

bird life in particular on these islands and elsewhere as the case may arise, as we recently did by officially protesting against the revoking of bird shooting and trapping legislation in Italy, and last year by doing our share in having the island of Gormio declared a bird sanctuary. This aim is indeed an ever increasingly urgent one as reports come in from all over the world of the disappearance of many species of wild life.

The shooting season is now upon us and it is to be hoped that the hunters will go out in ever decreasing numbers and be much more discriminating in their choice of game and may the new Secondary Schools which are due to open in September for all children in Malta be schools where respect for the life of God's creatures will be taught. Here is an area also where the Church in Malta has yet to let its voice be heard. It is a frequent sight in Malta to see the sons of St. Francis walking about in his humble robe and the clergy could take a leaf from the life of St. Francis and teach that God's feathered friends have a right to life and not to end up as just another stuffed specimen beneath a glass case, one further example of man's inhumanity to God's creatures

One scheme which is very dear to our heart is to have the Ghadira fresh water pond — the only such stretch of fresh water on the islands of Malta and Gozo — declared a bird sanctuary. It is indeed the main 'port of call' for many waders passing through on migration and under the present pressure of the building and developing boom could easily be encroached upon and disappear. Many an enlightened Government in other parts of the world has taken action to prevent the destruction of similar ecologically interesting areas and we hope that the Malta Government will prove itself to be just as enlightened.

May all the readers of our 'new look' magazine also become enthusiastic over the aim of the Malta Ornithological Society and seek out the support of similarly minded persons to promote the good work. We would particularly welcome the aid that teachers in secondary schools can give in educating the rising generation to change its attitude towards the wanton destruction of bird life on these islands and encouraging them to take up less destructive pastimes.

Miscellany

The infamous law No. 906 in Italy

In the fight for bird protection in Italy one of the great leaders is Professor Mario PAVAN, of the University of Pavia. The valiant efforts of the aged Professor Ghigi over many years had at last been crowned in 1969 by the passing of a law forbidding the annual massacre of birds throughout the country. Unfortunately, the present political leaders, with an eye on the next elections revoked this law by decree No. 906 and the slaughter of small birds is once again a common occurrence in Italy. The conscience of the nation has, however, been stung and

Professor PAVAN has himself collected more than 400,000 signatures of people protesting against law 906 and appealing to the Government to come back on its decision. We wish him and the noble Professor Ghigi success in their gallant efforts and hope the Italian Government will see reason and soon. If any reader of 'Il-Merill' wish to help on the good work, a short letter of protest sent to:

Professor Mario PAVAN,
University of Pavia,
Via Taramelli, 24
Italy

would be welcomed.

ERIK HOSKING's gift to the M.O.S.

We are grateful to Mr. E. Hosking, Britain's international famous bird photographer, for the generous gift of 130 bird photos, to the Malta Ornithological Society, which he also kindly allowed us to publish. One of these photos, of a Turtle Dove, is reproduced on the cover of this first issue of 'Il-Merill'. We also hope to make good use of them at a Bird Week later in the year.

Yellow Wagtails

Yellow Wagtails are protected in Malta. ARE THEY? Those who visited

ta' Qali disused airfield during the latter half of April would have wondered. Heavy passages of these beautiful, slender and strikingly yellow birds took place. Unfortunately large numbers finished up in nets managed by a few irresponsible youths. Hundreds were trapped and most of these would, no doubt, have perished after a few days.

The same thing happened in Gozo, in the vicinity of Lunzjata Valley. It is quite discouraging to request the Government to put more species on the protected list when the law protecting the few is not respected or enforced.

~~THE BREEDING BIRDS OF MALTA~~

~~By J. Sultana & C. Gauci~~

~~(THE MALTA YEAR BOOK 1970 carries a paper on the Breeding Birds of Malta by J. Sultana & C. Gauci. The following is the Introduction of their detailed study and shows the alarming state of Malta's breeding species. Ed.)~~



~~Barn Owl~~
~~Tyto alba~~