

BIRD'S EYE VIEW



No. 12

October 1989



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The Ornithological Society

Postal address: P.O. Box 498,
Valletta, Malta.
Office Address: 64, St Lucy Str.,
Valletta, Malta.
Tel. 230684 (24 hrs).

FOREWORD

1989 started with the appointment of Mr. Paul Portelli as the first full time Director for the M.O.S. This was possible thanks to the help received from the International Council for Bird Preservation. The need for a full timer has long been felt, but finances were always lacking. The amount of administrative work has reached proportions unable to be catered for on voluntary basis only. The Directors' aim is to increase membership and funds so that in the next few years the M.O.S. will be self sufficient.

During the summer, the M.O.S. has sponsored a Pupil Worker, Mark Falzon, who is a keen M.O.S. member to assist Paul in the preparations of the forthcoming activities.

The M.O.S. has grown into the leading conservation movement in Malta. The public knows this and all types of queries and requests reach our offices every day. Very often members of the public expect us to take direct action ourselves. Sometimes this is possible and the public is grateful. A continuous public relations exercise maintains a healthy Society by helping enrol members. In fact the results speak for themselves. During the month of July, we have reached the 1000th M.O.S. Youth member. The overall membership now totals 2000. This increase is the result of a campaign initiated at the beginning of the year by our Director. Considering the number of annual dropouts, this year, over 750 new members joined the M.O.S. Having reached such a wonderful figure, we are now aiming at doubling it in the next two years; the Director together with all the committees' members have an even greater task to achieve . . . that of reducing the annual dropout rate especially with regards to the MOSY section. To cater for such a large number of members, more volunteers are needed to help in the M.O.S. work. The collective efforts by members and committees will lead to a stronger conservation lobby group in our Islands; and the larger our group is, the greater is the pressure on the authorities to enforce the existing regulations and adapt to modern trends . . . that of conserving birds in their natural habitat, for all to enjoy.

Joe Doublet
President

COMMENT

Birds are still being illegally shot in the Maltese Islands. The number of sea shooters is increasing every year. Some Maltese shooters have been going abroad to carry out their destructive actions in areas where the mass killing of birds as carried out by the Maltese was unknown. Planned touristic developments are threatening one of the most important bird areas in Malta.

These and several other problems have been on more than one occasion on the agenda of the M.O.S. council and committees during the past months.

As you can read in this edition of *Birds Eye View* the M.O.S. is doing its utmost to solve these problems. We are continually monitoring the situation, reporting illegal activities to the police, informing the public and teaching youngsters about birds and nature.

We are pleased to note that the support of the Maltese public is increasing. Finally the Maltese have begun to realise that birds, which are an international heritage, and their natural habitats must be protected otherwise our lives will be much poorer.

But financial support from the Maltese Government is still lacking. While the Association for shooters and trappers is receiving more than Lm6,000 per annum, the M.O.S. pays commercial rates for its electricity, water and telephone bills. Conservationists are still waiting for the day when their vital work is acknowledged and given financial assistance. The M.O.S. needs funds for its ongoing projects. It needs more funds to take up several urgent problems.

Paul Portelli
MOS Director:

The Ornithological Society (M.O.S.), which was founded in 1962, has as its aims the study and protection of birds and their natural environment. The MOS, with a policy of conservation through education, runs an extensive educational campaign; publishes educational material regularly including the award winning books "A New Guide to the Birds of Malta" and "L-Aghsafar"; and organises various activities for its members, which presently number over 2000, as well as for the general public. The MOS, which has been instrumental in the setting up of Malta's national nature reserve, runs the Valletta Bird Ringing Scheme and publishes its scientific ornithological magazine "IL-MERILL" and its annual magazine "BIRD'S EYE VIEW", which focuses on the activities of the Society. The MOS has a thriving and active Youth Section (M.O.S.Y.) with its own publications "IN-NATURA" and "IL-KANGU".

Front Cover: Ta' Cenc Cliffs (Joe M. Mangion)

TA' ĊENC – UNDER THREAT

Every summer M.O.S. youths take part in what has become an annual main event. They congregate above Ta' Ċenc Cliffs waiting for darkness. And when dusk makes way for night they are regaled by the eerie cries of a thousand Cory's Shearwater. The occasion is impressive. The cliffs hold the largest colony of these pelagic birds, which, together with the cliffs are now seriously threatened.

Ecologists, conservationists and environmentalists have been shocked to learn of the proposed Lm20,000,000 tourist project for Ta' Ċenc, which would cover an area of two square kilometres. The project, comprising of an extension to the existing hotel, a new large hotel at the cliff edge, extensive sporting facilities, a tourist village and a craftsmen village, would be fatal to this site of natural and archaeological importance. Its fate is presently in the hands of an interdepartmental committee set up by the Government to study this shocking proposal.

The natural importance of the whole area, which is under threat, has been well documented in the Government's publication "Localities with Conservation Value in the Maltese Islands". Its ornithological importance has earned it a place in the I.C.B.P.'s publication "Important Bird Areas in Europe", which provides a comprehensive and up-to-date survey of all important areas in Europe.

Ta' Ċenc is an extensive rocky area on the southern coast of Gozo, bounded by sheer sea-cliffs on one side and by the village of Sannat and Mgarr ix-Xini on the other. It is largely made up of garigue, where the exposed lower coralline limestone rises up to 120 metres above sea level. The four-kilometre long limestone cliffs, which are relatively well vegetated and have several natural caves along the base, provide a breath-taking view of great scenic beauty, while the plateau

surface area is famed for its archaeological remains, which include a Copper Age Temple, Bronze Age megaliths, a dolmen and several cart-ruts.

The site is also regarded as the largest natural rock garden in the islands. After the autumn rain nourishes the area, this arid-looking, summer-baked locality explodes in different shades of colour. Here, in winter and spring many species of orchids, irises and other flowering plants cover the whole area. The Maltese Rock Centuary *Palaeocyamus crassifolius*, Malta's national plant, and the Maltese Cliff Orache *Cremonophyton lanfrancoi* are two endemics, also found here enriching this locality.

But Ta' Ċenc area is best known for its avifauna. It provides habitat for most of the species found in Malta's poor list of breeding birds, apart from being a haven for migrating and wintering birds of the open country. It is a stronghold for the summer visitor, the Short-toed Lark, and the resident Blue Rock Thrush. It holds the largest colony of the Cory's Shearwater as well as several pairs of Spectacled and Sardinian Warblers and Corn Bunting. It is also the site where the Barn Owl and the Peregrine Falcon have bred regularly in recent years, not to mention the dwindling colony of the Yellow-legged Herring Gull.

The proposed tourist development at Ta' Ċenc will not only affect adversely the fauna and flora of the site, but will impoverish the natural history of the whole archipelago. It will also have a negative impact on the whole ambient of Gozo.

It is hoped that all the continual protests, discussions and suggestions made the M.O.S. and other environmental organisations do not fall on deaf ears. It is hoped that common sense will prevail so that this important part of our national heritage is safeguarded.

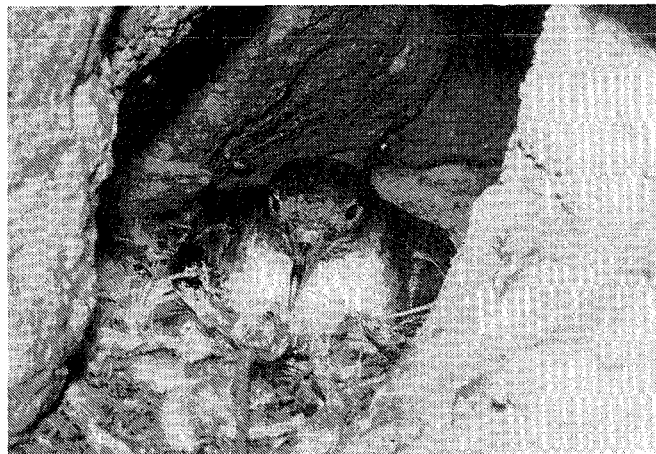


Joe Doublet

The national plant.



The cliffs hold a large colony of Cory's Shearwater.



Joe Sultana

The declining Spectacled Warbler breeds at Ta' Ċenc.



Joe Sultana

MAIN EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

Campaigning: The organisation, launching, carrying out and the following-up of campaigns form the bulk of M.O.S. activity. Most of the time of the members of the Council and Committees is taken up by campaigns; and where birds are concerned, there is quite a lot to campaign for. Robin trapping, the shooting of birds of prey and other protected species, shooting birds at sea from speed boats and dinghies, shooting and trapping birds in sanctuaries and during the close season, threats to bird habitats (such as the building development at 'Ta' Cenc); we could go on and on. For the past few years the M.O.S. has been campaigning regularly against Robin trapping as well as against the shooting down of birds of prey. In the past two years new campaigns have also been launched.



Some of the children's posters on exhibit at the public library Beltissebh.



No to Robin trapping

In October 1987 the Robin Campaign was aimed mainly at school children, with the approval of the Ministry of Education. Children in kindergarten and first-year classes were asked to colour a line drawing of a Robin and to build a model of the bird, both picture and instructions were provided by the M.O.S. to all the children. Second-year and higher classes were involved in a poster cum slogan competition with the theme "Man and the Robin". Prizes were given to students placed first and second in each category within each school, while prizes were also awarded to the best three entries among the overall school winners. A Robin sticker with the slogan "Don't trap me" was distributed among students while Robin information leaflets were given to teachers. Forty schools took part and many of the entries were exhibited for a fortnight at the public library, Beltissebh. During the prize-giving ceremony, the Minister of Education, Dr. Ugo Mifsud Bonnici, who is also responsible for the Environment, handed out the prizes on behalf of M.O.S. and in his speech urged youngsters to love and appreciate birds in their natural habitats. G. Despott's Hall at the Ministry of Education, where the prize-giving ceremony was held, was packed by many youngsters and their parents.

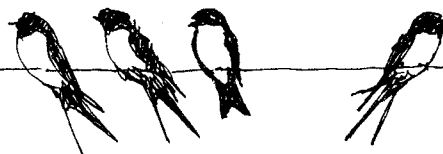
"Sieghi Pitirross" (My Mate the Robin) was the theme of last year's campaign, again held in October (1988) to coincide with the arrival of the wintering robins. A new sticker was printed and about 50,000 were distributed in schools. The campaign's competition was also different. This time school children were invited to write a letter to the Robin. No fewer than 1,753 entries reached the M.O.S. office. It was indeed a problem to go through all the letters and quite difficult to judge the winners. It was, however, satisfying to note the nice things Maltese youngsters wrote about the Robin, its protection and the problems it faces in Malta. Copies of a large line drawing (90cm x 60cm) of a Robin was also distributed in schools for children to carry out mosaic exercises to colour the pictures.



Correcting hundreds of Robin letters. From left: Victor Falzon, Desiree Coleiro, Paul Portelli, Joe Mangion and Joe Doublet.

