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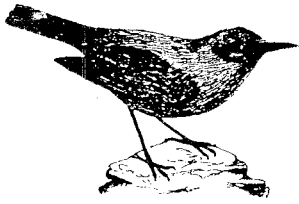


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IL-MERILL

BULLETIN OF THE MALTA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

No. 13 Jan-June 1974

10c to non-Members



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The Editor welcomes articles, letters and other features bearing on any aspect of the Ornithology of the Maltese Islands and the Mediterranean for publication in this Bulletin.

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EDITORIAL

Conservation being a "modern" issue is plagued by lack of understanding of the fundamental aims involved and by a proper sense of conviction and personal commitment. This explains why official "celebrations" of the environmental cause inevitably degenerate into mere empty pomposities — the heart is simply not in it. On the other hand individuals who embraced conservation because it happens to be the latest intellectual fad — consequently lacking conviction — are effusive when it comes to pay lip service but deficient in effective action and serious intent.

The editor of a Maltese daily has regaled us with a classic instance of the latter case. In a recent editorial he came out strongly in favour of environmental conservation, deploring and condemning the habitual slaughter of wildlife, pollution of the air and the sea and what-not. The sensitive observer might have flinched at the glib churning of slogans and clichés, but this editor made it easier for even a dull-wit: **in the very same issue** a befuddled contributor on "Shooting topics" sung lyrically about the "Glorious 23rd April" when the peak of the turtle-doves shooting is reached. In truth he complained of the ungentlemanly refusal of the turtle-doves to turn up punctually to be shot mercilessly in droves of thousands — but then this is not the only point upon which the contributor is confused. He brags erratically about natural phenomena in a painfully amateurish fashion; and, when frequently he lacks a "shooting topic", he rushes into metaphysical musings of the how-the-time-is-passing-us-by type (an apposite comment since he wastes so much of his time fooling about with a gun and lamenting about veering winds).

One might be tempted to dismiss the incident as a case of pathetic cretinism if it did not insidiously advance the cause of a fictitiously respectable type of shooting and therefore fundamentally anti-conservationist. Let us therefore spell it out for those unwilling to make the effort themselves. Environmental conservation is not a cause but the way of life of the future. It will progressively come about and its advance is irresistible because it is a positive and constructive historical factor. There will be those whose attitude is negative and reactionary but let them learn that this their pastime of hoodlums is merely tolerated in an ever fewer unenlightened communities and doomed to disappear. Miasmal floundering in mock "culture" and the collusive bigotry of the influential will not make the destruction of wildlife either dignified or respectable.

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Due to the rising cost in the printing industry it was decided to issue "Il-Merill" every six months instead of every four. This issue covers January-June 1974.