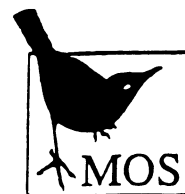


Bird-talk

ISSUE 3
JUNE 92



Xemxija Update

By the 15th of May, the amount raised for the Xemxija appeal had risen to over Lm2700 and still rising. This goes to show just how dedicated MOS members are to save birds.

Twenty five percent of MOS members have sent in a donation, that's one in every four. At this rate birds should be settling down in the new reserve very soon.

Over Lm60 were collected during the flower fair at San Anton. The tireless collectors were Mickey and Francesca Gambina, Alison Xuereb and Simon Cox, all budding MOSY members.

ALL THE FUN OF THE FAIR

Well, fun for those who visit the fair but hard work for the people who have to run them.

This year saw the launch of the highly attended and widely acclaimed GREEN WEEK. This fair - which dealt mainly with agriculture, horticulture and the environment - ran from the 22nd to the 26th of April and was visited by over 20,000 people.

Over three hundred of these people walked away with more than just a potted plant or a handful of leaflets. During those five days the MOS membership rose by 304 raising the total membership to over 2600!

Thanks go to everyone who joined, your support will help immensely. A word of thanks is also due to all the helpers who helped to recruit so many new members. These people worked tirelessly for hours on end talking, persuading, arguing (several bird-killers had very loud opinions to state) with prospective members.



MOS 30th Annual General Meeting

"MOS is alarmed by the thousands upon thousands of birds that are being killed during Spring migration."

"MOS is alarmed that nothing is being done by the authorities concerned to stop the breaking of bird protection laws."

The above statements were made during the 30th edition of the MOS Annual General Meeting held on May 5th at Giuseppe Despott Hall, Floriana.

Mr Joe Doublet, MOS President read his report which was followed by the MOS Director's Report.

Both reports focused on last year's garnishee, the need for professionalism within MOS as well as the increase in membership levels (Dec. '91 - 2242, May '92 - 2677). MOS Director Paul Portelli stated that the number of full time MOS employees was expected to increase in the coming months.

The AGM continued with the amendments being proposed by the council in order to refine the MOS statute changing it into a vital working part of the society. All of the proposals were accepted and passed by majority vote. The AGM closed with the resolution that MOS should encourage the authorities to bring bird protection laws up to European Community standards as soon as possible.

Editor's Box

At MOS you learn one thing very quickly: always expect the unexpected. Tomorrow could bring absolutely anything and we have to be prepared. Who would have dreamt that two bird killers would break into Ghadira, physically threaten the watchman, then go out and slaughter two beautiful little egrets?

On the brighter note was the Green Week (22-26 April). We managed to increase membership by over three hundred in just five days. It was extremely encouraging to realise that so many people care enough about birds to join MOS.

Finally I'd like to thank all of you who wrote in to say how much they liked BIRDTALK and also those who took part in the quiz.

Don't forget: enrol a member and receive a free Blue Rock Thrush statue.

Joseph.
Editor

GHADIRA - THE OTHER SIDE

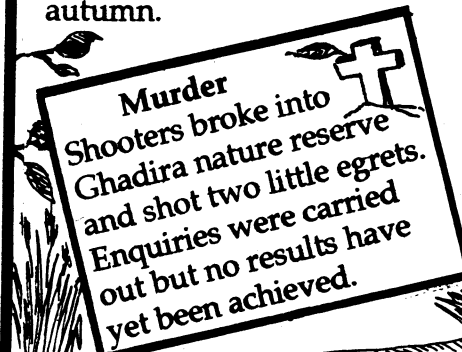
With the coming of summer, the number of birds at Ghadira dwindles, as the migratory birds head north to breed.

The birds may have left, but the nature reserve is far from empty. A nature reserve like Ghadira, albeit artificial to a certain extent, contains several habitats suitable for mammals, reptiles and of course fish.

The main species of mammal found on the reserve are rabbits, hedgehogs and mice. Weasels are also present, but don't hold your breath too long waiting to spot them: these animals are furtive, not so active in full daylight and anyway there aren't millions of them.

Reptiles, meanwhile, abound in summer: lizards, snakes, geckos, skinks and chameleons all bask in the hot sun and feast on the insect life.

In the water itself, at least three species of fish can be found. The number of fish in the pool is more evident in summer as water level subsides, much to the delight of birds returning in autumn.



Shooter Encounter of the Worst Kind

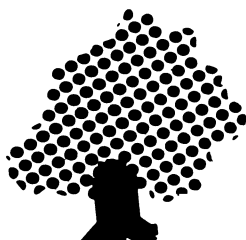
For Fabrizia, a young Gozitan girl, a peaceful horse ride was devastated when she witnessed a hunter shoot and injure a short-eared owl.

Fabrizia begged the hunter to spare the poor bird's life. The bird killer obviously found the situation extremely amusing. The bird killer was on the verge of slaughtering the owl, when Fabrizia pleaded with him to trade the bird for Lm10.

One would have expected the shooter to give up the bird freely or at least explain that the owl was essential to his collection (!!). But no...on smelling money the shooter threw what few principles he might have had to the wind and promptly became a small boy craving for money.

