

# BIRD'S EYE VIEW



No.9 November 1985

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Front Cover : MOS Youth handing out leaflets during the protest.  
(Photo : A.E.Baldacchino).

Back Cover : Sea Shooters. (Photo: Natalino Fenech). See also page 25

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## COMMENT

### ● LOOKING AHEAD

1985 is the International Youth Year. This is no news. Everyone must have heard this over and over again. However it is the opportune time to pay tribute to the local young people for playing such a strong role for conservation in the past months. They have helped to create the recent upsurge in the struggle for conservation. They have been adamant in showing their disapproval at the indiscriminate and widespread killing and trapping of birds. They have been in the forefront in the current battle to safeguard the countryside from the building rampage. The MOS is proud of its YOUTHS - and rightly so.

Keeping in mind its policy 'Conservation through Education', MOS has embarked on an educational campaign to create an awareness of nature conservation especially amongst youngsters. There has been quite a measure of success in this respect but much more ground needs to be covered. 'LOOKING AHEAD' means recruiting more young people for a tough but eventful future in conservation. Joining MOS means joining the struggle for conservation. Helping MOS means helping conservation.

In this Youth Year we salute the MOS Youths.

*The Editor*



John Portelli

# MOS TAKES TO THE STREETS

SEPTEMBER '84

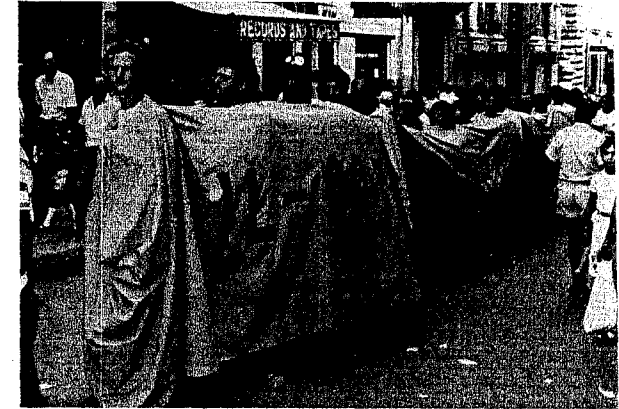
Several MOS Youths covered by a huge streamer, forming an effigy of a huge caterpillar, trekked along the main streets of Valletta on Saturday morning of 15th September (1984).

The caterpillar was headed by a small guitar group singing 'conservation' songs calling for the protection of the countryside and birds. The group was followed by a large mobile replica of a shotgun cartridge covered with spent cartridges gathered by MOS Youths from Buskett, a supposed bird sanctuary, where birds of prey, mainly Honey Buzzards, are frequently shot during the autumn migration.

The large slogans on the sides of the 'caterpillar' read 'No to the massacre'; 'Will this destruction continue?'; 'Let us protect nature'; and 'The senseless bird killing has not yet stopped'. Hundreds of leaflets, highlighting the bird killing which goes on unhindered in Malta, were distributed during the protest march. This was the second time that the MOS took to the streets to make the public aware of the state of bird shooting which has deteriorated due to lack of law enforcement and the continual illegal killing of protected birds in and out of protected areas.



Michael Zerafa, MOSY Committee Member pushing the giant replica of a shotgun cartridge, made from real spent cartridges collected from Buskett. (Photo: John Portelli).



MOS Youths, led by the protest organiser Saviour Balzan, forming an effigy of a huge caterpillar. (Photo: John Portelli).

Left : Members of the Shooters Association watching the protest. Mr. J. Scicluna, Vice President, (seen arrowed) was heard stating publicly "we shoot Honey Buzzards and we shall continue shooting Honey Buzzards". (Photo : Natalino Fenech).

When the MOS repeated the protest march in the afternoon at Sliema, the story took a different turn. A group of about 90 bird shooters and trappers, some wearing the shooters and trappers' Association's T-shirts, attacked the MOS protesters, who were pelted with eggs and other objects. MOS Youth Michael Zerafa was attacked while taking pictures and when MOS Youth Officer, Michael Grima, went to his help, he had his spectacles smashed in his face with a punch and glass splinters lodged in his eyes. Both were rushed to hospital for treatment, where Michael Grima was detained and operated on.

The protest had to be called off as the

few policemen present could not control the hostile group of shooters and trappers. However the story did not end here. On the way to the buses a group of MOS Youths were attacked and punched. A policeman acquired a black eye while MOS Youth Victor Falzon, who was one of the guitar group players, was floored and had his guitar smashed. Ten people, including the President, the Legal Adviser and Council Members of the Shooters and Trappers Association, have been arraigned by the police and are presently appearing in court. At the time of going to press, the criminal court has not yet heard all the witnesses against the accused. ●



During the protest a small guitar group led the march while singing conservation songs. (Photo : John Portelli).



Michael Grima, MOSY Officer, photographed a few moments after he was beaten. (Photo : Joe Sultana).



John Portelli

# BATS versus BUILDINGS

John Portelli





The protest march was led by some MOSY members dressed as bats, seen above posing in front of the building site above the cave. (Photo : Raymond Galea).

