



BirdTalk



NEWSLETTER OF THE MALTA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

APRIL '93

MOS becomes a partner in BirdLife International

Council members and other guests are seen here during the official launching of BirdLife International at the MOS office. The launch of BirdLife was held simultaneously in many countries in Europe, to make an impact to such an important event in the calendar of preservation of our wildlife.



The forum held on Saturday March 6th on the subject **Il-Kacca u l-Politika** (Hunting and Politics) brought together politicians, conservationists and hunters. Although it was not well attended, the Chairman Dr. Paul Xuereb was considering calling off the forum due to the continuous interruptions by hunters in the audience.



The MOS Council and Director held a press conference at the Sa Maison Hotel in Pieta announcing the launch of BirdLife International. It was explained to the press the significance of this new organisation which has an extensive conservation programme all over the world. MOS benefits from this since the Education Officer is sponsored by BirdLife International.



Robin Marathon '92



On February 26th, the presentation of the prizes for the Robin Marathon '92 was held at the Guiseppe Despott Hall at the Ministry of Education in Floriana. Dr. Stanley Zammit, the Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment presented the prizes.

These were an MOS T-shirt for those who collected more than Lm5, a sweat shirt for those who collected more than Lm10, a Lm25 voucher from the MOS Nature Shop for the highest individual collection and LM50 worth of nature books and videos for the school with the highest sum.

The Alfons Maria Galea, Girls' Secondary School of Sliema won the highest school collection with the sum of Lm 107 and Mr Adrian Gauci of St. Paul's Bay won the individual prize having collected Lm 35.

The marathon, which was held last November, was a big success. Over Lm800 were collected and the funds will be used to further create awareness regarding the illegal trapping of robins.

Robin trapping has been greatly reduced due to the intensive campaigns MOS has organised over the last 8 years.

Berne Convention

The Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats is better known as the Berne Convention.

The Convention deals with all aspects of conservation of the natural heritage. All species of plants and wild animals are placed under its protection. A number of species which are regarded as especially endangered, enjoy strict protection.

The exploitation of other species of European Fauna is made subject to strict controls and various non-selective methods of capture and killing are prohibited.

This Convention came into force in 1979 and has been an effective tool in the hands of conservationists throughout Europe.

The Convention has been signed by all the countries of the Council of Europe except Malta as well as a number of African countries.

MOS still awaits the signing of this important Convention by the Maltese Government. This delay has been due to political blackmail by the local hunters and trappers.

Spring migration - an end to the slaughter ?



The annual journey from Africa to Europe is on. Millions of birds are on their way to their breeding grounds in Europe. Our geographical position in the centre of the Mediterranean gives us a unique opportunity to observe the fascinating spectacle of migration. This position also gives us the responsibility to protect these birds and ensure that they will reach their nesting sites.

Unfortunately, here in Malta millions of birds are destroyed every year. Every bird shot during this time of the year is one nest less.

Migratory birds are strictly protected along their routes throughout Europe. Malta is

the only country that still allows the shooting of birds in Spring.

MOS has been campaigning for many years to stop the hunting and trapping of birds in Spring.

Dr Stanley Zammit, Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment said in the forum Il-Kacca u l-Politika (Hunting and Politics) that, when new legislation is passed, shooting of turtle doves in Spring might still be allowed.

MOS does not agree with this and will continue to campaign to stop all bird hunting in Spring.

PRESS

RELEASE

On March 23, MOS issued a press release in reply to the hunting association. Here under is a copy of the press release :

- The Council of MOS condemns the recent attempt by the hunting association to discredit MOS.
- MOS would like to make it clear that it has never been involved in or encouraged campaigns to stop tourists from coming to Malta
- On the other hand MOS encourages green tourism to Malta as it believes that the presence of green tourists will bring better protection to the Maltese countryside.
- It is in fact the large number of hunters and trappers who arrogantly dominate the countryside during most of the year, who are preventing the public from enjoying the countryside and actually discouraging green tourism in Malta
- MOS feels that the recent statement by the hunting association is libellous and is seeking legal advice to see what action can be taken to compensate the harm which it could suffer by these false accusations.

Ghadira Nature Reserve

A group of enthusiastic members spend most of their weekends at the Ghadira Nature Reserve. There they conduct tours to show the members and the public the birds that come to rest for a while in this important site.

The volunteers take you to the main hide where, on arrival you are greeted loudly by a committee of resident ducks (*not boat houses*) who are always petitioning for more food.

Here, it is explained what you might be able to see at the time of the year. After watching some birds with the binoculars provided, you take a small walk through the trees that have been planted over the years. The saplings are

protected with wire-mesh against the effects of the local flourishing rabbit population. At the end of the walk you come to another hide which is situated more to the centre of the reserve. Once you are inside you are amazed by the variety of bird activity you can see from there.

A thought springs to mind, **how can anybody shoot or trap such beautiful, innocent creatures?** It is so relaxing that you do not notice the time passing by. Your guide reminds you that it is time to go back, but you will definitely make an appointment with yourself to revisit the Reserve as soon as possible.

The reserve is open to members and the public on Saturdays and Sundays from 9.00am to 5.00 with admittance on the hour until 4.00pm.



Grey Heron

Following last year's success, MOS will again be taking part in The Green Week to be held between the 14 and 18 April at the Fair Grounds in Naxxar.

We would appreciate volunteers to help out on the stand. You need not have to attend every day, even one day would be a great help.

If you are interested please contact Peter Camilleri on 230684.

VOLUNTEERS