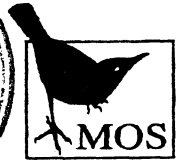


Bird-talk

ISSUE 8
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Robins at Large

A bird that almost everyone can recognise is little Robin redbreast, the Christmas card bird. Robins can be seen in Maltese gardens, parks and countryside from Autumn to Spring and heard as well. Robins are extremely proud little birds, once they have moved into an area they will claim it as theirs. This is known as 'territorial behaviour'. Should another robin enter an inhabited territory, the original robin will puff out its red breast and advance aggressively upon the invader.



This action easily leads to robins being trapped - especially by children. A caged robin is placed in the

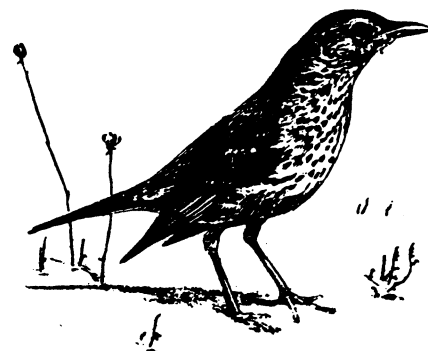
territory of the free robin who then moves towards the caged robin - and is trapped.



MOS has held yearly robin campaigns to educate children about such things as robins, robin trapping and bird feeding. After years of being bombarded by robin stickers, posters, street exhibitions and talks the message seems to be getting through. Robin trapping, although still a problem is less widespread than formerly. Perhaps one day the robin will be able to fly freely without having to be wary of trappers.



To make this happen MOS must continue campaigning in schools and in the streets. You can help by admonishing children you see trapping birds, sell our stickers and talk about robins if you are a teacher or parent. Also, why not help us financially by coming on the sponsored walk with us. If you are unable to attend please send a donation - however small - to the Robin Marathon Fund.



Young at Heart

Interested in doing some conservation work? Then why not join us for a week-end camp in Gozo between the 13th and 15th November, where we will be planting several trees. Development over the past decades has left our countryside raped of its former tree coverage. We will plant various native trees, such as Pines, Carobs and Oaks. For more details phone Ian after 8.00pm (tel 440964).

RJTH

NEWS

Shooting at Is-Simar: A number of birds have been shot at Is-Simar Nature Reserve despite the fact that it has been declared a bird sanctuary. Waders and a coot have been the victims of these vandals. It is a priority that the reserve be fenced to keep out the shooters.

Police raid taxidermist: Mr Anthony Cauchi of Nadur, Gozo was caught in a police raid. This taxidermist was found to have two freezers full of birds waiting to be stuffed. Police also found 4 live honey buzzards and one long-eared owl. Mr Cauchi was fined Lm100 and the freezers and their contents were confiscated. The live birds were given to MOS to be released into the wild. This action was taken after MOS passed information to the Parliamentary Secretary for the environment.

Saturday 17th October: A group of people from the San Blas Drug Rehabilitation Centre visited the Ghadira Nature reserve for some bird watching.

Used batteries: Please do not throw away your used batteries. As part of a national campaign MOS will be collecting batteries at the MOS Nature Shop. This action is being taken as a waste recycling plant is soon going to be put into action and obviously, all toxic waste must be removed before recycling. Batteries contain high levels of poisonous substances such as mercury. The batteries will then be given to the Secretariat for the Environment

Ballet Concert: If you would like some Ballet Concert posters to put up in your shop or a shop near you please contact MOS.

Ghadira is open: For an interesting outing go along to the Ghadira Nature Reserve. The reserve (entrance is free) is open to the public on Saturday and Sunday from 9am -4pm. Small groups are taken in at hourly intervals. Non-members can join MOS at the reserve.

Buskett raided: Police raided Buskett on the 25th of September to stop illegal shooting. While MOS congratulates the Police force for such action it is obvious that more must be done. MOS is proposing that a small group of dedicated police officers patrol Buskett regularly.

Arrests at Sea: 3 men were arrested by the police on the 4th of October after being caught with three shot guns in their dinghy. After failing in their attempt to outrun the patrol boat the men denied that the guns were for bird shooting.

Injured birds: A constant stream of birds into the injured birds unit peaked on 27th & 28th of September when three Marsh Harriers and four kestrels were brought into MOS. Just imagine how many we don't know about.

Shooting licence: MOS proposed to Minister John Dalli (Minister of Finance) that as from the next financial year the fee for a bird shooting licence be increased considerably. The reason for this request is that MOS believes that the present fee is far too low to compensate for the harm being done to the Maltese environment.

EURING CONFERENCE

The MOS Research Committee is organising the Euring Conference in Malta from 24 - 28th November at Mount St. Joseph, Targa Gap. Euring is the association of bird-ringing schemes in Europe and North Africa. Of the 28 ringing schemes in Europe 18 have sent in their registration forms and more are expected. The main aim of the Euring Conference is to discuss the running of the schemes, the standardization and improvement in the methodology used in the ringing, co-ordination of studies etc.