Minister of Education presenting one of the prizes.





Hirundines



Poster and leaflet used in the campaign.

Save the Swallows

Every year in early spring, swallows, martins and swifts start arriving in Malta from Africa on their way to their European breeding grounds. Many of these never reach their destination. They are shot at for "fun" by some of the trigger-happy shooters roaming the Maltese countryside. The M.O.S. highlighted the plight of these and other migratory birds when it launched its "Save the Swallows" Campaign in March last year (1988). With the help of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and Swallows Hotel (U.K.) the M.O.S. printed thousands of colourful stickers, posters and booklets depicting hirundines and swifts. Street actions were also held both in Valletta and in Victoria, Gozo.



MOSY during a street action in Gozo.



Campaign stickers.

Raptors

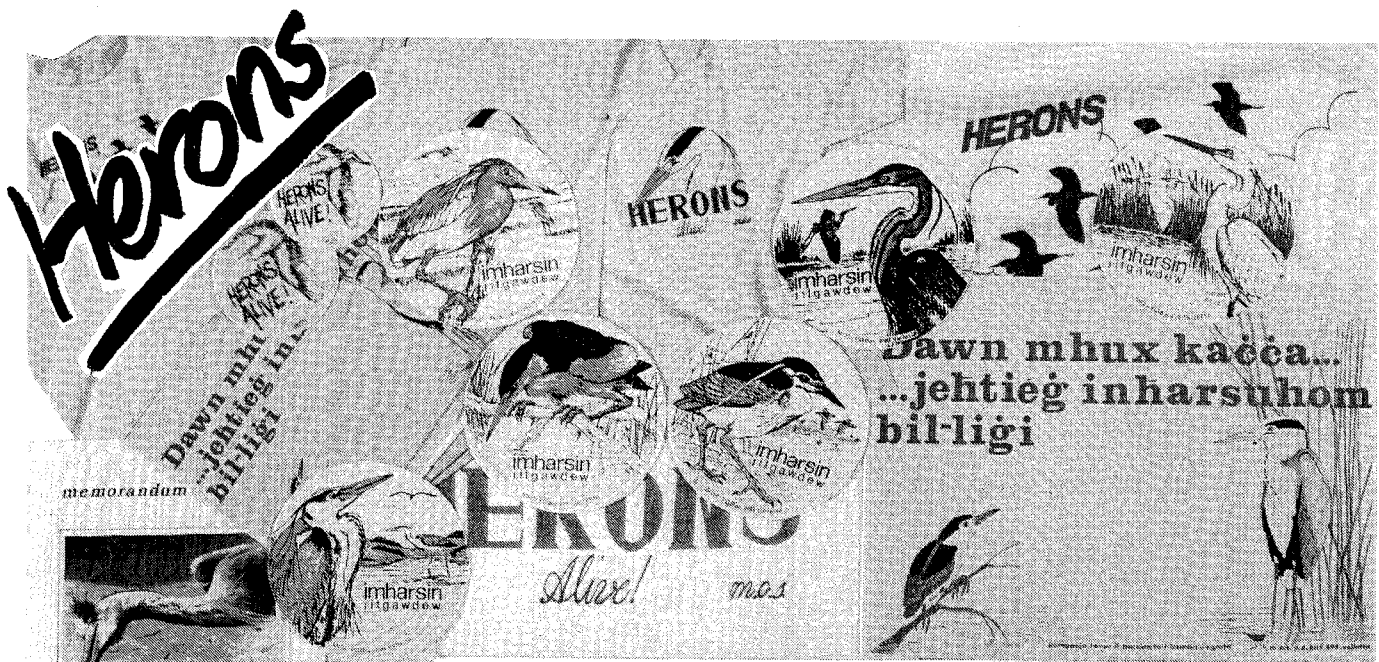
Campaigning for Birds of Prey

Under a large banner "Birds of Prey are not Game" M.O.S. youths distributed many leaflets at the City Gate one Saturday morning in September 1987.

For the 1988 campaign the M.O.S. produced a memorandum, which was sent to the authorities to highlight, amongst other things, the fate of birds of prey in Malta, and to point out the numbers killed annually.



Joe Sultana



Material used in the Heron Campaign.



Distributing leaflets during a street action at City Gate.

Joe Sultana

Save the Herons

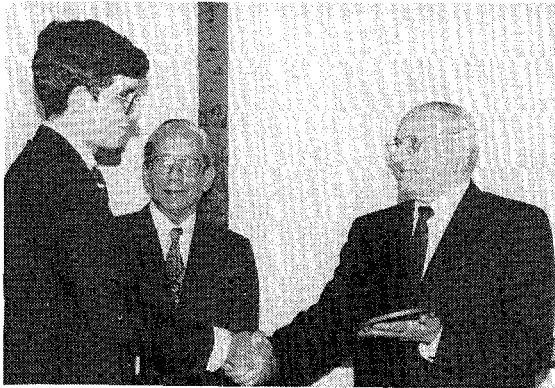
When the bird protection regulations were issued in 1980, the herons and egrets figured in the list of birds that may be shot. In Malta they are "legally" considered as game! And each spring and autumn see hundreds of these plumed birds shot down. M.O.S. wanted to bring this to the attention of the authorities and the general public in a vigorous way. The Heron Campaign was launched in March, this year (1989). Copies of a memorandum illustrated with colour photos showing both the beauty of the various species, which visit Malta, as well as their disgusting destruction on their arrival, were sent to the Prime Minister, Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries and to all the Members of the House of Representatives. A poster on the same subject was published and exhibited in many public places, while a street action was held at Valletta City Gate, where thousands of information leaflets were distributed. Heron T-shirts, a set of 6 different Heron stickers and lapel stickers were also produced and sold to M.O.S. members and the general public to cover some of the expenses incurred by the campaign. For the first time M.O.S. paid for Television air-time to advertise the plight of these birds in Malta.

All campaigns had very good press and TV news coverage while M.O.S., during each campaign, published a series of articles in all the local papers dealing with the campaign's theme.

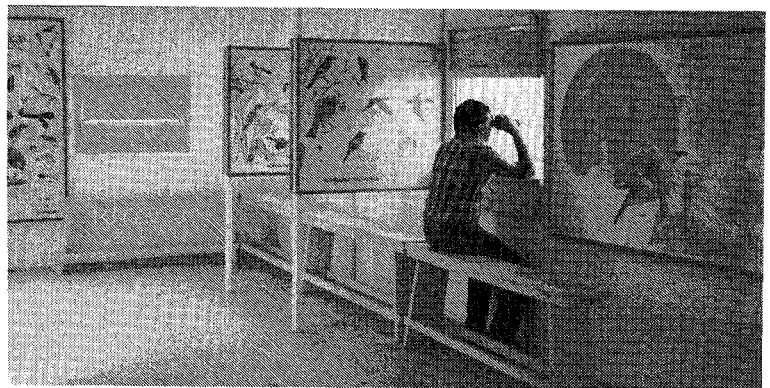


Traditional Harbour Cruise DEP: 10.30 a.m. - 11.30 a.m. - 12.30 p.m. 1.30 p.m. - 2.45 p.m. (winter)	Round Malta Cruise DEP: 9.15 a.m. RET: 5.30 p.m.	Price Lm 7.95
DEP: 10.00 a.m. - 11.00 a.m. - 12.15 p.m. 13.15 p.m. - 14.45 p.m. - 15.45 p.m. 16.30 p.m. (summer)	Comino and the Blue Lagoon DEP: 9.45 a.m. RET: 5.00 p.m.	Price Lm 6.50
Buffet harbour Cruise DEP: 11.30 a.m. RET: 3.30 p.m.	Party Night at Sea DEP: 7.00 p.m. RET: Midnight	Price Adults Lm 4.95
Sunday Special DEP: 9.00 a.m. RET: 5.30 p.m.	Deluxe Round Gozo Cruise DEP: 9.45 a.m. RET: 5.00 p.m.	Price Adults Lm 2.75 Price Lm 11.50
Introducing:		
Underwater Safari		
Daily departures from Rugibba II-Nanga, next to Sognor Beach at: 10.30 a.m., 12.00 a.m., 1.30 a.m., 2.00 p.m. (summer) Price Adults Lm 3.75		
Night-time departures: 8.30 p.m. (Tue & Fri) Price Adults Lm 4.25		
10.00 a.m., 12.00 a.m., 2.00 p.m. (winter)		
For more information please phone: 331961; 336576; 337513; 330429;		

GHADIRA – OFFICIAL OPENING & INTERNATIONAL AWARD



The President of Malta presenting the diploma to MOS President.



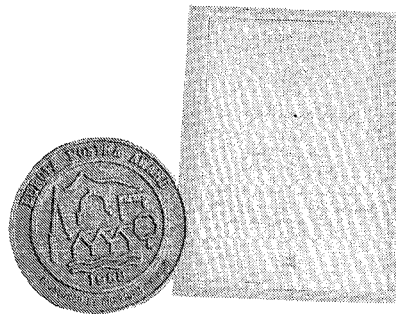
The visitor's centre at Ghadira reserve.

The Ghadira Nature Reserve – one of the M.O.S. dreams come true – was officially opened by the Hon. Minister of Education, Dr. Ugo Mifsud Bonnici on Tuesday 10 May, 1988.

In short opening speeches by the Head of the Environment Division of the Ministry of Education and by the Minister of Education, the M.O.S. was praised and thanked for its efforts and dedication in making the first Maltese Nature Reserve a reality. They also thanked those international and national organisations, namely World Wildlife Fund, the International Council for Bird Preservation, the Deutsche Bund Vogelshult, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Danish Holiday Centre at Mellieha Bay, the Malta Bird Reserves Overseas Committee and the Mid-Med Bank for helping M.O.S. set up the reserve. Mr. H.E. Axell, who initially made the reserve's plans and supervised most of the heavy engineering work, also came in for words of thanks. The visitor's centre was also officially opened. Boards portraying several aspects of the reserve, from history to birdlife, fauna and flora, which were designed by M.O.S. artist and Youths Officer, Mr. Victor Falzon, are displayed in the Centre.

A seminar on the biology of the reserve was also organised by the Department of Science of the University of Malta in conjunction with the Environment Division (Ministry of Education), M.O.S. and the Society for the Study and Conservation of Nature on 23 April, 1988 as part of the activities marking the opening of the reserve.

This year (1989) the M.O.S. was awarded a diploma of merit by Europa Nostra for turning a hunting area into a bird reserve. In 1967, the M.O.S. persuaded the Government not to build a road through the site and eventually embarked on a project to convert the place into a reserve, which was declared a bird sanctuary in 1978. This project was among 45 conservation projects in 17



Plaque and award.

