

Bird-talk



NEWSLETTER OF THE MALTA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY ISSUE 10 March '93



On March 3rd MOS, Malta's largest conservation society, will become partners with other bird conservation societies in over 100 countries, in launching the world's largest bird organisation - **BirdLife International**.

The organisation's aims are to prevent the further extinction of any bird species in the wild.

Of the world's 9,700 different bird species, 1,000 are currently threatened with extinction. In their efforts to solve this problem, BirdLife partners are pooling their expertise and resources to be in a stronger position to tackle these threats.

Altogether, BirdLife partners membership is in excess of 1.2 million people and spend in the order of Lm 80 million per annum on conservation work.

With effect from March 3rd, our stationery will feature BirdLife International's logo along with ours. You will be interested to know that you now form part of the world's largest bird conservation body and MOS can benefit immensely from such an international association.

International Award

The Dutch bird society is honouring Joe Sultana with the Gouden Lepelaar (the golden pin of the spoonbill) which will coincide with the launch of BirdLife International.

Joe, who is an MOS Council Member and past MOS President, is being recognised as having considerably contributed to the protection and conservation of birds.

Forum

Il-Kacca u l-Politika is the theme of a forum, being organised on the occasion of the launching of BirdLife International.

The forum will be held on Saturday March 6th in the Guiseppe Despott Hall at the Ministry of Education in Floriana at 9.30am.

The guest speakers are :

- *Dr. Stanley Zammit
Parliamentary
Secretary for the
Environment.*
- *Mr. Charles Buhagiar
M.L.P spokesman
for the environment.*
- *Mr. Saviour Balzan,
spokesman for A.D.*
- *Mr. Victor Vella,
president of the
Hunters Assoc.*

Members are urged to attend and air their views in this discussion.

MOS

for stricter laws

MOS has recently submitted a set of detailed proposals for a reviewed bird protection legislation to Dr Stanley Zammit, Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment.

The Society prepared these proposals in response to Dr Stanley Zammit's public declaration that, his Secretariat is working on new legislation.

The main changes being proposed by the MOS are:

- The abolition of hunting at sea.
- The closed season for hunting should commence on March 1st instead of May 22nd.
- The restriction of trapping to the months of October and November.
- The restriction of trapping to private land.
- The prohibition of shooting on Sundays and public holidays.
- The abolition automatic shot-guns.
- The prohibition of possession of protected birds (even stuffed).
- The prohibition of trading in wild birds.
- Fines to be increased considerably.

MOS looks forward to a favourable response to these proposals which are badly needed to protect the little wildlife we have left.

31st Annual General Meeting

The 31st Annual General Meeting of the Malta Ornithological Society will be held on Wednesday 24th March at 6.00pm in the Giuseppe Despott Hall at the Ministry Of Education in Floriana.

The Agenda for the meeting is :

1. Address by MOS President.
2. Reading of Minutes.
3. Reading of Director's Report for 1992.
4. Reading of Hon. Treasurer's Report.
5. Appointment of auditors for 1993.
6. Statute amendments.
7. Resolutions.

The MOS Council is proposing a number of amendments to the MOS statute. The proposed amendments are being put forward because of the MOS set-up.

It is proposed, that section 7.c.7. should read :

The Council shall appoint any committee deemed necessary to implement the policy of the Society. The Council shall appoint a Chairperson and any number of other members deemed necessary to form this committee. The Chairperson will represent this committee on the Council if he or she is not already a Council member.

This clause will replace 7.c.7., 7.c.8., 7.c.9. and 7.c.10.

Members are kindly asked to bring their membership cards to the meeting.

Vandals strike again

Unknown persons slashed all four tyres of the MOS director's car, *twice in one week*. These acts of vandalism took place during the nights of the 8th and 15th February, whilst the car was parked in front of Paul Portelli's residence. Some months ago, the car's paint work was also destroyed after paint remover was thrown on the car.

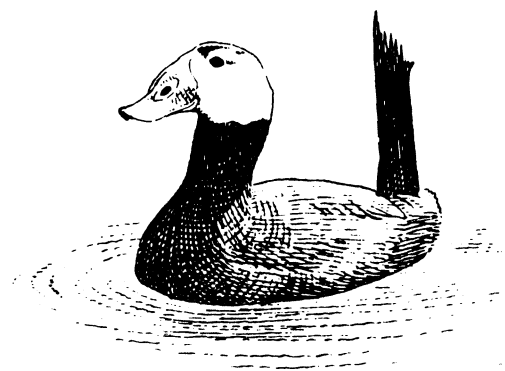
This act was another attempt to silence MOS. MOS will not be deterred in its fight to protect birds. With your support, we will continue with our campaign to stop the destruction of our birds.

One of Europe's Rarest Ducks under attack

The European white-headed duck is a rare bird found only in Spain. It is now under threat by another species - the ruddy duck. The ruddy duck is an American bird. It has escaped from captivity in England in 1953 and is now colonizing other parts of Europe.

The ruddy duck is mating with the white-headed duck, the offspring being fertile. This cross-breeding is resulting in the disappearance of the white-headed duck.

Spanish conservationists have begun to remove the ruddy ducks to protect the already endangered white-headed ducks.



The white-headed duck (brajmila rasha bajda) has occurred twice in Malta in 1864 and 1967.

Hunters' petition ✍

The hunters' association is collecting signatures for a petition in favour of the present bird protection laws.

The association has been campaigning for twelve years against the present bird protection laws. *Now*, they are campaigning in favour of these laws !

Their reason for the shift in favour of the present laws all goes to show that, they do not want to see any improvements to bird protection laws.

Getting tough with offenders

Francis Chircop has been fined Lm100 for using an illegal vertical net. Also his brother, Victor, was fined Lm50 for being in possession of two protected marsh harriers. The nets and the marsh harriers were confiscated, the latter were handed over to MOS to be released. Paul Portelli, the director gave evidence to ascertain that the harriers were of a protected species. MOS hopes that this type of fine will help to serve as a deterrent in protecting these protected birds of prey.

Injured Bird Unit

The MOS Injured Bird Unit is made up of a group of volunteers who dedicate a considerable amount of time and energy in performing an important lifesaving task for helpless birds. In 1992, the unit had a busy year having received 165 birds which included among others falcons, harriers, honey buzzards, herons, waders and owls.

Twenty three birds had to be put down on arrival, fifty-six died even after treatment, the rest were released into the wild. The most common injury was a fractured wing or leg. Some birds had multiple fractures. Apart from treating birds the unit was also called out to rescue sea turtles, hedgehogs and even chameleons !

A special word of thanks goes to these dedicated people who treat birds and other animals from injuries due mainly to their encounter with the *civilized man* !

MOS would like to remind its members that, it is illegal to keep protected species of birds or animals in their possession, even if these are injured.

