



BirdTalk



NEWSLETTER OF THE MALTA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

AUGUST '93

Ramsar Convention

Government delegates from 76 countries including Malta met in Kushiro, Japan to discuss the protection of wetlands of the world.

The delegations represented governments that are signatories of the Ramsar Convention (The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat).

The Ramsar Convention from its place of adoption in Iran, is an intergovernmental treaty which provides the framework for international cooperation for the conservation of wetland habitats. Its broad aim is to stem the loss of wetlands and to ensure their conservation.

At the Conference the delegates recommended increased protection for two of the world's most important and most threatened wetlands.

The two areas, Cuare Wildlife Refuge in Venezuela and the Lower Danube Basin were both proposed by Birdlife International as priorities for attention at the Ramsar Conference.

The World's wetlands cover a total of 8.5 million km². They are extremely productive systems, essential to life on earth.

Wetlands sustain a significant amount of the world's biodiversity and genetic resources, provide up to two thirds of the world's fish harvest, provide a natural form of flood control, help stabilise shores and banks, lock up large amounts of carbon, especially in the form of peat, preventing it entering the atmosphere as carbon dioxide, the main culprit in global warming.

An enormous amount of wetland has already been drained or developed. Because wetland frequently occurs on well-watered flat or gently sloping land with very fertile soils, it is very often targeted for conversion to agricultural land. Much has been lost for residential and industrial building in towns, and the development of coastal or inland tourist resorts and recreational areas.

NEW BOOKS AT NATURE SHOP

The MOS Nature Shop has now on sale a new range of high quality nature books. Among the titles you may find:

A NEW GUIDE TO THE
BIRDS OF BRITAIN AND
EUROPE,

BIRDS OF THE WORLD,

BUTTERFLIES OF THE
WORLD,

WILDFLOWERS OF THE
MEDITERRANEAN,

FLOWERS OF THE
MEDITERRANEAN.

It is worth noting that MOS is offering some very good prices and there are also some bargains. The Nature Shop is situated at 64/65 St. Lucia Street, Valletta and is presently open from Monday to Saturday between 9 am and 12 pm.

ENVIRONMENT GROUPS SUGGEST EXPROPRIATION OF LAND FOR PROPOSED PARK AT TA' ĊENĊ

Six environment groups, Arbor, Din l-Art Helwa, the Ecological Society, *the Malta Ornithological Society*, the Society for the Study and Conservation of Nature and the Moviment għall-Ambjent have commented on a discussion paper issued by the Planning Authority on the development of Ta' Ċenċ.

The Societies pointed to a number of "shortcomings" in the paper and expressed disagreement over others. They said it was being assumed that development would take place.

"We were afraid that this will create a presumption in favour of the proposed development. We suggest that it is made clear in the document that such presumption does not exist they said.

It was essential that the term "National Park" be clearly defined from the outset. The Maltese concept of national parks was alien to the idea of nature conservation, the groups said. Due to the ecological sensitivity of Ta' Ċenċ, access to the place should be limited and controlled.

The requisites for the setting up of a national park were already present at Ta' Ċenċ, the Societies said, going on to object to the proposal that a national park would be privately owned.

The societies recommended that once the boundaries of the national park were delineated, the government would expropriate the land.

BRIEFS

- MOS had a meeting with Dr. Stanley Zammit, the Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment in which discussions regarding the new bird protection legislation were held. MOS noted that in the draft legislation there was a big improvement on the 1980 laws. MOS does not agree that the Secretariat is to give concessions to the hunters.

It is the MOS's opinion that it should be made clear that these laws are not yet up to European Community standard and that

within a short time these laws will have to be amended in view of Malta's proposed entry into the European Community.

- Iceland has now also agreed to sign the Berne Convention. As a result of this Malta is now the only country of the Council of Europe that is not a signatory of this important convention.

Although the government has declared that it will sign the Berne Convention by the year's end, MOS urges the government to sign as soon as possible.

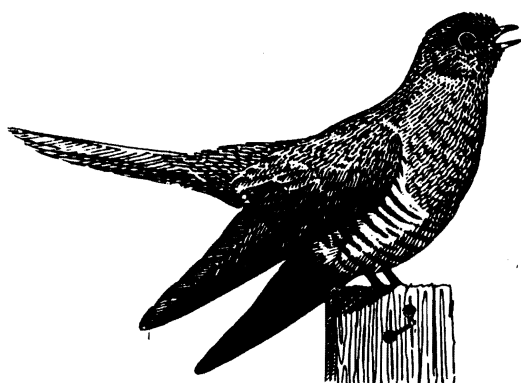
- A Press Release was issued by MOS jointly with other environment societies condemning the fact that, in Gozo, a hunters meeting was announced during the Sunday Mass. The Societies were shocked that the Gozitan Church Authorities allowed the hunters to publicize a meeting for those whose aims are to retain the killing of God's creations.

The Societies expect the Church to give more importance to the Pope's teachings on the preservation of our environment rather than its destruction.



**Do you have an
unwanted Computer
or printer?**

If you have a computer or printer which you do no longer require, MOS would greatly appreciate if you would donate them to the Society. We will consider any size and speed. If you can help us out please contact either Anna Caruana or Peter P. Camilleri on 230684.



cuckoo

EDUCATIONAL CAMPAIGN CO-ORDINATOR

The Malta Ornithological Society (MOS) is looking for a person to promote the conservation message to the public especially school children.

The right candidate must be a good organizer with good communication skills.

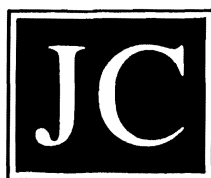
The education officer will:

- *provide teaching aids for use in schools;*
- *organize annual education campaigns on a national basis;*
- *set up and be responsible for a teacher training programme;*
- *liaise with the Education Department to promote environmental education in schools.*

The Education Officer will work through a network of MOS teacher delegates in schools.

The position being offered is on a full-time basis but a part-time will be considered. Driving license essential.

Handwritten applications are to be sent to the Director not later than August 27.



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Managing Director

Bird Watch

A Field Guide Book is one of the important "tools" for a bird watcher. It is a reference point whenever the identification of a bird becomes difficult.

A good field guide possesses these qualities. Firstly, it is compact and handy, the book must be portable, but, of course, the more information it has, the better to identify a species. The field guide is not and should not be an encyclopaedia of ornithology. It contains the bare essentials

regarding identification features of birds likely to be seen in the area, in this case Europe and North Africa. A good easy to understand map should accompany the general description of every species indicating the Summer and Winter ranges. Generally, birds migrate from North to South and vice-versa, so the bird is likely to be seen migrating between these two ranges.

A look at the yearly systematic list of birds observed in Malta

reveals a relatively substantial number of species which do not occur in close proximity with our island. These birds are accidental visitors or vagrants. Thus a good field guide should also include those rare species which are likely to be seen. Field guides have very good illustrations of each species showing plumage whether Summer or Winter and male or female. Thus one can, at a glance, tell what sort of bird has been seen and if it is a normal visitor to our islands.

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