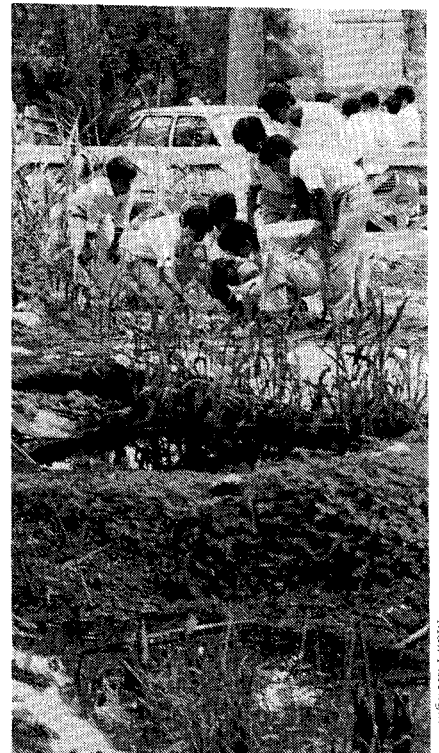
European countries which have been awarded medals or diplomas by Europa Nostra, the federation of non-governmental, historic, cultural and environmental societies in Europe. The results of this year's awards were announced simultaneously in several European countries on 25 January. In Malta, Judge Maurice Caruana Curran, President of Din l-Art Helwa, which represents Europa Nostra, gave details of the award during a press conference. Europa Nostra is made up of more than 200 conservation societies in Europe.

Over the past ten years Europa Nostra has organised an award scheme sponsored by American Express Company. Over 200 entries were submitted for this year's competition from private and commercial firms, civic societies and national, regional and local governments. The M.O.S. project becomes the second in Malta to be awarded such a diploma. In 1979, the Government received a similar award for restoring the former hospital of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta.

The commemorative "Diploma of Merit" plaque was presented to M.O.S. by the President of Malta, Dr. Vincent Tabone, on behalf of Europa Nostra, at a ceremony, held at Din l-Art Helwa's premises in Valletta on 22 April (1989). Present for the occasion was also the Minister of Education, Dr. Ugo Mifsud Bonnici.

Mini-Nature Reserve

A small nature reserve has been set up in the gardens of St. Aloysius College, Birkirkara on the initiative of a 14-year old student, Mario Farrugia, an M.O.S. Youth, and with some financial assistance by the M.O.S. The Rector of the College inaugurated the reserve in November last year (1988) and praised the students' efforts and initiative. This project helped Mario Farrugia to win this year's Elizabeth Coxon's Award – an annual prize of £50 worth of books given to a Maltese Youth who makes the best contribution towards conservation. The Elizabeth Coxon Award is sponsored by the Malta Bird Reserves Overseas Committee and named after the Committee's founder Mrs. Elizabeth Coxon.



Mario Farrugia

M.O.S. Stands at Fairs

The Flower Show, the Fur and Feather Show and the Malta International Trade Fair are three annual fairs at which the M.O.S. puts up its stand, advertising its aims and exhibiting its educational material. These fairs are very popular with the Maltese public and several thousands of people visit the M.O.S. stand. Here, efforts are made to enroll new members, while opportunity is taken to disseminate information. Participation at these fairs is also important for M.O.S. from a fund-raising point of view. Educational items, such as stickers, postcards, posters, books and other M.O.S. publications are displayed for sale and the income raised helps M.O.S. in its conservation activities.



Charles Galea

The President of Malta visiting M.O.S. stand.

Director for M.O.S. – New Blood at The Helm

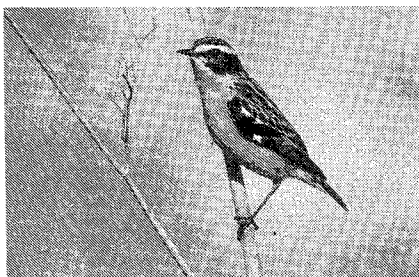
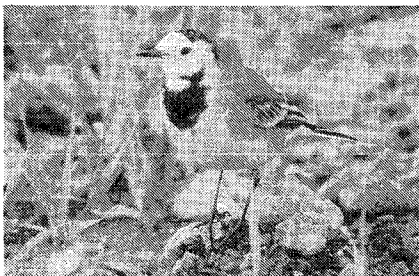
As from last January the M.O.S. has a full time Director to run its office in Valletta, as well as to co-ordinate its campaigns and its administrative work. This was made possible by a grant from the I.C.B.P., which is providing the monthly wages for a three-year period. Mr. Paul Portelli, President since October 1987, applied for the new post and was appointed Director by the M.O.S. Council. This necessitated changes at the helm of the M.O.S. Former Hon. General Secretary, Joe A. Doublet was elected President while Joseph M. Mangion was elected Hon. General Secretary.



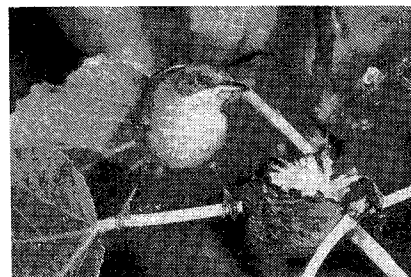
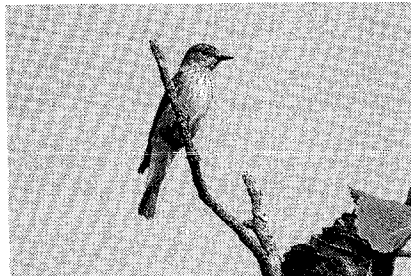
Paul Portelli, M.O.S. Director.

A New Set of Postcards

The 4th set of postcards showing wild birds in Malta from photographs taken by M.O.S. members has been issued early this year. The birds shown are a White Wagtail and a Spotted Flycatcher by Joseph M. Mangion, a Whinchat by

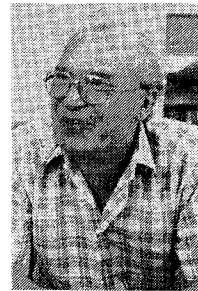


Richard Cachia Zammit and a Subalpine Warbler by Charles Galea Bonavia. These postcards show that bird photography is also possible in Malta and is one of the ways how birds can be appreciated. They also help M.O.S. to raise some funds.

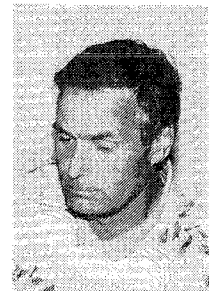


Visiting the M.O.S. Info Centre

"Environmental legislation in Malta would have to be revised within four years of Malta's entry into the E.E.C. and this would incorporate the directives of birds, in force in all member countries, regulating their hunting, trapping and conservation". This was stated by Mr. Ian Prestt, Director General of the R.S.P.B. (U.K.) at the M.O.S. Info Centre, which he visited while he was on holiday in Malta with his wife and family in June 1988. Mr. Prestt praised the M.O.S. for its work to protect birds in Malta and during a meeting with the M.O.S. Council Members he gave advice how M.O.S. should run its office and Info Centre. The M.O.S. was set up in 1962 with the R.S.P.B. giving a helping hand. Since then co-operation, mainly in educational campaigns, has flourished.



Ian Prestt



Klaus Dürkop

Another important person in the European Bird Conservation Movement, who visited the M.O.S. Info Centre was Mr. Klaus Dürkop, President of the D.B.V., the largest bird conservation society in the Federal Republic of Germany. While he was in Malta with his family for a holiday in October (1988) he visited the M.O.S. Info Centre, where he met the Council to discuss co-operation in some of the M.O.S. campaigns. His main remark regarding the local scene was "German hunters would be astonished at the rate of bird shooting which takes place in Malta. It seems that the bird protection laws are not respected at all".

M.O.S. Youths – Geared for the 90's



Joe Doubiet

When a sub-committee was formed to cater for a few dozen young members way back in March 1969, no one could foresee that the young members section (now affectionately known as M.O.S.Y) would in time be one of the main pillars of the Society. Gradually, but steadily, it has matured and grown from a handful of members into a thousand-fold members, with their own publications (Il-Kangu and In-Natura), newsletters and circulars, activities and committee. Indeed, M.O.S. is proud of its M.O.S.Y.

Today, young people can discover, within M.O.S.Y., a totally new approach to nature. Its youths learn how to appreciate, observe and admire the flora and fauna, birds in particular, in their natural surroundings. Loving nature the Victorian style has gone with the wind. It made way to the modern approach; and the Youths love it.

Hikes, bird-watching outings, slide and film shows, competitions protests and campaigns, discussions, as well as field study camps, are the order of the day within M.O.S.Y. The spring weekend camp in Gozo, when most of the time is spent out in the field observing nature and birds; the impressive night with the Shearwaters at Ta' Cenc; and the autumn raptor study camp at the Education Department's Field Study Centre, are now three of several main annual events on the M.O.S.Y.'s calendar.

Watching a wader feeding at Ghadira, observing the magnificent flight of a raptor over Buskett, and then comparing these sights with the galling death of the same birds which are shot on migration in Malta, is enough to baptise M.O.S.Y. members conservationists for life.

M.O.S.Y. is also active on the international scene through its affiliation with Youth and Environment Europe (Y.E.E.) and is continually in touch with several European youth organisations. While M.O.S.Y. members get the opportunity to attend overseas camps and gatherings of environmental groups, M.O.S.Y. also

plays host to its members' foreign counterparts.

M.O.S.Y. is always found in the front of the Society's protests and campaigns which are organised annually for the protection of birds and nature. Its members involvement in M.O.S. public relations action (stands at fairs, exhibitions, etc.) knows no bound and their contribution in the dissemination of the conservation creed among the younger generations is invaluable.

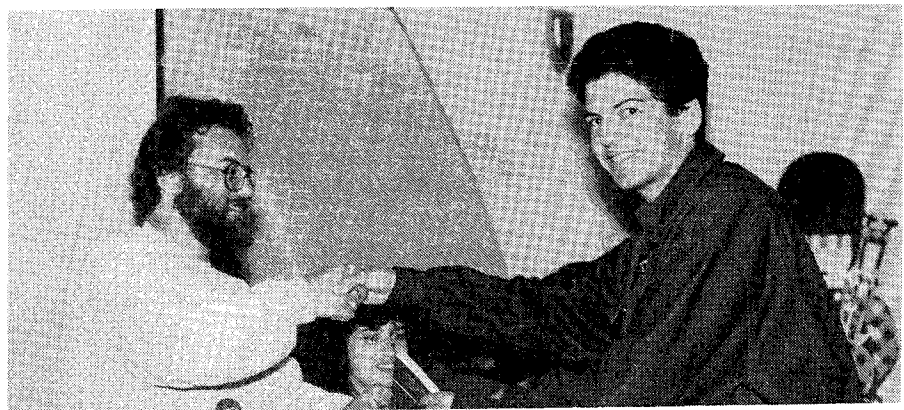
But M.O.S.Y.'s main contribution along the years have been to mature some of its members to become the M.O.S. leaders. Today's M.O.S. officials were yesterday's M.O.S.Y. members. Some of today's M.O.S.Y. members will be tomorrow's M.O.S. leaders. M.O.S. has always invested greatly in youths. M.O.S.Y. is indeed a sound investment for M.O.S. and Bird Conservation in future.



