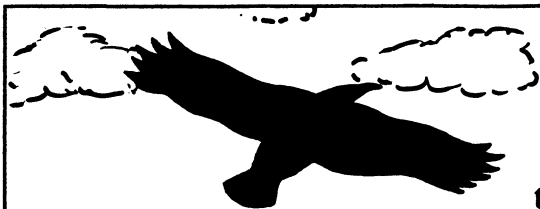


Bird-talk

ISSUE 6
SEPT 92



Majestic Migrants



Millions of birds undertake long journeys twice annually in the seasonal migration of birds - a fascinating natural phenomenon. Birds fly south in autumn to spend the winter in countries providing food and a milder climate, then return to their breeding quarters in the following spring. Many species are involved but few are as spectacular in flight as the birds of prey. These winged aristocrats are marvellous to watch. Some are able to soar and circle endlessly to great heights, using the warm rising air of land masses.

Unlike many other species, birds of prey are diurnal migrants and very often reach Maltese shores late in the afternoon. Those which arrive late in the day seek a roosting site to spend the night here (whether they succeed or not is another, different, sad story).

Although there are species such as harriers, and to a certain extent falcons, which do not hesitate to cross the Mediterranean Sea at its wide crossings, most of the birds of prey, such as the honey buzzard (kuċċarda) choose the shortest stretches of water. The birds that come to Malta look for a safe place to rest, a place full of trees and dense undercover...Buskett.

Foto: Hans Gebuhr



Little do the poor birds know that hunters are waiting expectantly to shoot them. It is a tragedy that there are still "several people" who indulge in the mindless slaughter of these magnificent birds.

Structure Plan for Malta

Last month Parliament approved a Structure Plan for the Maltese islands. The plan sets down policies regarding the various kinds of land so as to improve all aspects of the environment, both man-made and natural.

MOS welcomed the Structure Plan as it is the only tool to halt and control environmental destruction.



Editor's Box

Welcome to the sixth issue of Bird-talk, the MOS Newsletter. It's amazing but six months have flown by since the first issue of April.

What a pity that not everything can fly past as quickly or as safely. September means but one thing to the blood-thirsty shooters...birds of prey.

Protected species such as Eleonora's falcons fall before the hunter's fury. Thousands of majestic raptors will be shot down in September, denied the right to life.

Now is the time to put pen to paper and write a letter to the newspapers. If there is enough pressure, if we can have enough members, then we CAN make a difference. Times are changing, once bird shooters could walk around with a bloody corpse and impress people, nowadays it is environmental awareness that impresses people. Get people to join MOS and help the birds, they need all the help they can get.

Joseph
The Editor

MOS Bird Week

What do ospreys, marsh harriers and Eleonora's falcons all have in common (apart from the fact that they are all birds of prey)? The answer: they are all blasted out of the sky as they pass over Malta.

Each year thousands of these proud, majestic birds end up destined for the taxidermist. To let everyone know just what is happening MOS is organising a Bird of Prey Week at Citygate, Valletta (31st August to 5th September). During this time MOS will raise funds, enrol new members and attempt to educate people.

If you have a friend who wants to join (or might be persuaded to do so) bring them along. We are aiming for 100 new members, so we'll need your help. It is important that MOS takes action now. We no longer have barn owls or peregrine falcons in Malta, why must we try to kill of what is left?

KESTREL BOOKS

TIGAN FLATS - No2 C.DeBrocktorff Str, Msida - Tel 319105/334877
Send for a free illustrated catalogue and Kestrel news - the info guide to new and forthcoming books. Next open days: 19-20-21 Sept
Opening hours: 10.00am-1.00pm and 2.00pm-5.00pm all three days
Over 500 books to choose from all birds and natural history.
Bargains and discounts will be available for open days only.

News

* Members of the Hamrun Scout Group were allowed to camp at Xemxija up to August 23rd. Dr Stanley Zammit, Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment has agreed to offer them an alternative camp site for next summer. It is impossible for camping to continue in a nature reserve as vital breeding sites could be unknowingly disturbed.

*The present MOS Council is as follows:

President: Joe Doublet

Hon Secretary: Denis Cachia

Hon Treasurer: William Wait

Chairpersons of Committees:

Education: Desiree Falzon

Youth: Victor Falzon

Research: Joe Sultana

Conservation: Victor Borg

Members: Joe Attard Jackie Cremona

Max Farrugia Ray Galea

DANCE MOS
DISCO

The Eden Leisure Group have kindly offered to let MOS use Stownes Disco, Bugibba, for the evening. This festival of fun will be held on Saturday 10 October from 8.30pm onwards. The entrance fee is Lm1.50. There are bound to be queues so get smart and send Lm1.50 to MOS POBox498 Valletta CMR 01.

If you order ten tickets (for your friends etc) you get 1 ticket free of charge. Tickets are also available from the MOS Shop 64 St Lucia Str Valletta and at the door.



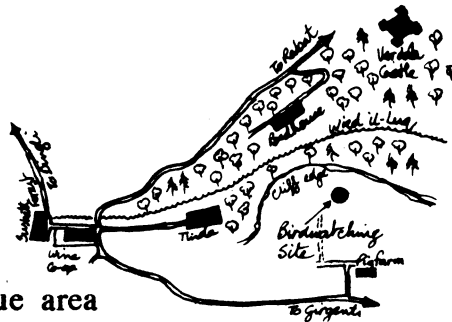
Young at Heart

Hi bird fans!

