

BIRD'S EYE VIEW

1. DEDICATION

This number of "El-Merill" is dedicated to Mr. M. Mills of Mdina House, Naxxar who generously donated the sum of £25 towards the costs of the present issue.

2 FRIENDS' DONATION

The Friends of Malta GC have kindly donated £25 to the M.O.S. to enable our Ringing Group to press forward with their research work. A big thank you to the Friends of Malta G.C.

3 BANG-A-BANG, BANG

This spring the migratory birds were again met by formations of (literally) thousands of shot-guns and given no respite from early morning till dusk. Although appeals and protests continue to be voiced by the general public, the M.O.S. and other Natural History societies, the shooting madness goes on worsening from year to year. It has reached such appalling proportions that now it is noticeably dangerous to venture out in the countryside during the shooting seasons. The incidence of fatalities and ugly accidents is sufficient indicator to those who do not shut their eyes on this hideous social scandal.

4 A RARE PROSECUTION

Last January a very rare kind of prosecution took place in Malta. A Mr. J. Grech of Mtarfa was fined £2 at the Law Courts for keeping a caged robin, and for trapping robins at Buskett gardens. The robin is one of the legally protected birds and Buskett is officially a protected area. It is though a sad reflection that even the present inadequate legislation on bird protection is widely unobserved and only sporadically enforced. A regular systematic enforcement of the law at least during the shooting season is of vital necessity and its implementation should be studied urgently.

5. SUGGESTIONS PRESENTED TO THE GOVERNMENT

The National League for the Preservation of Birds and their Environment has just published and presented to the Government proposals concerning firearms, shooters and bird-protection. A copy was sent to all the deputies in the National Assembly. The proposals include:

- a. Application for a Provisional Shooting Licence.
- b. Testing of applicants.
- c. The grant of licences.
- d. General regulation regarding shooting.
- e. The introduction of a closed season.
- f. Regulations concerning bird trapping.
- g. Taxidermy.

The League is an "ad hoc" Committee composed of representatives

from the Malta Ornithological Society, the National Section of the International Council for Bird Preservation, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Natural History Society of Malta, the Men of the Trees — Malta, and Din l-Art Hejwa. The meetings were chaired by Baron G.E. Testaferrata Abela.

6. M.O.S. 4th POSTER

The M.O.S. has just published its fourth poster appealing for the protection of birds of prey. It was designed by Mr. A. Baldacchino and Mr. S. Borg and publicised a couple of days before the first Spring passage of migrant birds was observed in Malta. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has kindly contributed £25 towards the printing of this poster. Copies are still available to be utilised for future publicity campaigns; those who feel that they can make good use of this poster are kindly requested to contact the P.R.O. of the Malta Ornithological Society. (See back page).

7. WEDDING BELLS

The M.O.S. Ringing Secretary and a regular contributor to "Il-Merill" — Mr. Charles Gauci — was married to Miss Mary Filletti on the 11th of May. Congratulations and good wishes from their many friends and well-wishers in the Malta Ornithological Society.

8. REFERENCES TO MALTA IN FOREIGN REPORTS

In a report on the "Hunting Seasons and Methods in Europe 1969-1970" by Mr. Teppo Lampio and H.K. Michaelis, compiled to present information on some aspects of wildfowl hunting rationalization, while affording some idea of the work of the Hunting-Rationalization Research Group (HRRG), the following extracts referring to Malta are worth quoting:

"...the situation as regards wildfowl species lacking protection in 1969-70 was favourable. The outstanding exception was Malta, where no wildfowl species was protected at any time".

"Woodcock and Snipe was protected for at least some part of the year in all countries except Malta. In Eire, no waders were legally protected but were in practise fully protected. In other countries, except Malta, they were protected for at least part of the year".

9. AT THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has recommended member Governments to reinforce their legislative and administrative measures in order to provide greater protection for the avifauna and its habitat. It calls on member Governments to afford special protection to fifty-nine species listed as examples in a study commissioned by the European Committee for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. Governments are asked to give special attention to migratory species and to ratify as soon as possible the Convention on Wetlands of international importance.

(Resolution (73) 31 of the Committee of Ministers, Oct. 1973).

In its Resolution (73) 30, the Committee of Ministers recommends strengthening current protection measures and setting aside certain areas in order to develop a European Network of "protected areas". For this purpose, member Governments are called upon to take into account as fully as possible the principles and criteria set out in "European Terminology for protected areas".

(Council of Europe — Newsletter 74, 1/2).

10. SPAIN

The shooting and collecting of all birds of prey — as well as certain other birds — was prohibited for the duration of the 1973/74 season. Import, export and internal trade of specimens, dead or alive, of protected species were also banned. Likewise it became illegal for taxidermists to be in possession of skins of protected birds.

(ICBP — The President's letter of December 1973).

11. FRANCE

The rapid decline in the nesting population of Ospreys in Corsica has caused considerable concern. During the nesting period and as a temporary measure, the nesting site with a perimeter of 500 metres was placed strictly out-of-bounds. The area was heavily guarded against shooting parties and egg collectors.

12. GREECE

A new National Park has been set up in Greece; it is around Prespa Lakes in Macedonia, the region bordering Yugoslavia. Around 150 species of birds can be met with in the new National Park.

(Council of Europe — Newsletter 74-3).

Alfred Baldacchino.