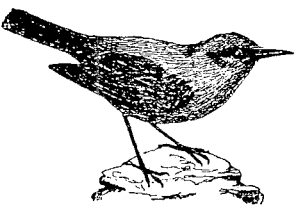


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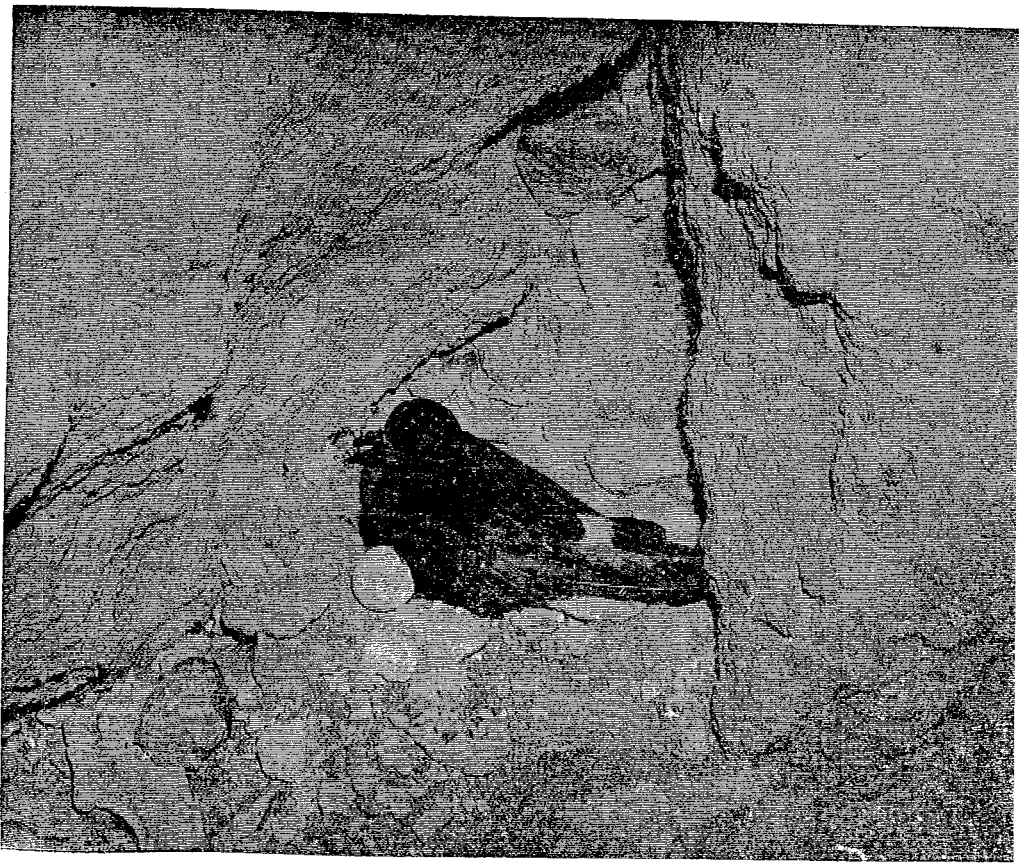
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IL-MERILL

January-December 1976
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THE H.C. MORRIS MEMORIAL ISSUE

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All the opinions expressed are those of the authors and may not reflect the views of the M.O.S.

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IL - MERILL

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Cover Picture: Storm Petrel brooding its newly-hatched young.

Photo by J. Sultana

IN MEMORIAM

It was not the gods, but the birds, who were formerly masters and kings over men.

“The Birds” — ARISTOPHANES

Out of the wilderness surrounding the house to which we had moved in the beautiful Sussex village of Anstye my husband created a wonderful garden which was visited by many people and hundreds of birds.

The birds became so tame that it was not uncommon to see a robin alight on the spade when my husband was digging or for thrushes and blackbirds to follow with self-interest his progress with the hoe. In the eaves beneath our roof swallows nested and returned with their young; a kingfisher was a frequent visitor to the pond, and a pair of magpies made our garden the scene of their fleeting comings and goings.

One incident, among many, comes to mind. A blue tit flew fearlessly on to my husband's hand one lovely summer evening. A farm-labourer on his way home stopped at the sight and said, “Now that's how it should be. That's how it was meant to be!”

Because my husband felt that's how it was meant to be, when we came to live here he joined the Malta Ornithological Society, that valiant David which fights a seemingly invincible Goliath. He believed that against all odds and with the passing of time the efforts of the Society would one day transform the Maltese Islands from a bird cemetery to a bird sanctuary. To these efforts and to my husband's memory this issue of *Il-Merill* is dedicated.

Marjorie Morris



H. C. Morris

When dealing with old, ingrained, seemingly intransigent problems, almost all of us instinctively feel that something ought to be done to remove ancient wrongs, to wipe out some deep injustice, or merely to put matters right.

But unfortunately such wrongs will not simply disappear because we placidly make a mental note; we have to act, we need to intervene even if it means -- as in the case of nature conservation -- that we must collide with deep psychological situations on a national scale. It does not mean that we discard democratic opinion but rather that we seek to regenerate interest where it has been allowed to wither and stamped out of the national consciousness.

The Malta Ornithological Society is committed to remove this blight which afflicts Maltese society and seeks bravely to face up to it. In the course of time this struggle has not wasted us away but we have gathered momentum and gone from strength to strength.

Of course it has been possible because others have decided to do something about it too — each within the limits of his ability and possibility: people who have found within themselves the rare sensitivity and generosity of heart to offer a helping hand.

Among the noblest at heart, we came across Mr. H.C. Morris, a gentleman serenely at peace with himself because he was at peace with nature and appreciative of its inspiration. He is now no longer among us to strengthen our resolve but in tribute of his aid, we will keep the memory of this friend alive.

This H.C. MORRIS Memorial Issue of *Il-Merill* will ensure that his name will always be associated with the Malta Ornithological Society.

Dominic Cutajar
Editor
Il-Merill

~~THE 14TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING~~

~~The 14th Annual General Meeting was held on 5th February 1976. Here is the Presidential Address which was delivered at the meeting and the Hon. Secretary's report for the year March 1975 — January 1976.~~

President's Address

~~Ladies and Gentlemen,~~

~~I am glad to welcome you again for this annual general meeting. The past year was a time of great activity for the Society. Many members have contributed a great deal to the aims of the Society. Others have been very generous towards its funds. Many others have shown their appreciation and encouraged us in our difficult task. It would take me long to mention all these members by their name, but I would like to bring to your notice the sterling work done by the Young Members Section, the way they have been organising themselves, the harmony they are keeping with the Executive Committee and the propaganda they are spreading amongst other youths about what we believe is beneficial to our avian fauna and ornithological studies. To many other youths they have proved to be a beacon of light in a world darkened by indiscriminate shooting and vandalistic acts. On several occasions they collaborated with the Department of Agriculture in planting hundreds of young trees at Ghadira and Ta' Qali.~~

~~Two years ago we announced in a general meeting that the Society had undertaken to publish a book on the birds of Malta. It is my great pleasure, this evening, to announce that this book under the title "A Guide to the Birds of Malta" is ready and will be launched in a Press Conference in the very near future. As stated by the authors themselves this guide is not intended to serve as a descriptive and illustrated handbook when standard European field guides and much wider works are available, but it provides a comprehensive, unambiguous baseline for future ornithological studies. It is a great credit to~~