The birds of prey are arriving! This means that several birdwatchers will be converging on one particular garigue area overlooking Buskett valley, like pilgrims on a holy shrine. This site (see map) is now a traditional MOS lookout in raptor time, indeed it was formerly occupied by skygazing shooters. So you can lay your bets that on every day of September and a good chunk of October, from mid-afternoon till sundown, there will be MOS people manning this special post, logging raptor species and numbers coming in - and, sadly, raptor species and numbers being blazed out of the skies by bird killers who call themselves sportsmen. If you fancy a challenging afternoon of bird spotting and identification, join us there: we'll be most glad to fill you in on the latest sightings.

The number of young MOSY members is increasing, and we urgently need mature members who are willing to help out as leaders during our activities. You don't have to be an expert ornithologist or anything of that sort. If you enjoy sharing nature with children, you will make a perfect Youth Leader. Please phone Desiree Falzon on 434703.

Ruth



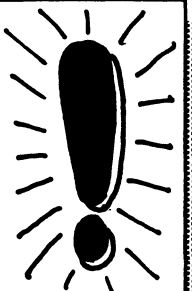
STAMPS

MOS has decided to start a stamp collection...to raise funds. Used stamps can help MOS raise vital funds. When you receive a letter don't throw out the stamp. To help us, cut a 1cm border round the stamps before you send them in: do not try to tear the stamp off the envelope as it loses its value.



HELP!

MOSYouths need people to help act as leaders on their activities. See *Young at Heart* for details.



PROTECTED ...FINALLY

Life is looking up for two families of Maltese animals - the reptiles and marine mammals. Laws have been passed which totally protect these animals. It is now illegal to interfere with the lives of any Maltese lizard, gecko, skink, sea turtle, snake, dolphin, whale, porpoise or seal. Endemic species such as the Maltese wall lizard (found nowhere in the world but the Maltese Islands and two other islets) should no longer have to worry about extinction. Chamæleons should no longer be harassed and taken home in plastic bags or jam jars.

The law states clearly that:

No person shall pursue, take or attempt to take, kill or attempt to kill, possess, buy, sell, exchange, import, export any of the species listed in the schedule.

Any person who commits an offence will be charged Lm25 (first time) and Lm100 for every subsequent event - for each specimen involved.

These laws really are a step in the right direction. If these laws are enforced, the sight of turtles butchered for sale, crushed lizards and dead dolphins should become a thing of the past.

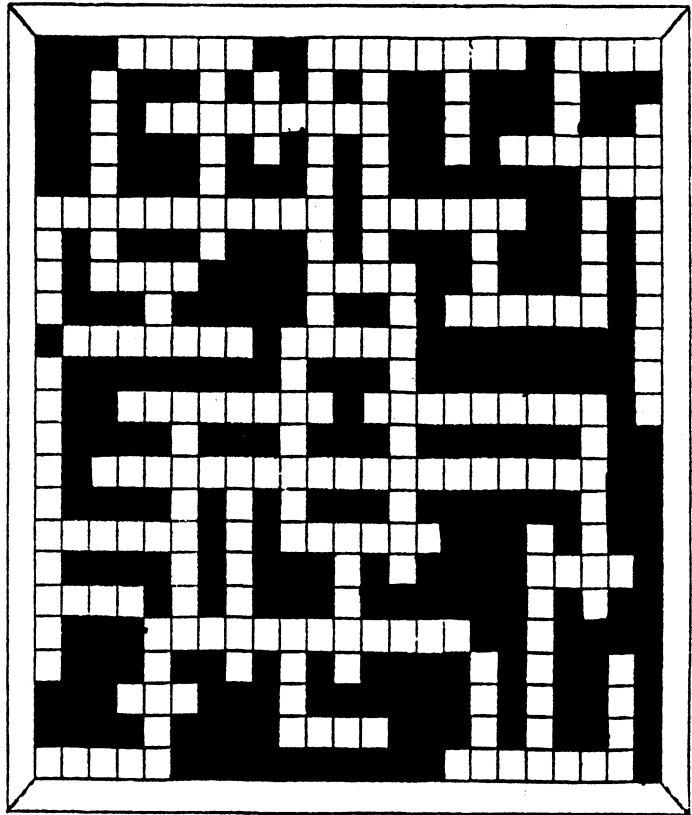
Government has moved to protect reptiles and marine mammals. It is meanwhile a shame that millions of birds are still shot every year. MOS expects that the bird protection laws are updated and enforced immediately.



PUZZLE

This month's competition was thought up by Fiona Cutajar. Fit the words below into the grid opposite. Once all of the words are in place, rush it to MOS as quickly as you can and win this month's prize, a bird poster!

- 3-letter: jay - owl - tit.
- 4-letter: coot - lark - swan - crow - pica - teal - gull - rook - tern - hawk - shag - ruff - ibis - skua.
- 5-letter: drake - stilt - crane - heron - twite - loxia.
- 6-letter: falcon - hoopoe - magpie - puffin - thrush - willet.
- 7-letter: goshawk - swallow - jackdaw - warbler - moorhen - tattler - skylark.
- 8-letter: bobolink - shelduck - bee-eater - pipixcan - prunella.
- 9-letter: brambling - kittiwake.
- 10-letter: bearded-tit - green-heron - nutcracker - yellowlegs.
- 11-letter: golden-eagle.
- 12-letter: capercaillie
- 19-letter: larus-melanocephalus



Last month's winners were Nicholas and Christina Vassallo from Sliema.



Peregrine falcon
Falco peregrinus