Fabrizia was given the bird (after handing over the money) and the bird is now recovering at the MOS Injured Bird Unit.

MOS members are NOT encouraged to pay money for injured birds as this will encourage bird killers to embark on a lucrative trade in selling injured birds to nature lovers. Report all incidents to MOS.



PRINTCARE

OFFSET AND LETTERPRESS PRINTING

106, St. Lucia Str., Valletta. - Tel: 239222.

MOS news

A BayRadio debate about hunting was attended by an MOS official on April 26.

APRIL 30: MOS members ran a stand about MOS at the University of Malta. This was part of an environmental awareness campaign organised by ARBOR. Lm19 were raised for the Xemxija Appeal during this event.

The MOS scientific journal IL-MERILL has just been published and mailed to scientific institutions around the world, as well as to all those members who have requested it in the past. This year's edition contains papers about Storm Petrel, Short-toed Lark and Cormorants. There are also 18 short notes about various aspects of birdlife. The systematic list and ringing reports for 1989 are also included. Each member is entitled to one free copy. Extra copies are available at LM1 each.

May 2: Police from Victoria police station removed two large vertical nets from Xewkija, Gozo. These nets, besides being illegal, are extremely cruel as all types of birds are caught, often left tangled in the meshes for hours, sometimes overnight. No one stepped forward to claim the nets, so no one could be prosecuted. Police action was rapid in this case, but what about all the other nets that have been reported - and are still there wreaking their share of destruction?

St Thomas Bay and Marsascala were recently the unusual site of a Honey Buzzard massacre. One tourist from a hotel in the area reported seeing 13 Honey Buzzards shot down in two hours.

May 26: Dr Joe Borg of the EC Directorate met MOS officials to discuss European Community bird directives. Also discussed was Malta's prospective entry into the EC, and the effect that illegal hunting may have on our application.

The Ghadira nature reserve will be closed to the public as from June 1. It will reopen in autumn.

In April, MOS Education officer Desiree Falzon and MOS Youth officer Victor Falzon attended a course on Education and Youth at RSPB headquarters in Bedfordshire, UK. The aim of this course was to improve on the structure and function of the MOS Education Unit and MOSY.



Members wishing to receive their free copy of IL-MERILL are to write to MOS .

Situation Vacant

EDUCATION OFFICER

Career Opportunity

The Malta Ornithological Society requires a dedicated person to be responsible for the educational work of MOS.

The successful applicant who will be expected to start work in September 1992, will organise and service the MOS School Delegate System. He/She will also be responsible for the organisation of the MOS educational campaigns.

The post is ideal for a person with organisational abilities and classroom experience. Knowledge about the natural environment will be useful but not essential as full training both locally and abroad will be given to the right applicant. Driving licence essential.

Salary commensurate with experience / qualifications.

Please send your full c.v. to:

The Director
MOS
P.O. Box 498
Valletta

Hi there bird fans,

Finally we have some space in the MOS Newsletter for those adults who are still young at heart. The editor, Joseph, asked me to write something about the Youth section of MOS so I'd better get on with it! MOSY started out in 1969, and at the moment there are almost 1000 members aged between 5 and 18. MOSY organises a load of activities for the youth members: hikes, camps, tree planting, birdwatching, talks stc. However, why should the fun stop when you reach the ripe old age of 18?! MOSY is now offering to let "adult" members to attend some of the activities organised for MOS Youth members. So if you are under 25 years old and free, come along to one of our activities and see what MOSY is all about. I'll be keeping you up to date through this column, and rest assured all MOSY activities are full of fun, entertainment. You also get the satisfaction of having done something for our threatened environment. Our first activity is a very interesting slide show about the natural environment of Malta, which will be given to us by the legendary Joe Sultana. Date: 4 June 1992 - Place: Despott Hall, Floriana - Time: 6.30pm. Did you write that down in your diaries? Good, so I'll see you there. Till then, Ciao.

Birdfreak

Ruth

ps Now that we have our own corner, we should decide on what to call it. If anyone can come up with a bright idea before June 15th, please write to me at BIRDTALK.. I'M COUNTING ON YOU!!

BIRD-CROSS

Here is this month's quiz: a birdy cross word!

Last month's winners were Ms Victoria Galea and Ms VM Gauci. Well done to everyone who took part.

Get busy solving the quiz because this month we're giving away a set of bird prints to the first correct answer!

A clue to the puzzle: all answers are names of birds.

Across

- 1 Yellow crested, white, parrot from down under (8)
- 3 Sir Francis _____ (5)
- 5 The great one is extinct (3)
- 7 Mistle, Rock, Song _____ (6)
- 9 The Christmas card bird (5)
- 11 Nursery rhyme: Mother _____ (5)
- 13 One of these is scarlet (4)
- 16 Sounds like an underground digger (5)

Down

- 1 Lifts up heavy objects (5)
- 2 Peregrine? (6)
- 4 Polly is one of these (6)
- 6 A duck (4)
- 8 Wing made of wax! (7)
- 10 Pallid, Hen, Marsh _____ (7)
- 12 Australian ostrich (3)
- 14 A baby bird (5)
- 15 Eyes like a _____ (4)

