

graphers has kindly donated six photographs of the Blue Rock Thrush to the M.O.S. He also gave his kind consent to use them in M.O.S. publications.

#### ~~Course at Ghadira~~

~~The Education Department held a three-day field course at Ghadira for Science Teachers in Secondary Schools with the help of the British Council. The course was run by Mrs. P. Wolsey and Dr. S.M. Haslam. During the course all those present realised the potentialities of this area as a field cen-~~

~~tre where school children can learn how to appreciate nature in its natural wild state.~~

#### ~~Filfla~~

~~The bilateral agreement which was signed by the Governments of Malta and Great Britain does not give permission to the Services to use Filfla during the breeding season of the sea birds. It is also hoped that Filfla will be declared a nature reserve. Its importance is documented in 'Bird Studies On Filfla' which was published by the M.O.S. in 1970.~~

## BIRD PROTECTION

By Brother Edmund

There is a very laudable movement throughout Europe, and even the rest of the world, for countries to come closer together for various reasons such as trade, defence and culture. This is, in fact, an extension of Donne's saying that, "No man is an island". Just as individuals need each other in order to live sanely, so also do countries for self-defence against threats such as pollution and destruction of the environment. In other words, if we are to survive, then we must come closer together to save our common heritage and culture. The seas surrounding our countries do not belong to us only but to all mankind. If the Mediterranean becomes heavily polluted and fishless, this is the concern of all the countries in the area. So also we can argue that if one country is allowing its flora and fauna to be destroyed it is also destroying those of neighbouring countries, especially in the case of migrant birds which belong to all the countries over which they fly.

It was thus interesting to hear Dr. Mansholt, president of the Common Market Commission, at a recent conference in Venice, speak, "with horror of the destruction in Italy of millions of migratory birds." This, he declared, "is destroying the natural balances in this part of Europe. We respect Italy as the cradle of civilization. It is essential that this horrifying practice stop immediately." Not a very tactful thing to say as a guest in Italy, but how courageous and true! He emphasised that the killing of migratory birds is banned in all other countries of the Common Market and this was another reason why the ban should be fully imposed in Italy. There have indeed been noteworthy and constant attempts in Italy to introduce some control and when we were just about to experience the

happy end to the annual massacre, largely due to the life-time efforts of that gallant gentleman Dr. Ghigi, the power of the 'hunters' lobby' prevailed in these months of political instability. But nevertheless, we entertain firm hopes that the politicians will soon listen to the voice of millions of conservationists, Italian and European, who are determined not to let the 1,600,000 licensed shooters have their own way. The absence of small birds means on the part of farmers a greater reliance on chemical insecticides which is one reason why in Italy the presence of D D T in humans is 1.8 parts per million compared with 0.4 in Britain.

One inevitable result of the greater use of chemical insecticides, as has been tragically shown in recent studies in Israel, is that the already diminishing number of birds is further being destroyed through the accumulation of chemicals in their bodies, so that their eggs become infertile. In addition to this, the birds of prey which feed on the smaller birds and rodents are rapidly and tragically decreasing in numbers. One bird of prey in particular is in especial danger in Europe, the Peregrine Falcon (il Bies). It has already disappeared from several countries and its numbers have gone down by 90%. And yet this bird is not on the protected list in Malta and any hunter can shoot down one of the few remaining ones with impunity. For this crime in Sweden a hunter would be sent to prison and his gun would be confiscated.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature issues a Red Data Book which lists animals and birds which are in imminent danger of disappearing from the world. Last year eight more species of birds were added to the danger list which is no small one. Yet it could happen that a trigger-happy hunter in Malta could shoot down a highly protected bird such as the Osprey (Arpa).

Much can be achieved in the field of bird-protection by two means. The first is through education in the schools, as was achieved last autumn in Malta through the Save the Robin campaign, and in the mass media of newspapers and T.V.; and this is being fairly well done in Malta through the efforts of the Malta Ornithological Society and other dedicated persons. The second is in the vital field of legislation in drawing up and enforcing adequate protection laws. We are quite hopeful that in the next few months much will be achieved in this area in order to bring Malta in line with present standards of bird-protection in the rest of Europe and thus help maintain and increase the declining numbers of our feathered friends.