GHAR IL-FRIEFET, the cave near the main road on the outskirts of Birżebbuġa, was the concern of the MOS and other societies when it was found out that buildings were being constructed above the cave and enclosing its entrance.

This cave, apart from housing a colony of Lesser Mouse-eared Bats, contains unique cave fauna and is also of geological importance. The MOS organised a protest on Sunday, March 3rd and together with the Society for the Study and Conservation of Nature, Din l-Art Helewa, Men of the Trees, Society for the Protection and Care of Animals, the Archeological Group and M'83 (University Ecological Students), marched along Birżebbuġa's main roads and ended up in front of the cave site. Leading the protest march was a group of MOS members dressed up as a family of bats. The protesters carried several placards calling for the protection of the cave as well as of the natural environment, sang slogans and distributed leaflets to the residents of Birżebbuġa as well as to occupants of the passing cars. At the end of the protest march, an open letter signed by representatives of the associations taking part, was sent to the Prime Minister calling for the setting up of an Environment Board as well as for the protection of the cave.

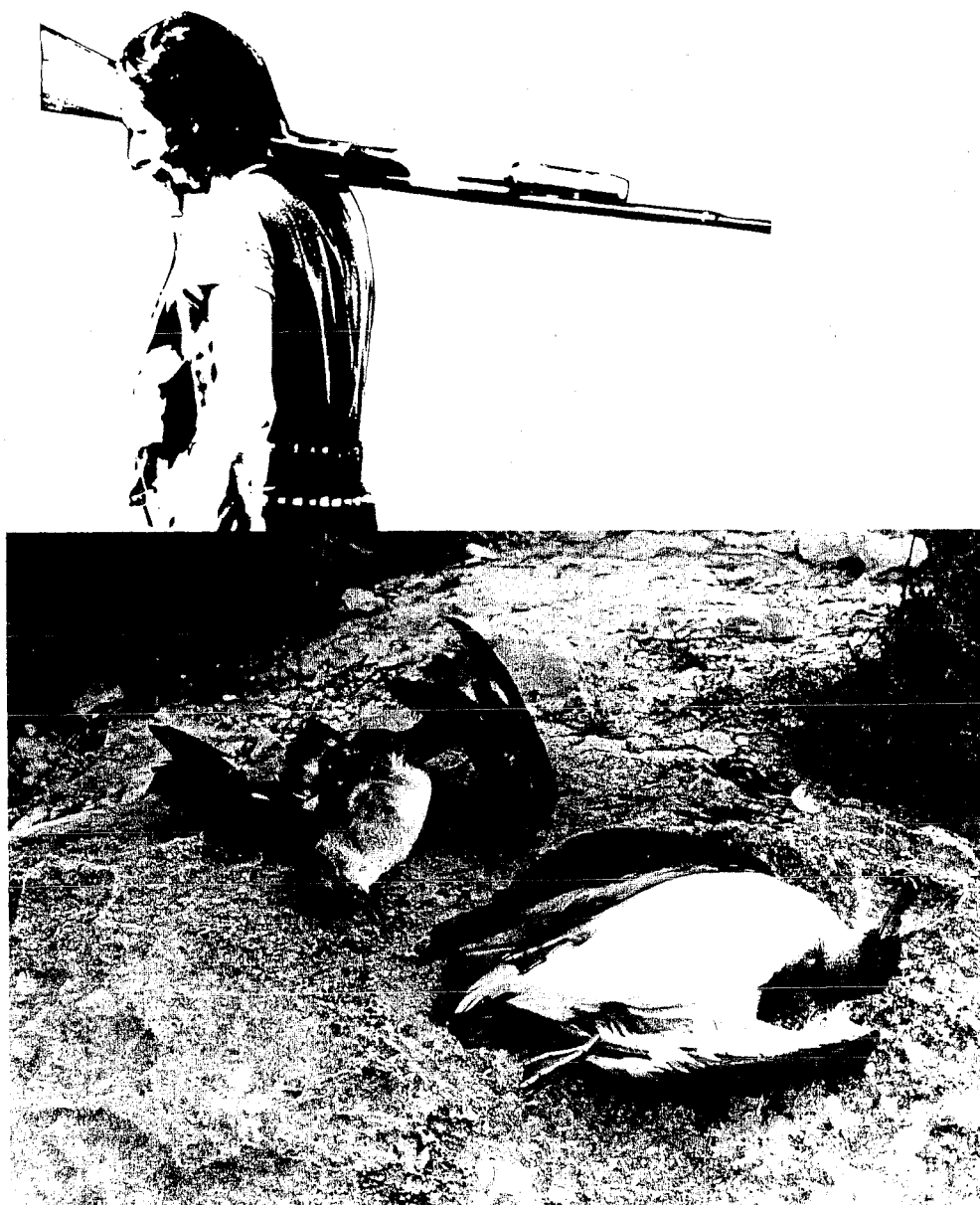
After the protest the building above the site was stopped by the authorities and studies are being made how to conserve the cave. Although no official reply has been received on the cave's future, the MOS and SSCN have offered their advice and services for the cave's preservation.



