



BirdTalk



NEWSLETTER OF THE MALTA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

JUNE '93

NEW LAWS RUFFLE FEATHERS

On Sunday 30 May...

While the Hunters and Trappers Ass. was holding a protest march in Rabat to show its disapproval of the new proposals and its intention to continue the bird destruction, MOS held a press conference together with five other environmental societies to condemn the hunters and trappers attempt to resist laws to protect birds.

The Federation of Hunters of the EEC (FACE) whose membership also includes

the local hunting association is in favour of the proposed new regulations put forward by MOS.

Dr Yves Lecocq, the secretary general of FACE wrote to MOS stating that these proposals serve as a sound base for dialogue, with the aim of introducing these new laws.

Dr Lecocq also agrees, that these new regulations have been modelled on the European Community's directive of bird conservation.

THE KARLCHREUTER REPORT

Dr Antoine Vella, a biologist analysed a report written by Dr H. Karlchreuter a biologist/hunter describing it as unscientific since it was based on hearsay and not on research.

Dr H. Karlchreuter, was commissioned by the Hunting Association to compile a report regarding hunting in Malta. This report was written after the author visited Malta on two 5 day visits. The report was nothing but a justification of hunting.

RADIO DEBATE

The radio station Super One conducted a debate program about the hunting issue.

Mr Paul Portelli and Mr Joe Doublet, Director and President respectively of MOS and Mr Joe Percici Calasione and Mr Aldo Azzopardi, President and Ass. Secretary respectively of the Hunting and Trapping Association debated Malta's hunting problems in a marathon three hour program.

MLP IN FAVOUR OF BERNE CONVENTION

The Hon. Dr. Alfred Sant MP leader of the Malta Labour Party (MLP), recently stated in a television debate that the MLP agrees with the signing of the Berne Convention.

MOS notes with satisfaction that, all the political parties appreciate the need to safeguard our fauna and flora and to create the necessary legislation in that regard.

LPO Project in French Guiana

French Guiana is the smallest South American country with an area of 90,000 km². It is almost entirely covered by tropical rain forest. The population is only 120,000 but growing rapidly. The majority of people are concentrated in the narrow coastal band.

As in most tropical rain forests, hunting played an important part in traditional societies. Today the hunting pressure has greatly increased due to a relatively rich, urbanised population using sophisticated equipment such as high performance guns, 4x4 vehicles and spotlights.

Penetration into the forest has been made easier by the creation of forestry tracks. As a result the animal populations have declined despite there are protected species. For example the Scarlet ibis and Toco toucan are massacred to a point that these species will not survive long.

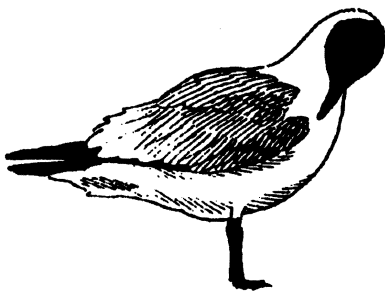
The French society for the protection of birds LPO is co-operating with the local administration in a project to develop the environmental awareness among the population.

MOS gives its moral support to the LPO in this project.

Different but the same

According to various newspaper reports there seems to be another hunting association in the pipeline.

The name of this new association is Ghaqda Dilettanti tas-Senter u l-Gabjun (Association of Enthusiasts of the Shot-gun and the Trapping Cage).



Black Headed Gull

Although they do not associate themselves with any other association, their aims are similar to the existing hunting association i.e.. to retain their favourite pastime of hunting and trapping of birds.

This new association officially started to function on 5 June which also happened to be World Environment Day.

CAN YOU HELP ?

MOS is in the process of producing two posters with a strong message regarding bird protection. We need members to help in distributing the posters.

These posters are effective in highlighting the realities that occur in our countryside. Help us to get this message across.

BIRDS NEED OUR HELP!

If you would like to receive these posters to exhibit in your office or shop, please contact Paul Portelli or Peter Camilleri on 230684.

Libel Action

MOS is suing The Association of Hunters and Trappers for damages regarding a press release they issued some time ago saying that MOS is ready to harm the Maltese to reach its aims.

MOS felt slandered by this press release and after taking legal advice, it decided to take court action. Dr Toni Abela LL.D. is representing MOS.

OF BIRDS AND MEN

Herbert Axell

Herbert Axell is synonymous with Ghadira Nature Reserve in Malta. Under the scorching sun of the Maltese summer, he spent many days there, directing heavy machinery to create ditches, islands and pools according to his design.