1988 sticker.



1989 sticker.



Charles Coleva

Bernard Hamilton receiving from Victor Falzon, MOSY Officer, the award for enrolling the largest number of young members.



Raymond Galea

MOSY guests' DBV Youths give a helping hand at Ghadira.

Joe Mangion, Manwel Mallia and Raymond Galea (left) during a discussion at the YEE Ecotourism camp in Germany – October 1988.



Raymond Galea

TUNISIA . . .

A Land for Birds



Tunisia is a land of many contrasts . . . the highrise ultra-modern buildings in the city and the Bedhoun mudhouses and tents of the countryside; a land where the latest stylish fashions worn by the rich class contrasts with the traditional wrap-around clothing of the moslem women.

Tunisia is not densely populated. The spoken language is arabic with french spoken by many people. Life is definitely not expensive for the visitor and bargaining is the rule of the game, especially in touristic places.

Tunisia is the land with a variety of habitats - from the cork oak forests of the north to the arid desert of the south. It has also some fine wetland areas. A wide range of bird species is thus found in the country throughout the year.

All these characteristics have proved attractive to a number of both experienced and budding birdwatchers to engage on a cheap holiday in a country where nature is still largely unspoilt.

Presently the only airlink between Malta and Tunisia is a small Fokker aircraft travelling to Tunis and Sfax twice weekly. Prior to landing at Tunis airport one can easily spot Flamingoes and Egrets feeding at the Lac de Tunis and this increases greatly the expectations for the bird-watchers' first visit to Tunisia.

Although public transport reaches most towns and villages, a car is essential for those who want to explore the remotest parts of the country without having to worry about the hustle of the "louages" and coaches.

The first place one should visit in the north is the Rades Saltpans, which are situated a few kilometres from Tunis. During the last five years or so, the saltpans have been abandoned and although they have been somewhat adversely affected by nearby development, the west side still provides a rich area for a number of birds. The area in general is famed for its wintering grebes

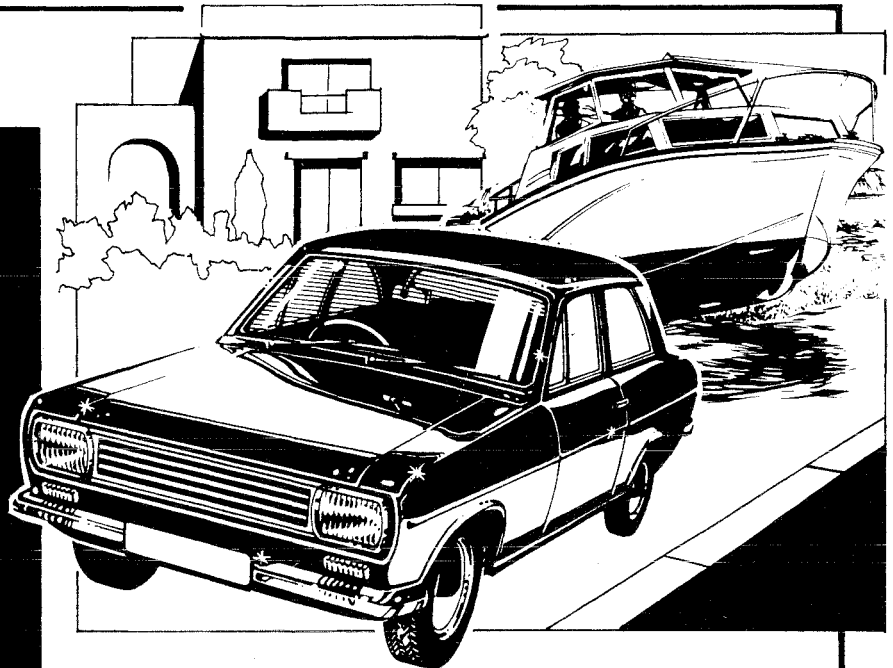
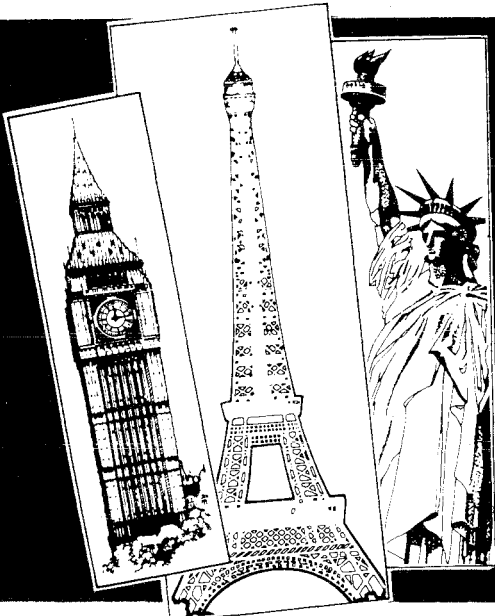
and ducks, cormorants, little egrets and Flamingo. Kentish Plover and Black-winged Stilt breed here while a variety of waders, gulls (including Slender-billed Gull) and terns can also be observed for most of the year, especially during migration.

Driving south along the coast one can stop to see a variety of gulls and waders while Little Owls and other birds of prey are not an infrequent sight perching on pylons.

Close to Sfax, the red and white lighthouse is a landmark which leads you to the famous Thyna Saltpans, a birdwatcher's paradise. Ducks, terns, grebes, herons, Spoonbills, Falmingoes and waders are among several thousands of wintering and migrating birds which one can watch. Sea-bird watching, too, can be fruitful here. The extensive mudflats at Achichina, just before reaching Gabes are also fruitful especially for waders.

Further south, where the land becomes more barren, a variety of desert birds can be observed at various arid areas between Medenine and Remada, one is surely to see several species of Wheat-ears (Desert, Mourning, Red-rumped, Black and Black-crowned Black), Hoopoe and Desert Larks, Fulvous Babbler, Trumpeter Finch, House Bunting and Brown-necked Raven.

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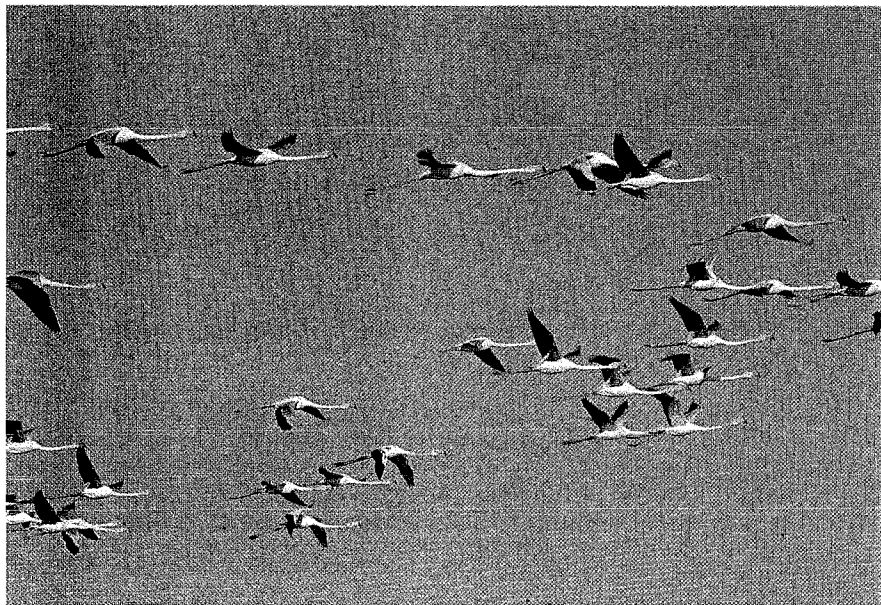
Going westwards in the south desert birds are always present and the Scrub Warbler and the Temminck's Horned Lark can be added to the list. So can the Black-bellied Sandgrouse if one visits the stream at El Hamma in the morning.

Travelling towards the north, through western parts, the landscape changes and in the areas north of El Kef the scenery is breathtaking, especially at Ain Draham, where the cork oak forests provide some woodland species including the Levillant's Woodpecker. And further north, Lac Ichkeul is a haven for birds. It is exclusively renowned as a wintering place for Grey Lag Geese and several species of ducks. During Spring and Summer, the lake, the adjoining marshy areas with the reedbeds as well as the Djebel Ichkeul, abound with a variety of breeding and migrating birds, ranging from herons to birds of prey, as well as a long list of passerines. In spring the Marsh Harrier displays seen on the reedbeds are certainly not to be missed.



Richard Cachia Zammit

The colourful Moussier's Redstart, a "first" for many who visit Tunisia.



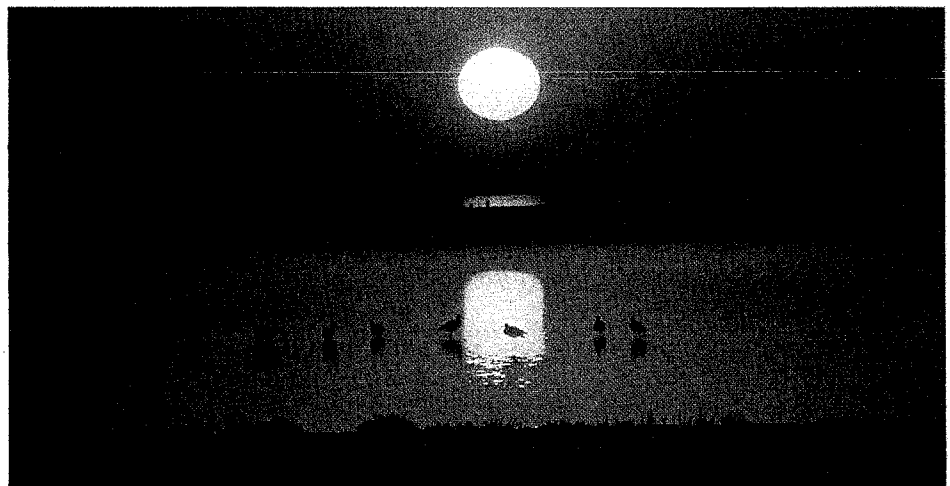
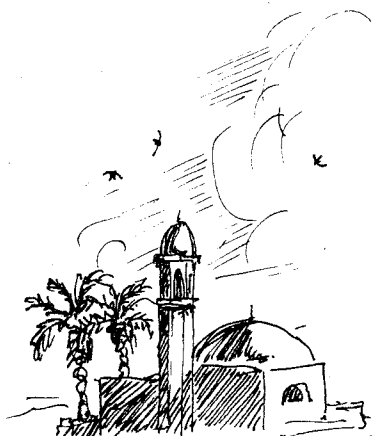
Joe Doublet

Flamingoes in flight are quite spectacular.