The first two days of the conference will deal with the above mentioned details. On Friday 27th November an Ornithological Symposium open to all MOS members will be held. Several speakers will deliver talks on subjects varying from Africa to waders to migration. It should prove to be an interesting day.

If you are interested to attend this one day symposium please write immediately to **The Chairman - MOS Research Committee**, at the MOS address, and put it down on your diary

Photo Clip

This month's competition is based on TREES. To win 2 rolls of Kodacolor Gold II, 36 exposure film, donated by P.Cutajar & Co. Ltd, all you have to do is take up to tree photos having TREES as the main topic.

Please note that all pictures must have been taken in Malta. The closing date for this months competition is November 31st.

Good luck

Membership

We have not yet reached this year's membership of 3,000 members. You can help us reach our target by enrolling members for MOS. Don't forget we are giving a porcelain Merill for every adult members enrolled. For more information or membership leaflets phone MOS on 230687.

Walk for the Robin

There are still a few days to go before the MOS Robin Marathon on the 8th of November. Don't forget, every sponsorship you collect will help MOS make Malta a safer place for birds.... and at the same time **you could win a Lm25 voucher for yourself!** That's right, if you collect the greatest amount of money by the day of the Marathon you will receive a LM25 gift voucher redeemable at the MOS Nature Shop. So go for it!

On the morning of **Sunday the 8th November** all participants will meet in the **Paola Square at 8.30 am** we'll be trooping off towards Birzebbuga at 9.00am. See you there!



The Ballet School
of Mary Jane Bellia & Ray Mamo
&

Malta Ornithological Society

proudly present a

Ballet for Birds

Tickets from:

The Ballet School, Gzira
MOS, St. Lucia St, Valletta
G. Spiteri Debono, Republic St. (optician)
At the door

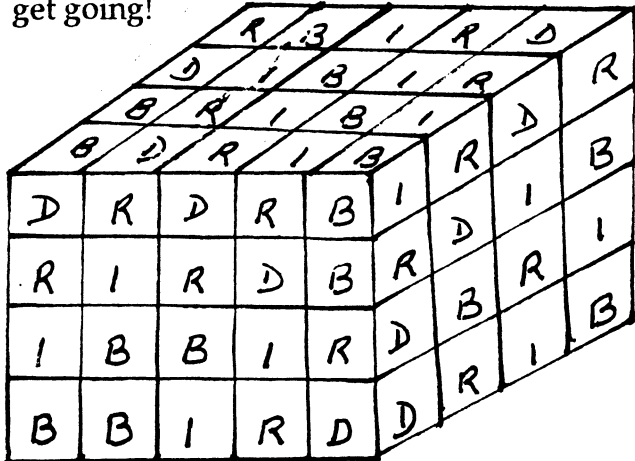
28th & 29th NOVEMBER at 7.30 p.m.
at ST. AGATHA HALL, RABAT

Price: Lm1.50
Tel: 230684



Birdbox

How many times can you find the word 'Bird' in the box below? There are 15 in all... get going!



This month's prize is a set of bird prints. Last month's winner was Trevor Taliana.

Reader's Question

Dear Editor,

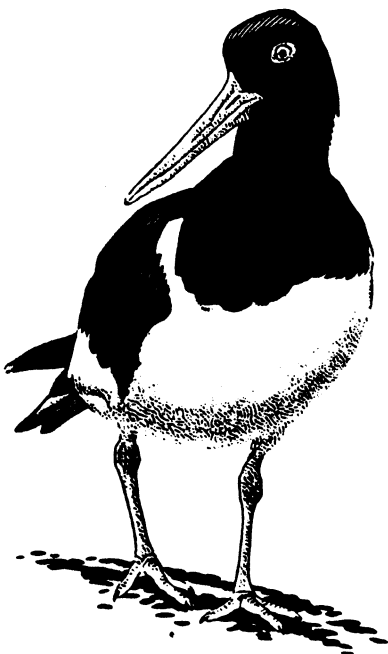
Once again I wish to congratulate you for your excellent newsletter. I have a question that you might like to publish.

The Manx Shearwater is a native of the North Atlantic. Is this also the case with the Cory's shearwaters? Is it possible to believe that the Cory's Shearwaters in Malta preferred our climate and when was it that the Cory's Shearwater travelled to Malta making our island its land base? Finally how is it that the idea to name the Cory's Shearwater our national bird has been hooted? I wish every success to MOS.

Thank you, Victoria Joan Galea (Sliema).

Thank you for your letter. Although the Manx Shearwater does have North Atlantic colonies, it also breeds in the Mediterranean. Cory's Shearwaters are mainly Mediterranean residents and so would probably have lived here for millenia. This species of bird breeds in crevices among rocky cliffs on islands and so found an ideal habitat in Malta. There are approximately 8-10,000 breeding pairs (plus non breeding birds) of Cory's Shearwaters on Malta.

As for your last question, the Blue Rock Thrush (Il-Merill) has already been declared the National Bird of Malta.



Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*.