prestigious LEAF Award. I have to say that each year you manage to outsmart yourselves with very interesting projects that really bring about a positive change within your school communities. Those of you who are still undecided on their LEAF theme for this year are invited to visit our website and face book page for ideas. For further information one can also visit the revamped international LEAF website [www.leaf.global](http://www.leaf.global) .

I take this opportunity to invite you to send us any articles that you might deem fit for this newsletter. As from next issue I will be including some of your work. Photos showing various phases of your LEAF projects are most welcome and will be uploaded on our Facebook page **LEAF Learning about Forests Malta**. Please join and like our page!

Johann Gatt, National LEAF Coordinator

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## The Director and Founder of ENO visits Malta



During his short stay in our country, LEAF Malta caught up with Mika Vanhanen to discuss the progress Malta has made in its bid to reach out to more schools with respect to awareness about the benefits of forests and local active participation to safeguard these vital natural commodities.

Mr Vanhanen runs ENO - Environment Online, an e-NGO which is present in more than 150 countries through a virtual network of educators. The NGO has made

an ambitious commitment at the UN RIO+20 Summit; that of planting 100 million trees by 2017.

Hailing from the lush landscapes of Finland, Mr Vanhanen was quite bemused with the seemingly barren landscape since the local vegetation is still reeling from the hot arid weather of the past summer months. It was explained, that the scantiness of the soil, the erratic rainfall patterns, the introduction of invasive species and other human pressures, have done nothing to arrest the progressive degradation of the remaining pockets of vulnerable ecological niches.

Buskett woodland, a Natura 2000 site and a bird sanctuary is one such place. Located in the Western/South Western Coast of Malta this special important site of ecological and nature conservation is home to a variety of endemic and rare species and a concentration of Annex I habitats that are unparalleled in the Maltese Islands.

A popular retreat for picnic lovers during the winter months, the woodland has suffered considerably and has been in neglect for various years giving hardly any chance for the local flora and fauna to re-establish itself. Thankfully, the Ministry for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Climate Change through the PARK Directorate has managed to secure EU funding for a very ambitious LIFE Project : Saving Buskett, that is envisaged to give a much needed uplift to the site. Mr Vanhanen had the opportunity to meet the project managers Dr Mark Causon and Mr Mark Zammit for a short tour around the specific targeted areas where intervention has already started. The project budget is €2.7 million, 50% of which is co-financed by the EU LIFE Funding Programme under the Nature and Biodiversity priority area. The project commenced in July 2013 and is expected to be completed by May 2018. The aim of the project is to repair and rebuild/retaining dry stone walls and arched buttresses along the watercourses, to remove invasive alien species which are competing with native trees and the planting of new indigenous plants to enhance the quality of existing habitats.

To this effect Mr Vanhanen had the opportunity to see the works in progress and discuss several issues with the project leaders. Mr Neville Ebejer, Senior Environment Inspector at the PARK Directorate discussed also the challenges to reach out to the general public in a well thought and vigorous educational campaign. Mr Vincent Attard – Executive President of Nature Trust Malta and Mr Johann Gatt - LEAF Malta National Coordinator explained how the LEAF programme is assisting in the growing of trees in various schools that will be eventually planted at Buskett as part of the ambitious LIFE project - Saving Buskett.

*ENO has made an ambitious commitment at the UN RIO+20 Summit...*

*planting 100 million trees by 2017!*



Several LEAF schools have also benefitted from guided tours in these woodlands to gain further awareness about the key role these have in our lives when managed sustainably. A major tree planting event will be organized in the same area in the coming months.

## The LIFE Project ; Saving Buskett - another tree planting opportunity!

Interventions pertaining to this major EU project are now well underway. The next phase includes a major tree planting event which will be held at Buskett woodland. Interested schools are urged to contact Mr Johann Gatt at their earliest to avoid disappointment. Deadline for your expression of interest is **Friday 13th November 2015**. Kindly note that schools applying beyond the given deadline may not be accepted due to logistics purposes.

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## Trees on the Increase?!



Now in their third year these workshops are fast becoming a main feature in the LEAF calendar. In the coming months a circular will be issued with the now familiar workshops. Themes such as; seed sowing, tree identification, leaf art, plant health, water/energy conservation, and sports through nature are amongst the topics tackled. This year new workshop themes are being added.

Normally these interactive workshops catering for various age groups are held during the first or second week of February. Do be on the lookout as places tend to fill up fast!

## Useful Resources

You might find the following links useful for your LEAF projects. You can also visit the Malta LEAF website [www.leafmalta.org](http://www.leafmalta.org) and browse the *Resources* section for further ideas.

<http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/curriculum>

<http://www.naturerocks.org/>

[http://oakrakow.pttk.pl/j/images/stories/games\\_for\\_nature.pdf](http://oakrakow.pttk.pl/j/images/stories/games_for_nature.pdf)



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