There are other localities in Tunisia which should be included in any bird-watcher's itinerary. Djebel Zaghuan mountains, south of Tunis, is famed for its raptors in spring and summer, which include Black Kite, Short-Toed Eagle, Booted Eagle, Long-legged Buzzard, Bonelli's Eagle, Egyptian Vulture, Lanner, Peregrine Falcon as well as other birds such as the Rufous Bush Chat, the Moussier's Redstart and the Rock Sparrow. And to the north-east of Zaghuan, the Cap Bon peninsula provides a dramatic migration of raptors from the end of March to early May. White Storks and bee-eaters, as well as a myriad of other migrants can be seen on passage here.

The birds of Tunisia face, as in most countries, several problems. Pollution, shooting, liming and uncontrolled development are already evident in some areas. Apart from birdwatching, Tunisia has a wide and largely unexplored variety of flora and fauna.

Birds and sun combine to make Thyna a place to remember.



Joe Doublet

BIRD SHOOTERS

Statistics prove that there are more bird shooters to the square kilometre in Malta than anywhere else in Europe, and probably in the world. Replying to a parliamentary question, the Minister of the Interior and Justice said that there were 13,871 licensed bird shooters in 1983. By 1987 the number reached 14,972, an increase of 1,101. We can safely conclude that there are 46 bird shooters per sq. km. If, however, we take in consideration the area taken up by buildings, airfield, sportsgrounds, roads, etc., the number of bird shooters per sq. km. of Maltese countryside will be definitely higher. One must note that here we are not including the bird trappers.

Another reply by the same Minister to another parliamentary question brings up to light how the regulations are not properly enforced. The Member of Parliament asked what action was being taken by the Police to prevent game hunting at Buskett and other areas where hunting was banned. The Member mentioned a particular date in which he said that there was continuous firing of shotguns at Buskett, a bird-sanctuary, where whole families were recreating themselves. The Minister said that "occasional" patrols were made in bird sanctuaries and "four" persons had been charged with having violated regulations for the protection of birds at Buskett over the past three months. (This was in February this year (1989)).

In the mid-seventies, when the authorities started to contemplate revising the then outdated 1937 bird protection regulations, the bird shooters and trappers formed an association to fight for the *status quo*. They opposed strongly the revision of the laws and they never really accepted the regulations, which were eventually issued in 1980.

The pressure against indiscriminate shooting has continued to build up, especially when M.O.S. informs the public about what is actually taking place in the Maltese countryside. On the other hand the shooters react to every M.O.S. move. When, to mention one instance, the M.O.S. made a public protest against illegal shooting of birds of prey at Buskett, the shooters made a counter protest, turning out in good numbers, claiming that M.O.S. was a society of abolitionists, that the laws were unfair, that they had the right to indulge in their "sport", etc. etc., while threatening the authorities that they own thousands of votes. When the M.O.S. repeated the protest, the following year, some shooters beat M.O.S. members.

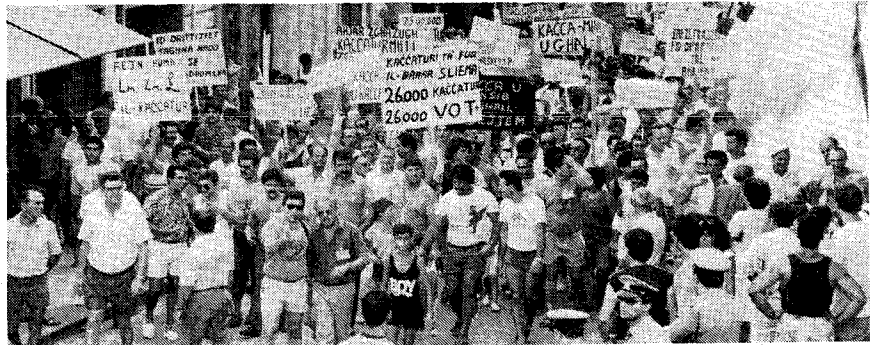
Early this decade the shooters and trappers, in an apparent public relations

exercise, changed their association's name and started calling themselves also "conservationists". They dropped the word "trappers" from their official English name and labelled themselves "Association for Hunting & Conservation" while they retained it in their Maltese Name. Later they joined F.A.C.E., the Federation of Hunting Associations in the E.E.C., as corresponding members and started to brag about this; that is that they had the support of their comrades in Europe.

Every time the M.O.S. issues a press release, the shooters immediately issue another rebutting what has been stated, no matter what was said. They also oppose every contemplation of the authorities to set up nature reserves. They even protested against the declaration of Filfla as a nature reserve



The Sunday Times pokes fun at the shooters' self-proclaimed title of conservationists.



Shooters and trappers demonstrating in Valletta.



Shooting at sea from motor-powered dinghies has become a serious problem.

On the pretext of scaring birds to make a safe runway, members of the AFM were seen shooting birds on the airfield.



because, they said, they were not consulted. They claim that the Islands had a larger area of bird sanctuaries than any other European country. They claim that the setting up of nature reserves is a strategy aimed at abolishing hunting gradually and stealthily until it becomes illegal to practice the sport (The Times 5 Dec. 1988). Their association also condones the shooting of migrating birds at sea from speed boats and motor-powered dinghies, most of which is illegally carried out (The Times 14 March 1988), while it publicly opposes the signing of the Berne Convention (The Times 17 February 1989). It has even tried to defend those who went to Egypt on bird-shooting sprees.

Their latest public demonstration was held in August last year (1988). A few hundred bird shooters and trappers demonstrated in Valletta on Sunday, August 7th protesting against what they see as a threat to their sport. Holding placards with slogans promoting their cause, belittling M.O.S., or vaunting their thousand-fold membership strength, they walked through the streets of Valletta and ended up at Freedom square, where they were addressed by their President Mr. J.R. Scicluna.

Mr. Scicluna, amongst other things, claimed that teachers were brainwashing the students with anti-hunting themes and influencing them against bird shooting and trapping. Giving an example of the

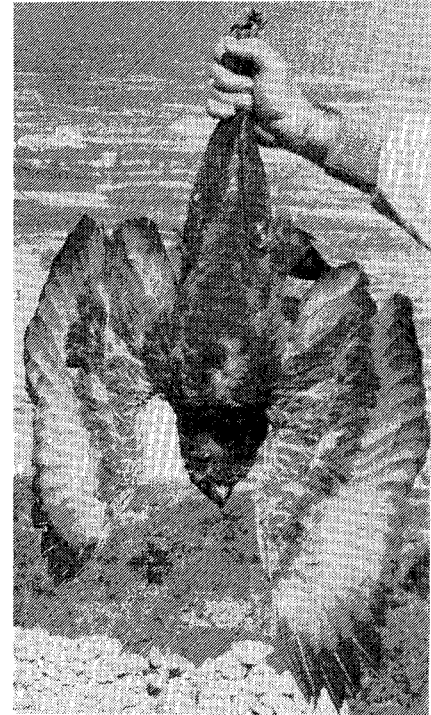


Policeman protecting an M.O.S. member from angry shooters, who objected to being photographed during their demonstration.

One of hundreds of harriers killed annually. Shooters consider the legally protected birds of prey as game.

climate being promoted against their sport, he said that a subject offered to year-six students in an essay-writing examination was "a letter to the Press protesting against the shooting of birds in Malta".

At the end of their meeting, the bird shooters and trappers approved a resolution by a show of hands, deploring



Joe Sultana

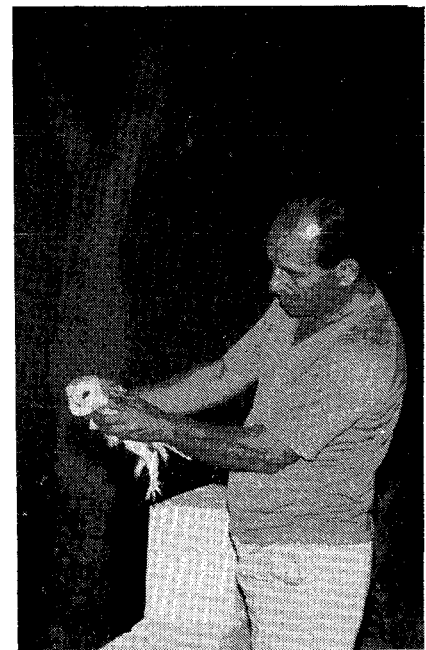
attempts to abolish their sport and the influence and unjustified power of some people opposed to the sport. They also called on the Government to consult them on matters affecting them and said that the Government should not even consider any proposals to establish sanctuaries or nature reserves as the Maltese Islands could not take them.

HAVE WE LOST THE BARN OWL?

Five young Barn Owls were found starved to death after their parents were shot in May 1988 (reported in *Il-Merill* no. 25). This was the only known breeding site. A banner condemning this killing was hung above the City Gate. This was removed by the Police after the shooters' association protested, claiming that there was no proof that the birds were shot by "hunters". On right, John Grech, M.O.S. member, releasing a Barn Owl which was found entrapped inside a building in Victoria, Gozo.

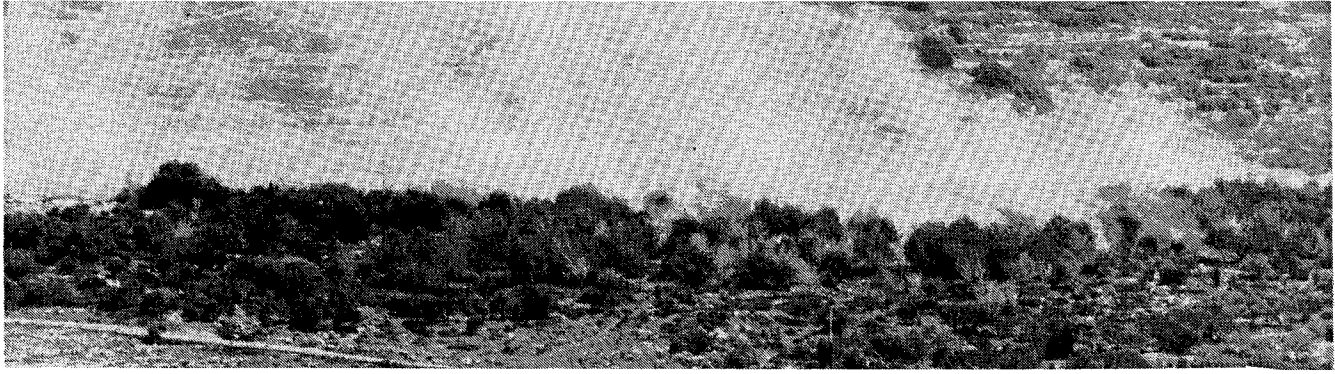


Joe Sultana



Joe Sultana

IL-MIŻIEB ON FIRE



Joe Sultana

For the third consecutive summer the wooded area at Mizieb was set on fire and hundreds of trees have been destroyed. This area, which is administered by the shooters' association, is allotted to a number of shooters and trappers. M.O.S. has received a number of anonymous letters threatening that shooters who were left out will burn the area!

