



BirdTalk



NEWSLETTER OF THE MALTA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

MAR / APR '94



The New Laws are paying off

It seems that the new bird protection laws have started to pay off. On the 16 March for the first time, a beautiful looking Flamingo made it to the Għadira Nature Reserve. This spectacular bird, which stands up to 1.5m high, spent a few days resting, before leaving, most probably heading towards its favourite lagoon in France. Although the Flamingo is not one of the regular visitors to our islands its protection is vitally important both locally and on an international sale. Hundreds of people visited the Reserve over the following weekend to get a glimpse of the bird.

Annual General Meeting

On the 16th March, MOS had its Annual General Meeting in which four new members were elected to the Council. The new members are Mr John Borg, Mr Alex Casha, Mr John Grech and Ms Ruth Sultana. The statute amendments as they appeared in the last newsletter were all approved.

In their first Council meeting Mr Joe Doublet was elected President, Mr Dennis Cachia as Hon. Secretary and Mr William Waite as Hon. Treasurer. MOS would like to thank the outgoing members for their work.

OPEN SEASON IN SPRING

As you might have *heard*, the period from the 10th April to the 20th May, is the open season for the hunting and trapping of Turtle Doves and Quail **only**. Within this time no hunting is allowed at sea and on Sundays and Public Holidays until 12 noon.

MOS would like to thank all those who in the past few weeks reported illegal hunting and trapping. Should you notice any illegal hunting and trapping, you may report it by either phoning the police on 240707 or MOS on 230684.



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Briefs ...

Bird Conscious

Due to the ban on Spring hunting, we have received many reports of flocks of birds crossing over the islands to continue their journey north. Many members of the public phoned up to inform us of this activity. The hunting issue has moved many nature conscious people to take interest in what is happening to birds coming through here. Let us hope that with these new laws and their enforcement, we will have the opportunity to see more birds in our countryside.

Hunters' Protest

As you might already know, the hunters and trappers held a carcade in early March to protest against the new bird protection laws. The route they followed resembled a whirlwind, trees were uprooted, walls broken down, tyres burnt. MOS issued a statement condemning the vandalistic acts which were carried out by egoistic persons who are ready to destroy the environment and intimidate the public to achieve their aims.

School Mural Competition

MOS is currently running a school

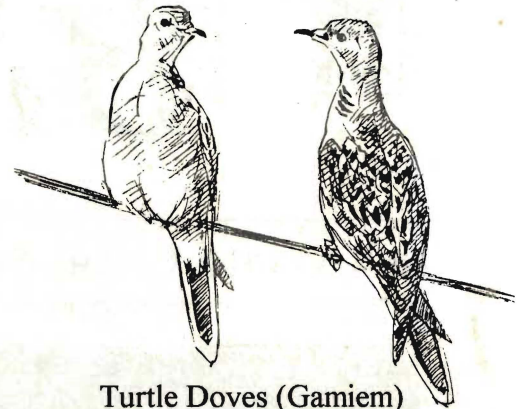
mural competition. The theme of the mural is the Robin and its conservation. There has been a very encouraging response with over 20 schools participating in this nature awareness campaign.

Christmas Card Competition

On the 25th February, MOS held a prize giving ceremony for the 90 winners and runners-up of the Christmas Card Competition organised by our education department. Dr Stanley Zammit presented the certificates to the school children. We received around 2500 entries from 80 schools. The competition was sponsored by APS Bank, Selekt Fruit Juices, NSTS Youth and Student Travel and Good Earth Natural Foods.

Illegal Hunting and Trapping

On the 21 March, MOS issued a press release in view of the large number of persons who are breaking the law by trapping birds during the closed season. MOS has given detailed information about illegal hunting and trapping to the police but, no action has been taken and as a result the number of persons breaking the law is increasing daily. It is of no use having better laws if there is not a better enforcement.



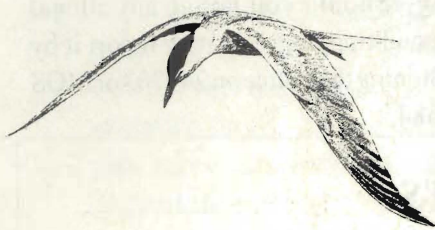
Turtle Doves (Gamiem)

A Step in the Right Direction

As a consequence to the MOS press release, the police stepped up their control to stop the illegal hunting and trapping. MOS was instrumental in the sense that it passed on to the police the many reports it had received. A number of persons are to be arraigned in Court in connection with these illegal activities.

Distribution of Posters

As part of our awareness in schools, posters depicting a shot heron which was on its way to breed, have been distributed. These have been well received and many are being displayed on the schools' notice boards and classrooms.



