



IL-MERILL

BULLETIN OF THE MALTA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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10c to non-Members



IL - MERILL

The title of the Society's Bulletin, **IL-MERILL**, is the Maltese name for the Blue Rock Thrush, *Monticola solitarius*, which is one of the few resident species of the Islands. It was chosen as the National Bird of Malta by the local National Section of the International Council for Bird Preservation and has been the emblem of the Malta Ornithological Society since the latter's inception.

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EDITORIAL

The conscience of a conservationist will find little to comfort it when faced with the Maltese Nature setting. Pillage and destruction are so commonplace, reckless and habitual that one can only reflect upon the scene with extreme nausea. Of course only a sensitive mind will acknowledge that much. For the wreckers, having banded themselves in a caucus of self-interest, have arrogantly claimed that any improvement in conserving Nature in Malta will be suggested by themselves when the need is felt! It is a classical case of the devils organising hell; but then the man with the gun has never been remarkable for his intelligence.

The effective eradication of this mentality can only be achieved by an education designed to awaken the sensitivity lying dormant within the heart of every human being. For this reason we view with distaste the display of stuffed birds at exhibitions held under the auspices of the Education Department — of all public bodies! If the intention is to impart information a well-drawn picture can do the job perhaps more efficiently. It is foolhardy to expect to learn about the instincts, intelligence, behaviour, emotions, habits, etc., of a human being by viewing a mere corpse. The same is true for all living things.

On account of this the M.O.S. has insisted all along on the preservation of Ghadira to serve as a bird-observatory where a brief course of instruction to students can help them to learn far more on bird-life than all the books they can go through. Give our children the chance to observe closely a living bird and not a mere stuffed, amateurish, fading imitation of life.

In the following pages the reader may note a plan for the proposed amelioration of the Ghadira nature-reserve as suggested by M.O.S. The project is easy to carry out and inexpensive; it respects the nature of the ground and its present character as a habitat which it seeks to improve with as slight human interference as possible. If followed through, the Ghadira nature-reserve will be an asset to the nation and an additional attraction to a section of foreign visitors.

The Committee of M.O.S. has decided to acknowledge gratefully the splendid help of those superb photographers, Eric Hosking and M.D. England, whose work the readers of "Il-Merill" have had the chance to admire on the cover of every issue. As a tribute to their completely disinterested aid, both gentlemen have been elected Honorary Life Members of the Malta Ornithological Society.