CARING FOR INJURED BIRDS



Max Farrugia

Max Farrugia and Joyce Christie with an injured Barn Owl.

During the past two years about 100 birds of several species were brought to the M.O.S. for treatment. Max Farrugia and Ray Galea, who have been trained to care for injured birds, have spent two weeks in Middleton Cheney, England, at Cliff Christie's Bird Hospital. During their stay they were assisted by the Malta Bird Reserves Overseas Committee and by Cliff Christie himself. Cliff instructed Max and Ray on the basic treatments needed from the time a bird is handed in until it is ready to be released. Various problems

encountered with different species were discussed at length.

Meanwhile news has reached us that the Bird Doctor had to call it a day. Kind-hearted Cliff and his wife Joyce had turned their home into a hospital for wild birds. They nursed hundreds of birds which were brought to them by animal lovers and the police.

A new job for Cliff and an injury to Joyce brought a sad end to 30 years of devotion to the care of sick and injured birds.



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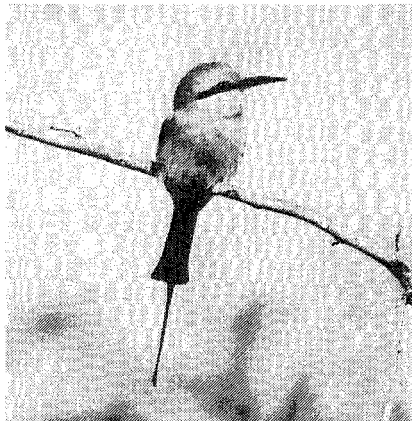
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The Killing of Birds in Egypt by Maltese Hunters

Richard Cachia Zammit



The Little Green Bee-eater was not spared.

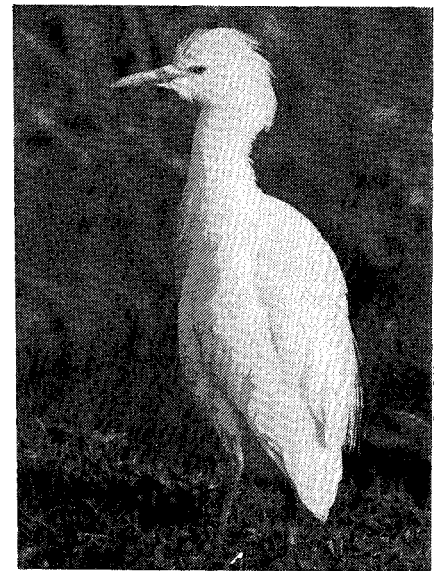
A flash of green and a Little Green Bee-eater alights on a perch; a secretive Senegal Coucal betrays its presence in thick cover by a series of "bubbling" notes; a Cream-coloured Courser and a Hoopoe Lark trot in a sandy desert habitat; a Black-shouldered Kite perches on a wire grasping its prey; a Pied Kingfisher hovers above the water before plunging headlong; a white-eyed Gull sails along the coast; and a Nile Valley Sunbird balances on a brightly-coloured flower.

Yes, we are in the land of the immortal Nile, where all this and much more can be enjoyed. Egypt, which is more known for its array of pyramids and temples, has also a lot to offer to the bird lover and the past decade has seen a surge of interest in its ornithology. Apart from a distinctive list of resident species occupying extreme varieties of habitats, Egypt is just as fascinating for migrating and wintering Palearctic birds.

Unfortunately bird hunting and trapping have always formed part of the Nile Valley cultural traditions and Egypt is well known for some notorious bird killing and trapping. In recent years a new disgraceful dimension has been added to this phenomenon. Maltese bird shooters, who are well known to be infamous where bird killing is concerned, have been visiting Egypt on organised bird-shooting tours. One participant boasted "many foreign hunters visit Egypt, but the Maltese are the worst - we shoot at anything that flies wherever we are". Another participant writing in a local paper, claimed "we shot 10,000 birds during our 5-day visit to Egypt". It is indeed quite galling to see a leaflet advertising these tours, carrying pictures of Maltese shooters sporting huge

bundles of dead birds hanging round their necks. On several occasions the Maltese authorities confiscated the dead birds on health reasons when shooters returned from Egypt. These birds were brought to be stuffed and mounted, later to be sold locally to mounted-bird collectors. At other times only the skins were bought by the shooters. But those belonging to birds protected in Malta were also withheld and confiscated. The list of birds killed by Maltese shooters is incredible and includes, among several others, species such as Purple Gallinule, Black-Shouldered Kite, Little Green and Blue-Cheeked Bee-Eaters Senegal Coucal, Spur-winged Plover, Painted Snipe, Cattle Egret, Palm Dove, Crested Lark, Great Grey Shrike, Black headed Bulbul and Hooded Crow.

The M.O.S. left no stone unturned to show both the local as well as the Egyptian authorities what was happening when the bird shooting tours were organised. In an illustrated memorandum entitled "The Destruction of Birds in Egypt by Maltese Shooters", the M.O.S. highlighted by facts



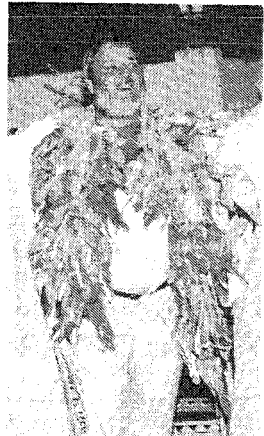
Richard Cachia Zammit

The tame Cattle Egret was an easy target.

organisations. It also requested publicly its members and supporters to boycott those travel agencies who were organising these shameful bird-massacre tours to Egypt.

Writing in the Times of Malta on February 15th, 1989, Dr. Mustafa Fauda, President of the Ornithological Society of Egypt, stated that certain tour companies were violating Egyptian Laws and devastating their wildlife. He added "Large numbers of birds were killed during these trips, including many species protected by Egyptian Law, such as birds beneficial to agriculture and birds of Prey". He also implored "the Government and people of Malta to continue with their efforts to ensure that these massacres are discontinued and hunters from Malta abide by Egyptian and Maltese regulations. Killing anything that flies is not only unsportsmanlike but detrimental to the survival of birds", and figures the nauseating accounts of bird killing in Egypt. The memorandum was sent to Government departments in Malta and in Egypt as well as International

Photos appearing in a leaflet advertising "hunting" in Egypt showing the tour organiser (centre photo) and some shooters posing with hundreds of dead birds.



I.C.B.P. CORNER



The XVII I.C.B.P. European Conference

Adana, Turkey was the venue of the XVII conference of the European Continental Section of the I.C.B.P., which was held from 15 to 20 May 1989. 26 countries, including Malta, were represented. The Maltese delegation was composed of Raymond Galea, Paul Portelli and Joe Sultana. The conference was chaired by Joe Sultana, who at the end of the meeting was re-elected Chairman of the European Section for another term.

The conference started with a one day symposium on "The Importance of Turkey for Bird Conservation in Europe", with various topics including birds and habitats, wildlife legislation, hunting and persecution of birds and bird conservation.

This was followed by a two-day I.C.B.P. conference which discussed, amongst other things, the progress reports of the ongoing I.C.B.P. projects, various con-

servation issues and the future of the E.C.S.

During the conference the publication "Important Bird Areas in Europe" was launched. The identification of Europe's most important bird sites was one of the ongoing projects. The publication was published jointly with I.W.R.B. and is the most comprehensive inventory of European bird sites. It is the result of a two-year study involving ornithologists throughout the region and provides key information on 2,444 sites in 32 countries. A majority of the sites are either unprotected or inadequately protected, or are threatened by man's industrial and agricultural activities. For the first time, there is a concrete proposal for a continent-wide network of sites that must be protected, requiring positive co-ordinated action by the people of Europe. Malta also figures in the network with five sites - Ghadira, Buskett, Filfla, l-Ahrax tal-Madonna and Ta' Cenc. The latter is presently threatened by touristic development.

The conference deliberated at length on the follow-up of the I.B.A. project and it was rightly stressed that the publication is not the conclusion of the project but in fact an introduction to the future action required to protect the sites.

The conference was also given a detailed report on the Slender-billed

Curlew project. The realisation that the Slender-billed Curlew was the rarest migratory bird in the western palearctic prompted I.C.B.P. to launch a project in May, 1988 to save the species. The first year was concentrated on the identification and monitoring of the key breeding areas, stop-over sites and winter quarters, and to study habitat preferences, food and feeding ecology throughout the bird's range. A publicity campaign to increase the awareness of governments and the public of the plight of the species have already started, while discussions on the drawing up and promotion of a comprehensive management plan for a network of protected areas, are under way.

The Slender-billed Curlew is a rare and irregular visitor to Malta and its last known occurrence was in December 1977. As with the other curlew species, the Slender-billed is not legally protected in Malta.

"Conserving Migratory Birds" was a day workshop which brought to an end the Adana conference. I.C.B.P. hopes to publish a technical publication with the topics which were treated in this workshop, which included a presentation on the conservation work of the M.O.S. The workshop ended with a discussion of I.C.B.P.'s Action Plan for migratory birds for the next five years.



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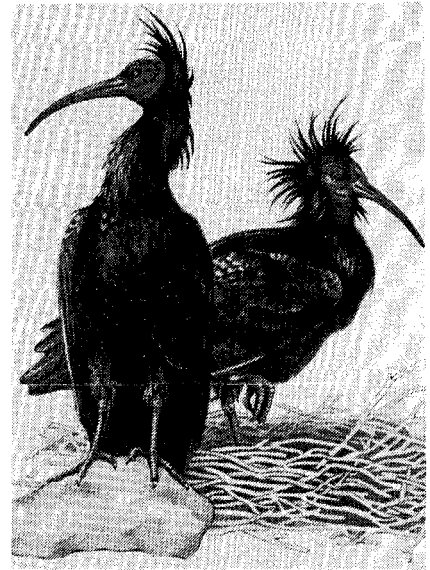




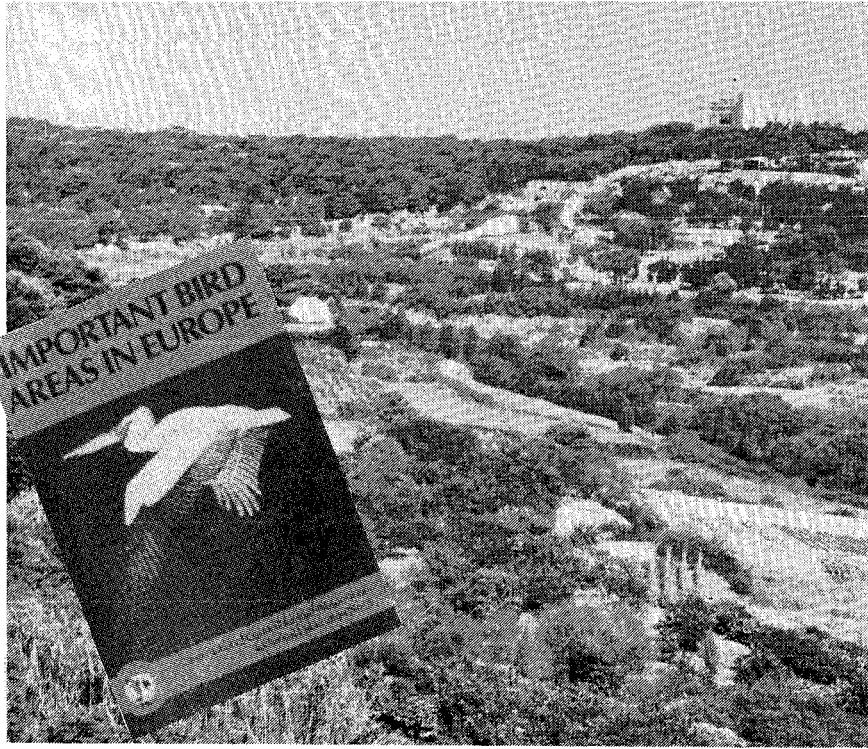
The German delegates addressing the Conference, with (from left) Alistair Gammell (Secretary), Joe Sultana (Chairman), Michael Rands and Richard Grimmet from ICBP Secretariat.

