

## MISCELLANY

### 1. DEDICATION

This issue of "Il-Merill" is dedicated to the memory of the late Captain A. M. Jacobs of Tipperary, Eire, whose wife kindly donated £20 towards the costs of producing this M.O.S. publication.

### 2. BIRD COLLECTION -- WITH A DIFFERENCE

Mr. L. Attard of Hamrun, a member of the M.O.S., has a collection of birds: - a collection with a difference. He carved his birds from Maltese Stone, the globigerina limestone (franka). In the adjoining photo Mr. L. Attard can be seen with his unique collection which does not harm the bird-life as the out-dated unscientific ones of mounted birds do. Unfortunately there exists a craze for the latter in Malta.



photo: S. Borg

### 3. FAREWELL BRO. EDMUND

Chez Francis, Bugibba, was the venue last June of a farewell dinner in honour of Bro Edmund, ex-Editor of Il-Merill, who left the island. A small token was presented to Bro. Edmund for his sterling service as committee member, editor of 'Il-Merill' and an active member of the Bird Ringing Group.

### 4. ROBIN FOSTER

Posters of the Robin were again distributed and displayed at all Department of Information Notice Boards and installed in every police station in Malta and Gozo.

### 3. PROTEST WITH PLACARDS

Sunday 21st October 1973 is a red-letter day for the M.O.S. especially for the Young Members Section, which in collaboration with the 4T's paraded at Buskett in protest against indiscriminate bird shooting. Some of the placards which the youths carried were: 'Ghasafar protetti fl-Ewropa Maqtula l-Buskett' (Birds protected in Europe killed at Buskett); 'Live and Let live'; 'Qt'il f'post protett' (killing in a protected place); 'Save YOUR Birds'; 'Buskett Qerda shiha ta' Kuččard' (Buskett, a wholesale massacre of Honey Buzzards); 'Xita ta' Comb fil-Buskett' (Shower of shot-gun pellets at Buskett); 'Pellets fly, birds die'; 'Stop this indiscriminate shooting — NOW!'

The shots which could be heard at Buskett by the so-called 'sportsmen' confirmed this, while the youths showed their disapproval of such irresponsible behaviour.



photo: by courtesy of the 'Times of Malta'

### 3. R.A.F. LUQA O.S. M.O.S. VISIT FILFLA

Since 1968, the M.O.S. Ringing Group has been visiting Filfla twice yearly on bird-ringing expeditions. As a result of such visits, the M.O.S. has published a booklet in 1970 on the breeding of pelagic birds on the Islet.

This year the RAF Luqa Ornithological Society and the M.O.S. held two joint bird ringing expeditions to Filfla, one in May and one in August. Although the first visit to Filfla was not exactly successful, the latter visit proved more rewarding — 200 Storm Petrel were ringed.

### 3. SHORT DOCUMENTARY

A short documentary film on bird watching and bird ringing was taken

at Ghadira by the School Broadcasting Unit with the help of J. Sultana and M. O. S. young members. The film was subsequently televised to Primary School's children in May and October.

#### 8. M.O.S. RESOLUTION AT SEMINAR

"Nature Conservation in Malta" was the theme of a Seminar organised jointly by the M.O.S. and the Natural History Society of Malta with the participation of Din l-Art Helwa, Men of the Trees, and the Malta Geographical Society. The seminar was held on 8th July 1973 at Mount St Joseph, Targa Gap, Mosta; Mr. J. Sultana and Mr A. Baldacchino were the M.O.S. members on the Organising Committee with the latter serving as its Secretary. The Chairman at the Seminar was Profs. S. Busuttill.

The M.O.S. contributed to the Seminar an illustrated talk by Mr J Sultana on the "Bird Situation in Malta with particular emphasis on the breeding birds and their habitat"; in the afternoon Mr J. Attard delivered a talk on "Bird Conservation in relation to legislation and education".