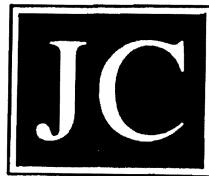
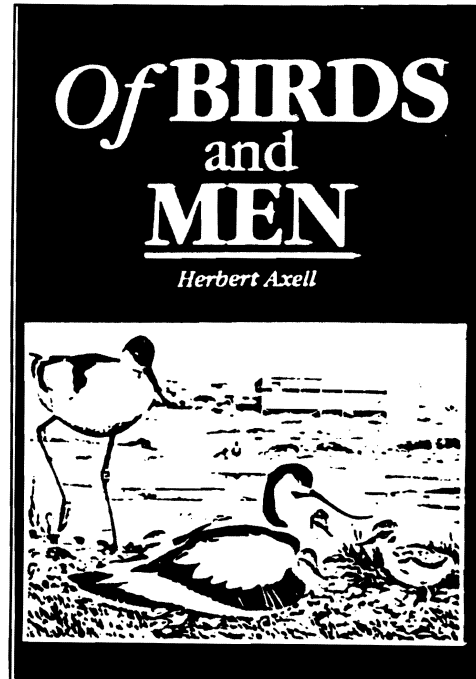
This story is told in style in his book "OF BIRDS AND MEN". This book is an autobiography of an extraordinary man, who spent his lifetime for birds and conservation.

He devotes a whole chapter to Malta in which he also gives an account of the killing

and trapping of birds which takes place here.

Mr Axell, an expert in land use for bird conservation has taken his techniques around the globe, planning, lecturing and advising over twenty countries, from America to China and from Spain and Australia, collecting awards, including the M.B.E. along the way. All this is told with modesty, style and good humour in a book which will be definitely enjoyed if read.

Members who would like to buy this book may order it through MOS.



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Bird-watch

The most frequently spotted birds are sparrows, robins, starlings or perhaps swifts. However, if you go to the right places there are many many other birds to watch. These places were mentioned in last month's newsletter.

April brought in an interesting variety of birds. In the first two days of April about 675 Garganeys, a type of duck, and 75 Curlews were spotted off Il-Qammieh, l/o Mellieha.

The Ghadira Nature Reserve was host to, among others, sandpipers, kingfishers, black-winged Stilts (drawing below), and the now quite rare Glossy Ibis. Another rare

visitor was the Squacco Heron.

Although Is-Simar Nature Reserve at Xemxija is not complete, birds are already using this resting place on their migration path. The visitors included the Grey and Purple Heron and the Ferruginous Duck.

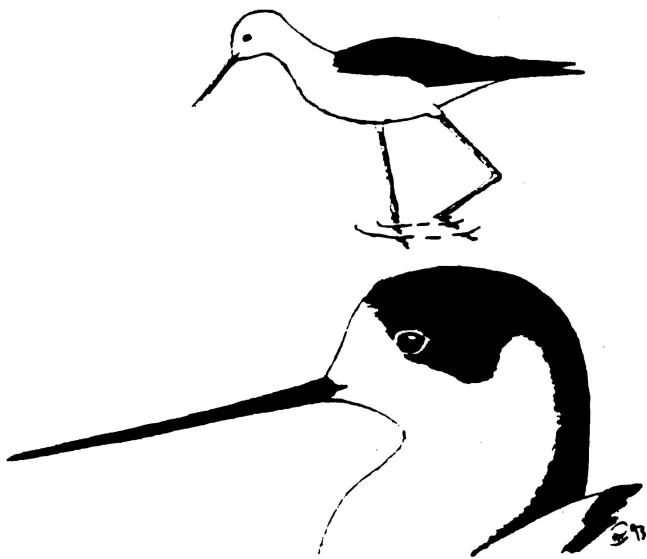
Due to its protected status the island of Comino enjoys many bird sightings. There, a large number of Subalpine Warblers were observed as well as the Little Bittern, the Cuckoo, the Hobby, the Hoopoe, and the former breeder in our islands, the Peregrine Falcon.

In Ramla Bay, Gozo, one of the

smallest but most beautiful of the falcon species was observed. This was the Red-Footed Falcon, with its bright coloured feet and beak. Its feathers are of a velvet powdery blue colour.

Next month, we shall talk about the sort of equipment you can use to enjoy this relaxing past-time. If you have seen an unusual bird, please write and tell us about it and where you have seen it. We would like to know.

Please note that the Ghadira Nature Reserve has closed for the summer months. The Reserve will reopen in the first weekend of October.



Black-winged Stilt