Europe loses the Bald Ibis

The I.C.B.P. conference was informed with the sad news that the Bald Ibis is now become extinct in Europe. The bird was once common in Central Europe as far as the Alps, but during the last decades it only occurred in Birecik in Eastern Turkey. Notwithstanding many efforts to save the last European colony only three individuals returned from migration in 1989. Unfortunately two died in a storm and, with only one remaining, it must now be considered as lost as a European species. The only remaining colonies are now found in Morocco.



DHKP (Chatterjee)



Buskett, one of the Maltese sites included in the Important Bird Areas.

The Memorandum shows how illegal killing can be stopped.



Joe Sultana

Memorandum regarding the setting up of the Environmental Police Section

The continuous illegal shooting and trapping of birds and other illegal activities which harm the natural environment prompted the Malta Section of the International Council for Bird Preservation to prepare a report, which was sent to the authorities, proposing the setting up of an environmental section within the Police Force. I.C.B.P. Malta rightly thinks that this would provide an immediate solution



to several of the prevailing environmental problems.

The memorandum states that the principal aim of the Environmental Police Section should be to see that the environmental laws, especially those regarding pollution, refuse dumping, and the illegal shooting and trapping of birds, amongst other illegal activities, are properly enforced.

The memorandum also gives details of how such a section should be structured, how it should be equipped and how it should co-ordinate with other Government Departments.

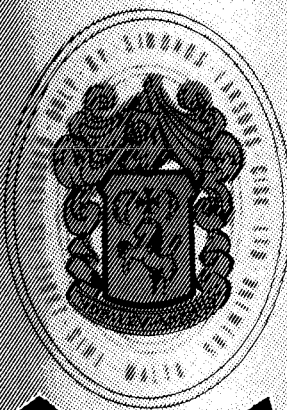


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MOS & BIRD CONSERVATION IN THE NEWS

Hardly any day passes without M.O.S., bird conservation and environmental problems, including bird shooting and trapping, taking up some space or air-time in the mass media. Through its public relations office, M.O.S. frequently airs its views, while matters concerning bird conservations appear regularly in the local press.

L-MOS Importation of birds

Large numbers of song birds have been imported into Malta in recent weeks from Tunisia, Italy and Britain, without the necessary import licences, the Ornithological Society said. The society called on the Government to stop issuing licences because the birds were of these birds were of origin country.

The Ornithological Society condemned the shooting of swifts, golden orioles and swallows at Ghaxaq, the Addolorata Cemetery, Buskett and Salina, and the shooting of honey buzzards in country lanes leading from Santa Lucija to Gudja and Wied Dalam.

L-MOS dwar

Is-Socjeta' Ornitolozjika (MOS) ghalet li ghandu jteqaf min l-isparar fuq l-aghsafar minn fuq il-bahar.

MOS CAMPAIGN

The Ornithological Society (MOS) is organizing a campaign in favour of protection of birds of prey. The MOS said in a statement that during the months of September and October, birds of prey migrate through Malta from their breeding grounds to Africa but many are shot while on Malta. Shooting on such birds also takes place at sea. The Society is publishing a memorandum about the destruction of birds of prey which is being presented to the authorities.

M.O.S. CAMPAIGN TO SAVE BIRDS

Members of the Ornithological Society (MOS) distributed educational material at a City Gate activity to urge the public to preserve and appreciate swallows, house martins and swifts, as part of a campaign to make the public more aware of migratory birds. In spring birds migrate from

var il-MOS tree

The Ornithological Society (MOS) has been burning of olive trees including olive trees during the last few days. The society said the sudden change in weather which occurred recently brought over the area on fire. The Hunters' Association put the area in a state of emergency and its members are trying to put the area back to normal.

Bird shooting condemned

The MOS condemned the shooting of birds during the closing of the hunting season. The MOS said that the shooting of birds during the closing of the hunting season is a crime.

SEA BIRDS SLAUGHTERED

The Ornithological Society (MOS) has reported a sharp drop in the population of sea birds around Malta and called on the authorities to take steps to halt the slaughter.

PROTECTING THE SWALLOWS

The Ornithological Society (MOS) has pointed out that the killing of birds at sea was illegal within three kilometres of the coast. To make matters worse, the MOS said that the population of both the Herring Gull and the Corys Shearwater was declining, mainly because of this slaughter at sea.

AFRICA TO EUROPE

The MOS said that the three birds are the symbol of migration, and they are ecologically important because they are birds which eat insects which can be harmful to agriculture. The MOS said it was important for the public to appreciate these birds, which would have travelled thousands of miles before reaching our islands.

MOS APPEAL TO POLICE

The Ornithological Society (MOS) appealed to the police authorities to stop "the shameful and illegal massacre of migratory birds", which, it said, was giving a bad image to Malta throughout Europe. The society said the sudden change in weather which occurred recently brought over

Malta and Gozo thousands of migratory birds. It has been reported, the MOS said, that a large number of these were killed by Maltese shooters and among these birds were the marsh and montagu's harriers, flamingos, storks and spoonbills, all protected species in Europe and in Malta.

During the same period, the MOS injured birds care unit received several birds to be taken care of by Mr. Max Farrugia and Mr. Ray Galea, who had received training abroad on the care of injured birds.

The MOS appealed to anyone who finds injured birds to contact the Addolorata shooting area.

Enforcing bird protection laws

The Ornithological Society has called on the authorities to enforce bird protection laws which, it said, could become reality only when a police environment section was set up.

Frequent illegal shooting was taking place at Buskett. In September and October, many protected species of birds were shot down. Reports had claimed that a confiscated firearm was returned to its owner by the police. This should not be allowed before owners were brought before the Court, the MOS said.

Protecting the swallows

The Ornithological Society (MOS) has extended the swallow sandmartins. The MOS said that the protest action, which was mostly concentrated in Victoria, was held because of the severe killing of such birds in various parts of Gozo, particularly at Ramla, Marsalforn and Wied il-Lunzjata.

Members carried a banner at swallows were created and distributed stickers and leaflets on swallows.

The MOS said that the population of both the Herring Gull and the Corys Shearwater was declining, mainly because of this slaughter at sea.

The Ornithological Society (MOS) appealed to the police authorities to stop "the shameful and illegal massacre of migratory birds", which, it said, was giving a bad image to Malta throughout Europe. The society said the sudden change in weather which occurred recently brought over

Malta and Gozo thousands of migratory birds. It has been reported, the MOS said, that a large number of these were killed by Maltese shooters and among these birds were the marsh and montagu's harriers, flamingos, storks and spoonbills, all protected species in Europe and in Malta.

During the same period, the MOS injured birds care unit received several birds to be taken care of by Mr. Max Farrugia and Mr. Ray Galea, who had received training abroad on the care of injured birds.

The MOS appealed to anyone who finds injured birds to contact the Addolorata shooting area.

Enforcing bird protection laws

The Ornithological Society has called on the authorities to enforce bird protection laws which, it said, could become reality only when a police environment section was set up.

Frequent illegal shooting was taking place at Buskett. In September and October, many protected species of birds were shot down. Reports had claimed that a confiscated firearm was returned to its owner by the police. This should not be allowed before owners were brought before the Court, the MOS said.

Protecting the swallows

The Ornithological Society (MOS) has extended the swallow sandmartins. The MOS said that the protest action, which was mostly concentrated in Victoria, was held because of the severe killing of such birds in various parts of Gozo, particularly at Ramla, Marsalforn and Wied il-Lunzjata.

Members carried a banner at swallows were created and distributed stickers and leaflets on swallows.

The MOS said that the population of both the Herring Gull and the Corys Shearwater was declining, mainly because of this slaughter at sea.



Members of the MOS distributing leaflets in Victoria. (Gozo)

THE 26th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

A Summary

The 26th Annual General Meeting, which was held on 15th March, 1988 at the British Legion Headquarters in Valletta, was opened by Mr. Paul Portelli, M.O.S. President.

During his address, Mr. Portelli highlighted some of the significant events of the previous year, which included the official opening of "Dar il-Merill", the M.O.S. Headquarters.

The President then detailed the future plans for the forthcoming year. He expressed the Society's concern regarding the money given to the Shooters' Association by the Government. While showing the Society's satisfaction regarding the raids at Buskett by the Special Mobile Unit of the Police during the birds of prey migration in September, he emphasised that similar raids should continue and that the bird protection regulations should be continually enforced.

The Hon. General Secretary, Mr. Joe A. Doublet, then presented his report for 1987, which opened with a special mention of the 25th anniversary celebra-

tions. With reference to the membership, he announced an increase of 19.7% (218) when compared to the previous year's total. The total number reached 1,325, 54.2% of whom were youths. While 553 were new members, 336 had failed to renew their membership.

During the previous annual meeting Mr. A.E. Baldacchino resigned from the Council and his post of Hon. General Secretary was taken up by Mr. Joe A. Doublet. At that annual meeting Mr. Joe Sultana also announced that by the end of the year he would step down from M.O.S. President, and eventually Mr. Paul Portelli was elected in October in his stead. Mr. V. Falzon filled Mr. Portelli's previous post as Youths Officer.

During the year, 11 Council meetings were held and 36 press releases were issued. A 4-page supplement commemorating M.O.S. 25th anniversary was published in The Times, Malta's English daily newspaper. Various meetings were also held with Ministers and heads of Government Departments. The M.O.S. Info Centre was opened daily.

Messrs Joe Sultana and Paul Portelli

participated in the 16th I.C.B.P. European Continental Section's Conference, which was held in Hungary, while Mr. Joseph M. Mangion and Miss Michelle Borg took part in a seminar on the Mediterranean Sea, which was organised in Strasbourg by the Youth and Environment Europe. Various publications were published during the year. The M.O.S. also took part in two main fairs and organised a Robin Campaign in schools in autumn.