The M.O.S. presented the following resolution which was approved: "This Seminar having noted the wanton destruction of bird-life in Malta, which is upsetting the natural balance and causing other adverse effects, and having noted inadequacies and lack of enforcement of present legislation, urges the Government to:

- a) enact new legislation, which would be strictly enforced to safeguard the bird-life.
- b) set up adequate Nature Reserves at Ghadira and Filfla where field-work in scientific studies can be carried out under proper control.
- c) hand over the ex-army barracks at Ghadira to the Department of Education solely for the purpose of such studies.

#### 9. SUPPORT FOR M.O.S.

It was good to hear Judge A.J. Montanaro Gauci, President of the Agrarian Society Committee, strongly condemn the widespread killing of birds by trigger-happy shooters. Even if the birds do not retain their wonderful instinct of feeding conveniently on types of insects which menaced our trees and crops, the killing of birds is still an act of vandalism against nature — said Judge A.J. Montanaro Gauci.

The Governor General, Sir Anthony Mamo, reiterated the urgent need to combat vandalism against nature. These speeches were delivered before distributing prizes during the Agricultural Show at Buskett on 29th June, 1973.

#### 10. M. O. S. MEMBER ON COURSE

Mr Alfred Baldacchino, Assistant Secretary and P.R.O. of the M.O.S. went over to England on the 14th August, where he was the guest of the Malta Bird Reserves overseas Committee (M. B. R. O. C.) during his stay. While in the U. K. Mr Baldacchino had the opportunity of meeting Dr Bruce Campbell.

From Banbury, England, Mr Baldacchino proceeded to North Wales for a week's intensive course at Drapers' Field Centre at Rhyd-y-creuau. The

Course "Youth Leadership in Environmental Conservation" was organised for youth leaders, teachers and others directly involved in working with young people both in U.K. and on the Continent. During the course Mr Baldacchino was invited to give a short talk on his experience in voluntary service in connection with "Conservation in Malta", which talk was well received.

The course was sponsored by the M.O.S. and the M.B.R.O.C.

#### 11. ANOTHER M. O. S. PUBLICATION

The M. O. S. has just published an illustrated two colour leaflet giving information on the Society and on its activities. These leaflets will be distributed with the aim of increasing the interest of the general public in the M. O. S., while hoping to increase membership. The printing cost was met by the Malta Bird Reserves Overseas Committee.

#### 12. M. O. S. PRESIDENT MEETS

##### ARCHBISHOP MAKARIOS

Mr. J.M. Attard, president of the Malta Ornithological Society met Archbishop Makarios, the Hon. President of the Cyprus Ornithological Society, while His Beatitude was on an official visit in Malta.

They exchanged views on bird protection in the Mediterranean and discussed bird problems in Malta and Cyprus.



(photo by courtesy of the Malta News).

#### 13. MEDITERRANEAN COMMENTS

##### (a) France —more protection

France has created seventy-eight reserves which constitute 12% of the coast where no shooting will be permitted. This action by the French Government will be of the greatest value in the protection of migratory birds.

Also, the shooting season for wild fowl was curtailed. It now opens on 29th July instead of 24th July and closes on 15th March instead of 31st March.

This is really a step forward greatly appreciated, but it must also be remembered that some other countries in Europe have far shorter seasons

which do not start until 1st September and end on 31st January.

Malta has no close season at all. So regarding this aspect, Malta is even lagging behind.

(b) Italy — ban on netting

The regional government of the Veneto t,he N.E. province of Italy surrounding and including Venice, has recently followed the lead of Piedmonte and Trento in banning bird netting and one hopes that this ban be extended further south.

(c) Spain — Wildlife disaster in the Coto Donana

World Wildlife Fund's experts on pesticides and the diseases of birds have now discovered that the disaster to wildlife in Spain was not caused by pesticides but by an outbreak of botulism, a disease, which caused so much damage in 1971 in the Netherlands. The species affected were mainly aquatic — herons, egrets, spoonbills, coots, ducks — amounting to about 50,000 birds. Great precautions are being taken to clear the infected area, and corpses are being collected and burnt to limit the outbreak. Although it is perhaps of some consolation to know that it was due to natural causes and not man-induced on account of pollution, the consequences to this reserve are very serious in that a number of species may be lost to the Reserve.

A. Baldacchino