

MISCELLANY

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting was held on Wednesday, 27th January, 1971, at the British Council in Valletta. Following is the Presidential Address, a summary of the Secretary's Report and the Financial Report for 1970 which were read at the meeting.

Presidential Address

1970 European Conservation Year has ended without giving us what we most expected. On our part we have made our efforts and given our share during this year to see an improvement in the protection of birds, the conservation of habitat, the education of the public and the study of our birds.

In this struggle in which we have experienced many times disappointments and frustration, we have come across inspiration and encouragement from men of good will and from local and international organisations.

It was a great honour to us when last year His Excellency the Governor-General, Sir Maurice Dorman, kindly accepted our invitation to be the Patron of Our Society. His patronage has already made a remarkable influence beyond our shores. The Friends of Malta have also shown their appreciation in our work by giving financial assistance to our Society to be able to send a representative to the XVth World Conference of the International Council for Bird Preservation, which took place in Holland, last year. There we were represented by our hard-working secretary, Joe Sultana, who put the case of Malta so well that his proposed resolution was unanimously passed by the delegates in this Conference. Here it was resolved that, whereas

many wild birds which are protected in most European countries, are netted and destroyed indiscriminately in Malta, the Malta Government should control these activities by adequate laws. A resolution also urged the Malta Government to turn Ghadira Pool into a Bird Sanctuary where better facilities could be provided to educate the Maltese public in terms of conservation and protection.

We must admit that it is politically difficult for any Government in power, especially when a General Election is so near, to carry out any changes in the old-accepted traditions and customs of the people, bad and rotten as they may be. But we believe that under any democracy and constitution an area universally regarded as a potential bird sanctuary, unique for our Islands and important to effect a change in the local mentality, should have never been given on lease to one person for the sake of shooting birds. If this mistake has happened it is up to the authorities to straighten things out by requisitioning the land back and use it in the best interests of the nation. As long as there is a Malta Ornithological Society, the struggle for the conservation of Ghadira will be carried on, not in the arena of politics but round the table of diplomacy and understanding.

In our address to you last year, we promised a new publication. This was done in a most interesting form under the name of "Il-Merill", ably edited by Bro. Edmund. Our publications for 1970 also included a booklet, "Bird Studies on Filfla", which is the most interesting and exhaustive study ever to be carried out on the birds of one of the islets

of the Maltese Archipelago. This is a credit to Joe Sultana and Charles Gauci who co-ordinated these studies to the best of their acquired knowledge on the birds of Filfla.

I would like to mention the assistance, understanding and co-operation that we received from other associations especially Din l-Art Helwa, the teenage branch of this group, The Teens and Twenties Talent Trust, The Plant a Tree in Malta Committee, the National Committee of the European Conservation Year, the Malta Bird Reserves Overseas Committee and the Natural History Society of Malta. The latter Society invited us, at the end of last year, to take part in an Exhibition on Natural History. This was a tremendous success and the most popular exhibition that has ever been held at the National Museum. This is a bright and clear sign for us that the Maltese public is again realising the great need of a Natural History Museum. There are already plans for such a museum and we earnestly hope that its message will be purely educational and scientific and not something of a Victorian bird collection. The ultimate aim of such a Museum should be the conservation of our natural heritage and a source of knowledge on local Ecology and species. Here I would like to remember the late Prof. Harry Micallef of the Royal University of Malta who did so much in the planning of this Museum, but who was unfortunately not to see it bearing fruit.

I would like to end this address by thanking all those who have helped the Society in any way or other in our activities and attainments of last year.

J. M. Attard, President, M.O.S.

Secretary's Report for 1970 (Summary)

The Committee for 1970 was elected as follows: President — *J. M. Attard*; Secretary/Treasurer — *J. Sultana*; Ass. Secretary — *C. Gauci*; Committee Members — *Bro. Edmund, C. Galea & E. Spiteri Campbell*. The Ringing Group Secretary was *C. Gauci* while the Gozo representative was *V. Vella Muskat*. *B. K. German*, helped by *M. Thake* and *M. Grima*, was in charge of the Young Members' Section. The Rarities committee was composed of *M. Beaman, C. Gauci & J. Sultana*. *J. M. Attard* was the Society's representative on the Plant a Tree in Malta and the Malta Committee for ECY, while *E. Spiteri Campbell* was the Society's representative at 'Din l-Art Helwa' Association.

The Ringing Group has been very active in field-work and achieved results. *Il-Merill* appeared in its new printed form and four leaflets were published for young members. 'Bird Studies on Filfla' was published to coincide with *E. C. Y.* while a series of twelve articles by *J. Sultana & C. Gauci* (10) and *B. K. German* (2) appeared in the local press including a number of letters by various members. No fewer than 19 talks were given by *C. Gauci* (8), *J. Sultana* (5), *J. M. Attard* (2), *B. K. German* (1), *M. Grima* (1), *J. A. Hardman* (1) and *V. Vella Muskat* (1) at various institutions, namely the British Council, St. Michael's Training College, St. Edward's College, Maria Regina Grammar School, Capuchins' Youth Centre, 4Ts Club, Boy Scouts Headquarters, Gozo and the Lyceum Secondary School, Gozo. Two film shows were also shown to members, while eight outings were held. Three reports — 'Wild Birds Traffic in

Malta' by Bro. Edmund, 'The Bird Situation in Malta' by J. Sultana and 'The slaughter of Birds of Prey' by C. Galea — were prepared and made use of by the Society's representative at the XV World Conference of the ICBP. MOS officials also took part in various programmes on the Malta Television and Radio-diffusion.

J. Sultana, Secretary.

**Financial Report for 1970
Brought forward £350 4s. 8d.**

Credit	
Fees & Donations	£203 17 4
Sale of Publications	49 15 8
Interest	14 1 11
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	£267 14 11

Debit	
MOS representation at the ICBP Conference	£30 0 0
Filfla Booklet	67 0 0
Il-Merill Nos 1-3	71 15 0
Postage	12 4 3
Young Members, Ringing Group, Circulars and other expenses	29 18 8
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	£210 17 11

Balance as on 27th January, 1971 = £407 1s. 8d.

J. Sultana, Treasurer,

Obituary

We were sorry to hear of the death of Dr. C. DeLuca, B.Sc., M.D., a member of the Society and a pre-

vious Hon. President. He was lately one of the Curators of the Natural History Section of the Museum Department. He has written several papers on local ornithology and natural history, including a checklist of the birds of Malta. We offer our sincere condolences to his wife and son.

A Set of Stamps

In 1963 the Natural History of Malta and the Malta Ornithological Society suggested to the Chairman of the Stamp Advisory Board to consider the issue of a Natural History set of stamps. Since then the M.O.S. have reminded him annually about the matter. Our insistence and that of the N.H.S.M. have been rewarded at last. Next September the Post Office will issue a set of four stamps depicting the Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*, the National Bird, and the *Centaurea spathulata*, the National Plant.

A Day Seminar

On the initiative of the M.O.S. a day Seminar — The Future of the Malta Environment — will be held on 4th July jointly with Din l-Art Hejwa, The Natural History Society of Malta and the Malta Geographical Society. Illustrated talks and discussions will be the main items. A circular will be sent to all local members with all the details.

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