

## MISCELLANY

### 1. Environmental Studies at Ghadira

Ghadira was the venue of a four-day course on environmental studies held for the students of St. Michael's college of Education. This was the second field course to be held at Ghadira, an excellent area for a bird reserve and a field centre. The M.O.S. has been pointing out to the authorities for the last six years, so far to no avail, the unique potentialities of this area.

The course, which was organised by Mr. J. Tanti, Science Lecturer, was quite a success and the experience gained will certainly serve the future teachers for the benefit of the children entrusted to their care. A number of such courses could be held annually by the Education Department.

### 2. The Blue Rock Thrush depicted on a Gold Coin

A set of six gold and silver (souvenir) coins, which are also legal tender, have been issued by the monetary authorities. The gold coin of the denomination of £M20 depicts the Blue Rock Thrush, the National Bird of Malta, with the sunrise as the background. We hope that the sunrise is a good augury for the birds in Malta.

### 3. Bird Conservation in the Local Press

A leader in the Times of Malta and an article in the Malta News on the need of bird sanctuaries, last

June, have started a most interesting and endless correspondence on the subject. The affair has been rather one-sided, that is, mostly in favour of reserves and controlled shooting and trapping. Some shooters also suggested some control. The M.O.S. too, aired its views on more than one occasion. It was heartening to note that, with the exception of a tourist, all the correspondents in favour of bird conservation were Maltese and Gozitans. There were times when we were criticised because only foreigners cared for any conservation, but this is no longer so.

### 4. Relations and Activities with other Local Bodies.

In the Annual General Meeting of the "Teenagers Din L-Art Helwa" the members passed a resolution supporting the M.O.S. in its efforts to turn Ghadira into a bird reserve and field centre and to control shooting and trapping in Malta.

During the 19th meeting of the Zurriq Civic Council, the Committee regretted to note that some people were destroying the breeding birds of Filfla and supported the M.O.S. by urging the authorities to declare the islet a nature reserve. The Council also invited the M.O.S. Secretary to give a talk on the wildlife of the Islet.

Five local organisations, the Teens and Twenties Talent Trust, Din l-Art Helwa, the Malta Ornithological Society, the Natural

History Society of Malta and the Geographical Society have written to the Prime Minister suggesting the area of Ta' Qali for the enjoyment and relaxation of the people. The unused airfield at Ta' Qali is frequented by many families on Sundays for picnics. During the week it is used only by speed enthusiasts. The threat of industrialisation has always worried the organisations mentioned above.

5. M.O.S. Stand at the Malta International Fair

One of the highlights of 1972 for the MOS was the erection of its stand at the Malta International Fair. It was an excellent media for advertising the Society and its aims to the many thousands of people who visited the Fair. The work and aims of the Society, the need to protect birds and the unique potentialities of Ghadira and Filfla were conveyed to the public by photos, slogans, charts and models. The Society's publications were also on sale at the stand.

6. 'Winged Aristocrats' & 'Wild Wings'.

These two films were sent to the Society by the R.S.P.B. and the British Film Transport respectively through the efforts of Mr. C. Cohen. Both were shown to members and to several thousands of students. The 'Winged Aristocrats' which has

a sequence of the shooting of a Honey Buzzard over Buskett, a supposed bird sanctuary, was also shown on the Malta Television with a Maltese commentary by J. Sultana.

7. Commemoration:  
Antonio Schembri.

The first centenary of the death of Antonio Schembri, the father of Maltese Ornithology, fell in December, 1972. The M.O.S. thought it fitting to commemorate this forgotten great man.

The commemoration started with an exhibition of his works in the various fields of study which he pursued during his life and on his connections with the various scientists of his time on the continent. The exhibition which was organised by the President, Mr. J.M. Attard, was held at the Royal Malta Library. Mr. Attard also read Schembri's Biographical Sketch at the 9th International Congress of the Mediterranean Academy which was held at the Hotel Excelsior on 2nd January, 1973. He also spoke on Antonio Schembri on the local Radio. The highlight of the commemoration was when on 14th January, 1973, H.E. the Governor General unveiled a commemorative marble plaque which was erected at Buskett by the M.O.S. A large part of this issue is taken up with an appreciation of Antonio Schembri by the President of the MOS, Mr J.M. Attard.