

BIRD'S EYE VIEW

Alfred Baldacchino

New Chairman for ICBP Malta Section/The XVI World Conference.

Mr. Dominic Cutajar, Editor of 'Il-Merill' and co-founder of the M.O.S., is the new chairman of the Malta Section of the International Council for Bird Preservation. He has taken over from Mr. Joe Sultana, the Hon. Secretary of the M.O.S. and Ringing Officer of the Bird Ringing Group, who had to relinquish the post due to the increasing volume of work of the M.O.S.

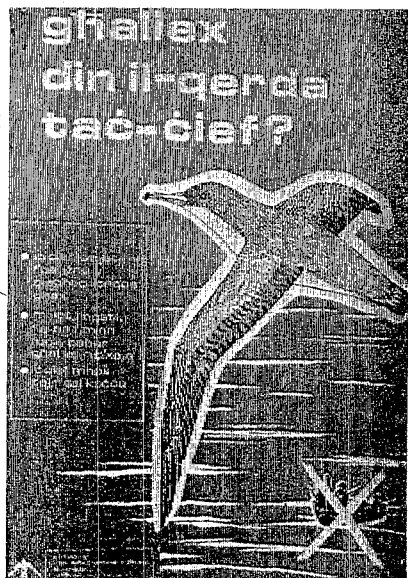
Mr. Cutajar is at present co-ordinating initiative dealing with the natural environmental work amongst the local societies.

At the XVI World Conference of the ICBP, which was held in Canberra, Australia, in August of last year, thirty-three resolutions were adopted. Two of these concern Malta directly. The first urges a number of countries, including Malta, where bird migrants from northern Eurasia are still killed in large numbers, to take legislative measures to reduce this slaughter and provide refuges for birds on migration. The other resolution urges the Government of Malta to consult with the Maltese Section of the ICBP to secure better protection for birds of prey and other birds on the Maltese Islands. The latter resolution was adopted because the Conference was informed that all countries in Europe, except Malta, protect some or all species of birds of prey. Copies of these resolutions were sent with a covering letter to the Prime Minister and other Ministers.

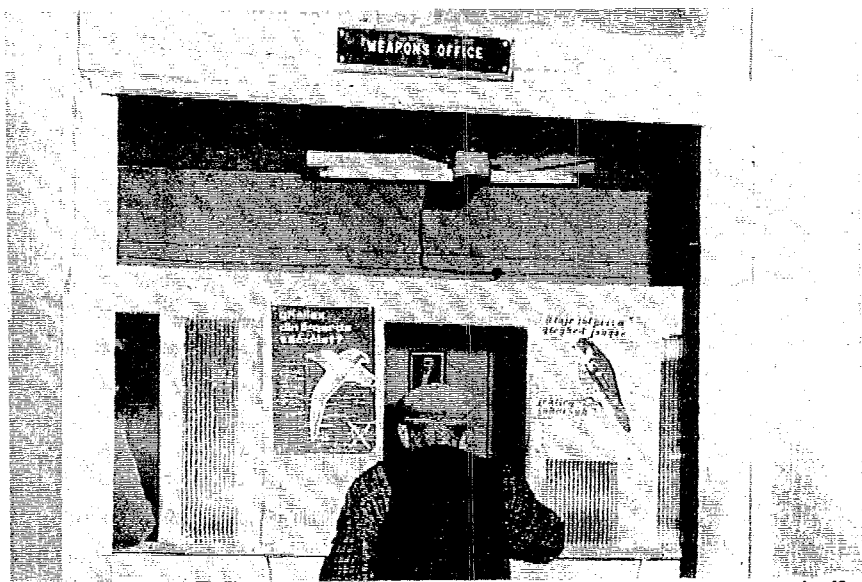
The European Section of the Birds of Prey World Working Group will be holding the meeting next October in Austria. Mr. Joe M. Attard, the M.O.S. President, will be attending and will read a report on the Birds of Prey in Malta.

M.O.S. Posters.