Caspian Tern (Cirlewwa Prima)

U n u s u a l V i s i t o r s

The wet and windy weather we had in early April brought with it an unusual large number of migrating birds. The birds coming across the Mediterranean were blown off course and many of them literally fell down on our islands, exhausted. In that week, MOS had a deluge of calls reporting birds found by the public. Most of the reports were of exhausted birds who only needed a short rest period before being released. Although this was the closed season, the hunters availed themselves of this bounty. Infact we received various reports of shot birds. One of these unlucky victims was a rare visitor, the Caspian Tern. It is worth mentioning that this bird was ringed in Finland and was on its way back there from Africa. In Europe there are only about 2000 pairs left mainly in Sweden and Finland. Fortunately its injury was not fatal and is on its way to recovery.

Falko - MOS Youths



Bike Hike

If you're bored with the usual hikes, why not join us on the 15th May. We'll be having a Bike-Hike, a chance to discover the countryside in Gozo on two wheels. Our meeting point is at Ċirkewwa at 8.00 am or if you are a Gozitan Falko member you can join us at 9.00 am in Marsalforn. Don't forget to bring along your binoculars, you never know what birds we may spot.

Bar-B-Que

On the 25th June we are organising our annual Bar-B-Que at Għadira. This is a good opportunity to meet active MOS youth members and to make new friends. All you have to do is bring along drinks and friends and meet us at 6.00 pm near the Police Station at Għadira. Food will be provided. Those wanting to sleep over can do so.



MOS Raffle

Included with this newsletter you will find a packet of 30 raffle tickets which MOS is organising. We have some fantastic prizes. Try your luck and at the same time help us raise funds. Each packet contains 10 free tickets, that is although each ticket costs 10c, you need only send Lm2 per packet. Once you have sold all the tickets, you can send the counterfoils to our office including a cheque or postal order, no cash please.

The closing date is the 30th September 94. Should you want more tickets please call us and we will send you more.

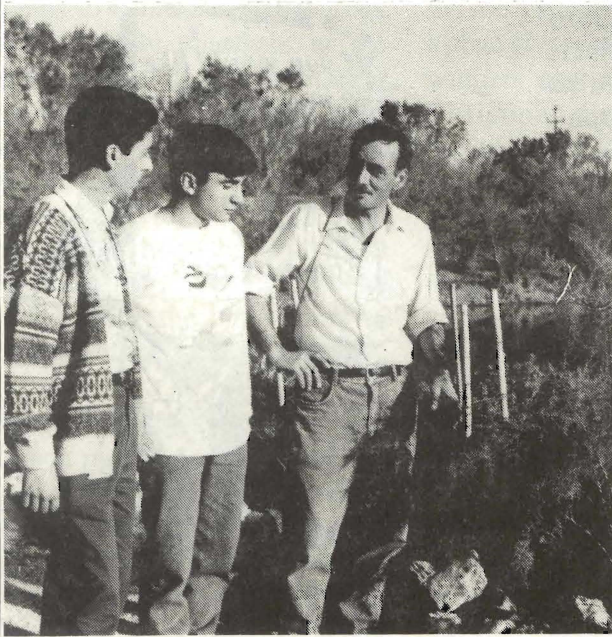


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Paul Camilleri, F.A.D.O. (Hons.)
Managing Director

Garden Shop Donation



The Garden Shop of San Gwann represented by Mr Herman Scifo (left) recently donated a number of local trees, which have been planted at the Ghadira Nature Reserve. This donation came about on the initiative of Mr Etienne Grech (centre), also seen in the photo is Mr Charles Gauci, the warden at the Reserve. These trees will further enhance this established wetland. This protected area offers migrating birds refuge on their long journeys across the Mediterranean.

Now is a good time to visit the Reserve and watch these birds take a short rest before they head north to breed. The Reserve is open to the public on Saturdays and Sundays between 9.00am and 5.00pm with entrance on the hour until 4.00pm. MOS has now also taken charge of the organisation of school visits during the week.

Visit to Comino

We shall be organising an excursion to Comino on Sunday 8th May. This activity will give us the opportunity to visit this protected area and enjoy one of our largely unspoiled habitats. MOS runs a bird ringing station on Comino between the 15th April and 15th May. This is part of an international bird monitoring project called Piccole Isole (Small Islands). All those members who would like to attend are asked to contact Peter Camilleri on 230684 for further information.

Have you renewed your subscription?

It is vital so that MOS can continue with its awareness campaigns, conservation activities and ensuring the enforcement of the bird protection laws. We have come a long way, please continue with your support. It is due to your membership that MOS can continue its work.

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