The General Secretary then reported on the workings of the Committees. The M.O.S. Youths Committee held 15 committee meetings and issued 12 circulars, Il-Kangu nos. 18 and 19, In-Natura no. 7 and Bird's Eye View no. 10. 32 activities were organised, including roost counts, a night hike, 3 field study camps and a night out in Gozo.

The members also took part in Bird-watch Europe '87. The Committee was chaired by M.O.S. Youths Officer, Mr. Paul Portelli (this post was taken up by Mr. Victor Falzon in October), while Mr. Joseph M. Mangion was the Secretary of the Section.

Mr. Paul Portelli and Miss Desiree Coleiro were Chairman and Secretary of the Education Committee respectively. This committee organised the Robin Campaign as well as prepared the ground work for the following year's campaign on the Swallow. 7 Info sheets were published for school delegates and a course was organised for teachers.

Messrs Joe Sultana and Charles Gauci were Officer and Secretary respectively of the Ringing and Research Committee. There were 13 active ringers and four trainees during the year. 10,708 birds of 99 species were ringed. The group had several birds recovered abroad and many interesting retraps. The Ringing

Mr. Denis Cachia presented a detailed financial statement.

Total income	Lm6,778.526
Total expenditure	3,683.987
Less transfer to reserves	773.305
Surplus transferred to accumulated fund	2,910.682
Balance sheet as on 31.12.87:	
Fixed assets	11,310.039
Imprests	930.803
Current assets	
Stocks	5,264.425
Debtors	1,456.148
Advanced payment	91.140
Cash	5,437.387
	<hr/> 24,489.942
Accumulated fund	
Balance brought forward from 1986	20,414.793
General reserves	2,736.623
Loan	635.667
Current liabilities	
Advanced subscriptions	326.000
Creditors	376.859
	<hr/> 24,489.942



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Newsletter was issued regularly bi-monthly.

The General Secretary concluded his report by thanking all the members for their continual support and by stating that more members should involve themselves in the ever-increasing work.

Before the election for the Council Members was held, the meeting approved six resolutions. These were dealt with in this order:

(a) The continuous infringement of the bird protection regulations by the shooters and trappers and the lack of enforcement by the authorities;

(b) The amount of finches and exotic birds being imported without any control whatsoever and calling on the authorities to sign the wildlife conventions;

(c) The public land which was being occupied by the association of the bird shooters and trappers, barring the public from these places, and the ecological damage being done to these areas;

(d) The large amount of birds being shot at sea from dinghies and speed boats, urging the authorities to ban this practice;

(e) The money being given to the association of shooters and trappers by the Government, while the same association was requesting that the shooting of birds of prey and shooting at Buskett, amongst other things, be made legal. This resolution called on the authorities to give financial help to the environment societies; and

(f) The threat to the natural environment from development. This resolution called for the formulation of a structural plan and that EIA reports be made for all areas marked for development.

After the outgoing Council was dissolved elections were held for a new Council. The members elected were Denis Cachia, Richard Cachia Zammit, Desiree Coleiro, Joe A. Doublet, Victor Falzon, Max Farrugia, Charles Gauci, Joseph M. Mangion, Paul Portelli and Joe Sultana. Silvio Scicluna was co-opted during the year to serve on the Council.



The current sticker which advertises M.O.S. - design and artwork by Guy Troughton of Sidcup, Kent. Available from M.O.S. at 15 cents (overseas 50 p).



Several bird-watching outings are organised for young members.

PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY

This introductory course of twelve evening lectures in practical philosophy is especially designed for those seeking to understand the meaning of human existence, the aim of life, and the art of knowing oneself.

The course enquires into man and his place in the world: his thought, feeling and action; the powers available to him and their development; the unifying and disruptive factors in human life.

The lectures include the opportunity for discussion.

Enrolments are taken on the evening of the first lecture.

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THE STUDY GROUP

These lectures will be held also in Maltese.

THE 27th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

A Summary

The 27th Annual General Meeting was held on 28 February 1989 at the British Legion Headquarters in Valletta. The meeting was opened and chaired by Mr. Joe A. Doublet, M.O.S. President.

Mr. Doublet expressed his satisfaction that 1989 started on a positive note. M.O.S. was employing its first fulltimer with the help of I.C.B.P. He also announced that M.O.S. won a diploma of merit in the Europa Nostra Award, for the work it carried out at the Ghadira Nature Reserve. He stated, however, that the local bird situation has not changed. Birds were still being killed indiscriminately, while the authorities were not showing much concern. To top it all, shooters were now going on organised tours to Egypt to indulge in their hobby of destroying birdlife. Mr. Doublet informed the members present that M.O.S. made several representations to the authorities and that it had set up a bird protection committee to monitor and take these matters in hand.

The President concluded by outlining the future plans, while stressing the need for more volunteers to help carrying out the ever increasing volume of work.

In his report, Mr. Joseph M. Mangion, Hon. General Secretary, referred to the official opening of Ghadira Bird Reserve and expressed his concern at the Lm20,000,000 proposed project at Ta' Cenc, Gozo a site of ecological and archaeological importance.

He gave details regarding the membership showing an increase of 50 members over the previous year. While there was an increase in the number of adult members from 305 to 357, the number of members in the Youths' Section went down from 718 to 692. School delegates increased by 13.

The Council met 16 times during the year. 43 press releases were issued and various meetings with Ministers and other prominent persons were held. On the occasion of the official opening of the Ghadira Bird Reserve, a day seminar on the biology of the reserve was organised together with the University of Malta, the Environment Division and the Society for the Study and Conservation of Nature. M.O.S. also took part in four fairs including the International Trade Fair. It also organised a petition urging the enforcement of the existing bird protection regulations.

Mr. Ray Galea, assisted by the Malta Bird Reserves Overseas Committee, was sent on a brief course on the care of injured birds in England, while Youth

members Tim Leone Ganado and Kirill Micallef Stafrace participated in a Y.E.E. course in Denmark. Joseph M. Mangion represented M.O.S. Youths at the Y.E.E. Annual General Meeting, which was held in Malta, while Ray Galea, Manuel Mallia and Joseph M. Mangion attended a Y.E.E. course on Ecotourism, which was held in Germany.

A special issue of Bird's Eye View to commemorate the 25th anniversary, Il-Merill no. 24, Il-Kangu no. 20 and In-Natura no. 8 were published. Various memoranda were prepared and sent to the authorities concerned. These included one on the killing of birds in Egypt by Maltese bird shooters, one on Birds of Prey killed in Malta and another on the Ta' Cenc project.

Messrs Victor Falzon and Joseph M. Mangion were Officer and Secretary respectively of the M.O.S. Youths Committee. 9 committee meetings were held while 17 activities were organised. 5 circulars were issued. Different activities were organised for members over and under 14 years respectively. These included field camps, night hikes and field outings. M.O.S.Y. members took an active part in the Swallow Campaign. The Elizabeth Coxon Award for this year was won by Mario Farrugia for the creation of a small nature reserve at his school.

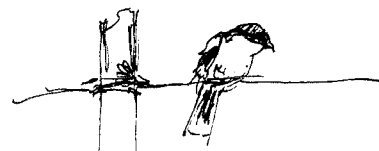
Mr. Paul Portelli and Miss Desiree Coleiro were Officer and Secretary respectively of the Education Committee. The committee met 9 times and organised the Swallow Campaign and the Robin Campaign in schools in spring and autumn respectively. A "Letter to the Robin" competition in schools, as part of the Robin Campaign, was very successful.

Messrs Joe Sultana and Charles Gauci were Officer and Secretary respectively of the Ringing and Research Committee. The committee met 5 times during the year. It organised a seminar for ringers and helpers and held meetings with the authorities regarding the ringing licences. During the year 13 ringers were active. 14,317 birds of 108 species were ringed. The committee issued 6 bimonthly ringing newsletters, the seminar's report and a manual for ringers. The Rarities Committee met once to examine records of rare occurrences.

The Bird Protection Committee started its work in November 1987 by carrying out a survey on bird shooting at sea and by compiling suggestions for a revision of the bird protection regulations. A bird care unit was run by Messrs Max Farrugia and Ray Galea, 72 birds of 30 species, most of which had lead shot injuries, were handled during the year.

Mr. Mangion concluded his report by thanking all the members and committees for their help and support. A vote of thanks to I.C.B.P. for supporting the M.O.S. Director's employment was taken.

Before the meeting was closed three resolutions were approved. The first resolution, while expressing concern over the proposed tourist project at Ta' Cenc, called on the authorities to declare the area a nature reserve. The second resolution urged the authorities to protect legally the Herons and Egrets, while the last resolution requested the general public to boycott travel agents who were organising bird shooting tours to Egypt.



Mr. Denis Cachia, M.O.S. Hon. Treasurer presented a financial report, the main details of which follows:

Income		Lm	4,175
Expenditure			3,704
Excess income over expenditure			471
Accumulated funds brought forward from the previous year			20,415
Accumulated funds carried forward			20,886
Fixed assets			10,791
Current assets	Lm	14,433	
Current liabilities		1,313	
Net current assets			13,120
Accumulated funds	Lm	20,886	
Earmarked reserves		2,490	
		23,376	
Loan		535	
		23,911	



Join up!

MOS depends entirely on the strength of its membership. It needs all the backing it can get. A larger Society means a stronger lobby group. MOS wants to reach and to teach more people about the beauty of birds and about our duty to protect them. By becoming a member of MOS you contribute to the defence of our natural heritage.



This is why...



STAFFORD T. TOTTEN

MOS needs your help!

What is MOS?

- The Ornithological Society (MOS) is the largest conservation body in the Maltese Islands, with over 1300 members.
- Founded in 1962 by a handful of bird enthusiasts, MOS is also the oldest conservation movement in the country.
- The aims of MOS are the study and protection of wild birds and their habitat.
- MOS conducts ornithological studies and publishes its scientific bulletin – Il-Merill.
- MOS runs the Valletta Bird Ringing Scheme.
- MOS organises various indoor and outdoor activities for its members.
- MOS publishes its yearly members' magazine – Birds' Eye View.
- MOS has a thriving youth section which publishes its own magazine, to cater for budding naturalists.
- MOS co-ordinates a network of teacher delegates in schools to help convey the conservation message to the younger generation.
- MOS informs people about birds and about threats to birdlife. This is done through public actions, lectures, exhibitions, films, talks, publications and use of the media.
- MOS maintains close co-operation with national and international conservation organisations both in Malta and abroad.



(photo: Natalino Fenech)

During the past decade the White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* has attracted major attention and international concern, particularly in Europe, where its rapid population decline has been alarming. One of the main threats to its future survival is human persecution. A galling example of the later was witnessed lately in Malta. The White Stork is a rare and irregular visitor but this autumn saw no fewer than 20 birds in small flocks, which tried to land for a rest. Their visit ended tragically thanks to the Maltese "hunters".



AN MOS PUBLICATION

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