The M.O.S. has continued to publish posters as one of the media to reach



the public. The 'Shearwaters' poster, which was launched last summer, proved quite successful. It deplored the yearly killing of many Cory's Shearwaters at sea by indiscriminate shooters who go out purposely on boats to indulge in such barbaric fun. The other poster (the 6th poster to date) which was published early this year point out that what happened to the Jackdaw, once a common breeding resident — now exterminated, may happen to other breeding species such as the Barn Owl, the Peregrine and the Blue Rock Thrush. Both posters were designed by Alfred Baldacchino and Joe Sultana and were exhibited in the notice boards of the Department of Information, outside all Police Stations, and at schools.



Copies of M.O.S. posters have also been displayed outside the weapons' office at the Police Headquarters, where all shooting licences are renewed annually (see photo).

The Visible Migration of Raptors over the Maltese Islands.

'The Journal of the British Ornithologists' Union — 'The Ibis' (No. 4 Vol. 116) carries a paper on the visible migration of raptors over Malta by Mark Beaman and Charles Galea, both members of the M.O.S. The paper reports observations of the visible migration of birds of prey whose movements in central Mediterranean have been relatively neglected, unlike the large migrations at the Bosphorus and Gibraltar which have been well documented. The largest number of raptors were recorded both in spring and autumn during contrary winds or overcast conditions mostly seen in the afternoon at either season. The authors show that large passages occur in winds with easterly or westerly components and conclude that eastward drift does not greatly affect the number seen in Malta, as had been earlier suggested by a paper in the same Journal (Ibis 111 — 1969) 'Bird Migration over the Maltese Islands' by C. De Lucca. During favourable meteorological conditions migration was probably above visible range. The authors also provide evidence suggesting that the volume of Honey Buzzard migration across the Mediterranean may be larger than formerly realized.

The previous number of the 'Ibis' had also carried a correspondence by 2

other M.O.S. members, Joe Sultana and Charles Gauci, who stressed the 'potentially damaging effect of collecting rare or scarce species in a place like Malta' in their contribution treating the newly-found breeding species — the Fan-tailed Warbler.

Archbishop's Statement on Shooting.

When the proposals concerning firearms, shooters, birds and bird protection were published last year, a copy was also sent to the Archbishop of Malta. Later His Lordship issued a statement encouraging the efforts of those societies which are doing their best to safeguard wildlife. The Church here has a role to fulfil and it will be most appropriate if the appreciation and respect of our natural environment is occasionally stressed in sermons. The clergy can help to bring about a change of the local destructive mentality by pointing out the example of St. Francis D'Assisi who habitually showed great love and respect towards wildlife.

Young Members' Protest.

The Young Members Section held the second successful protest against bird shooting and trapping in October, last year, outside the City Gate of Valletta. Various placards calling for bird protection were displayed. Members distributed leaflets on the M.O.S. and explained to the people the motive of the protest.

St. Aloysius College Exhibition.

The students of St. Aloysius College held an exhibition on the need to safeguard the natural environment. The M.O.S. helped the students with the section regarding birds and 2 illustrated talks were given to the college students. Various other schools visited the exhibition.

The M.O.S. & the Mass Media of Communication.

A memorandum, "The Natural Environment — Directions for a better tomorrow" was sent jointly by M.O.S., ICBP Malta Section and other societies to all Editors of local newspapers, to Heads of programmes of the Radio, Rediffusion and Television and to the Malta Broadcasting Authority. The aim of the memorandum was to bring to the attention of all corporations and individuals, involved in the media of mass communication in Malta, their responsibility in re-orientating the public 'mind' towards a positive outlook to nature and the general environment in which we live.

The M.O.S. have also acquired a weekly half page in the Times of Malta and a fortnightly column in the Maltese Sunday paper — It-Torċa. Members of the M.O.S. and the Natural History Society are contributing articles in these columns entitled 'Our Natural Environment' and 'Nghixu man-Natura' (Living with Nature).

Joe Sultana, on behalf of M.O.S., also took part in six Television programmes 'Studio għat-tfal' which were aimed for children between the ages of eight and fourteen. This brought a shower of requests for ornithological information from many young children who were encouraged to choose a subject on birds for their school projects. The film 'The Private Life of a Robin' was also shown with a Maltese introduction on the Robin's migration and stay in Malta. Various other interviews were held on Radio and Rediffusion and opportunity was always taken to propagate the Society's ideals. Six other programmes on Rediffusion's Gozo magazine were prepared by V. Vella Muskat, M.O.S. Gozo representative.