

## MISCELLANY

### A misguided educational approach

The appreciation of nature and wild-life can only be attained through the education of the younger generation with practical examples in the field.

It is therefore frustrating to learn that a bird stuffing club was opened in the scholastic 1969-70 of the Lyceum, Secon-Gozo. "Focus" — review of activities and achievements during 1969-70 of the Lyceum, Secondary Technical School, Technical Institute and Gozo Industrial Training Centre — carries a report on the bird stuffing club, "many birds were skinned and mounted. A large number of attractive and beautifully mounted specimens will be on show at the 1970 School Exhibition".

1970 happens to be European Nature Conservation Year and it would have been more befitting to do something towards conservation. In this modern age, in which bird life is being threatened as never before by pollution and destruction of the environment, we can no longer afford the selfishness of bird skin collections. Birds, whether resident or migratory, are part of our national heritage and individuals have no right to destroy it for their own selfish ends.

It is by far better to teach young people to appreciate birds in their wild state. There is a thrill in the ability to identify the large number of different migrant species that visit our shores and pleasure can be derived from watching and studying these feathered creatures.

Introducing bird watching to school children is certainly healthier than bird-stuffing which is nowadays regarded as

totally Victorian and is one of the major causes of the indiscriminate slaughter of wild birds in our islands.

It is worth quoting an extract from the foreword by Miss M. Mortimer, present Director of Education, in A. Valletta's booklet "Know the Birds", which was prepared for primary schools:

"But when we walk in the country or sit in the public gardens how many of us are familiar with the birds that delight us with their songs or flit about us gaily at work? Yet it is the birds that move freely in these surroundings that charm us best: in fact there are many persons particularly in other countries who make "bird watching" their hobby and whose delight it is to remain hidden for hours near bird haunted places not to kill the birds nor to take their eggs but for the joy of getting to know more about these lovely creatures of God".

### Indiscriminate shooting at Ghadira

It is said that Ghadira is reserved for duck-shooting. Those who visited the place in April and May can deny this statement. Green, Wood and Curlew Sandpipers, Little Ringed Plovers, Little Stints and other small waders were indiscriminately shot on more than one occasion. The result was a heap of dead waders. Several others, which were left maimed, could be seen pitifully limping about in the shallows.

### M.O.S. representation at the XVth World Conference of the I.C.B.P.

On behalf of the Friends of Malta G.C., Mr. H.C. Morris, A.C. C.S., Vice-president of the Local

Branch, has donated the sum of £60 to the Malta Ornithological Society in assistance to send a representative to attend the XV World Conference of the International Council for Bird Preservation, which is taking place at De Koog, Texel, Netherlands, between the 6th and 11th September, 1970.

Malta has been a member of the I.C.B.P. since September, 1963, The International Council for Bird Preservation has National Sections in many countries and exercises considerable influence throughout the world in bringing about adequate measures for the protection of wild birds.

Mr. W.E. Grey, Life-member of the M.O.S., also made a donation of £10 to assist in this matter.

#### **Italy to ban bird-netting**

After a widespread outcry from European Nature Conservationists at the legalising of bird-netting in Italy last January, the Italian delegation has told the Council of Europe that the Italian Ministry of Agriculture intends soon to introduce a new law to forbid this practice.

Bird-netting is still carried on in many parts of Europe and the Italian Authorities hope that other countries will follow suit to put an end to what is everywhere recognised as a severe threat to bird life.

The Council of Europe's Conservation experts paid tribute to the Italian Minister of Agriculture, Lorenzo Natali, for this initiative. Statements from national delegations and International Hunting Council revealed a thriving trade in netting birds between several countries and the experts agreed that only co-ordinated legislation in all parts of Europe against netting and the importation and exportation of birds could solve the problem. The chief species involved are song-birds which are caged and other small birds to keep as pets etc.

#### **European Conservation Year Exhibition**

The Malta Committee for E.C.Y. 1970 held an exhibition at the National Museum, Valletta, from 14th to 23rd July. The exhibition was officially opened by a speech from the Hon. Minister of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, who conveyed a word of praise to the M.O.S. for its activities.

#### **Hats off to the R.S.P.C.A. (Malta Branch)**

The Royal Society for the Protection and Care of Animals (Malta Branch) deserves a word of praise for helping the cause of bird protection. Officers and inspectors of the Society are going round to see that protected birds like the Blue Rock Thrush are not kept in cages.

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### **~~REGINALD ERNEST MOREAU Hon. M.A. (Oxford)~~ ~~AN APPRECIATION~~**

~~The man who followed the birds from their breeding quarters in Europe across the Mediterranean to their farthest wintering latitudes of Africa~~

~~has died in Hereford General Hospital in June this year on the day after his 73rd birthday.~~

~~Reginald Moreau was a well~~