John Portelli

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# THE KILLING GOES ON ....



Joe Sultana



Joe Sultana

In spite of the 1980 bird protection laws indiscriminate killing of birds is still the order of the day. Several Mute Swans and Flamingoes, driven south by severe weather in winter, were among thousands of birds of protected species which were killed. The show continued during spring when trans-saharah migrants are returning to their breeding quarters in Europe. On 28th April alone, a day when a large number of migratory birds reached Malta's shores, thousands of birds, including protected ones, such as Golden Orioles, Hoopoes and Birds of Prey, were mercilessly blasted out of existence. And the show continued even during the close season which starts as late as 22nd May. Various reports which reached MOS are quite appalling. One shooter boasted of killing over 30 Hoopoes during one shooting session on that April 'good day'. Illegal shooting of protected birds in and out of protected areas has been noted to be on the increase and this is mainly due to the lack of law enforcement.

Up to May this year there were about 13,700 licensed shooters, an increase of about 3000 since 1981. The MOS has been suggesting to the authorities the setting up of a small squad of environment police whose duty would be to enforce environment laws including bird protection. This, coupled with an extensive educational campaign, is the only solution to end the annual senseless massacre of birds which occur in the Maltese Archipelago.

The accompanying photos speak loudly for themselves.

Two of many birds found shot. Both the Little Egret and the Nightjar are not yet protected by Maltese bird protection laws. But even protected species are not spared, as can be seen in the previous page showing two dead Cory's Shearwaters.



Raymond Galea



## .....WHILE MOS TRIES TO SAVE BIRDS



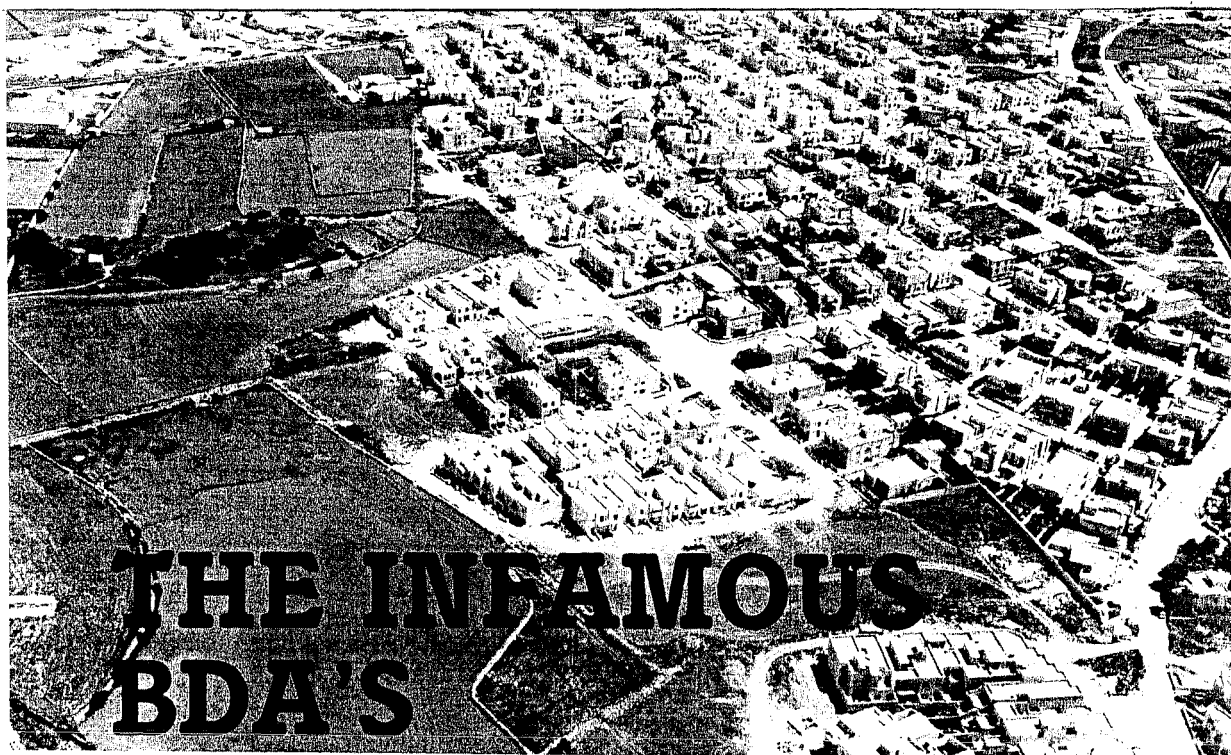
Due to an increase of the public conscience towards birds, members of the public frequently report findings of wounded birds which had been shot. A case in point was this Honey Buzzard which was nursed back to health by Natalino Fenech. (Photo : Joe Sultana).



One of the many swans which were driven south during last winter's severe weather. This Swan was found wounded at Marsamxett. X-rays showed several lead pellets embedded in its body. A ten-day fight to save it ended on Christmas Day. (Photo : Lawrence Darmanin).



A Stone Curlew, which was being cared for by Joe Doublet, is seen here being released by LIPU members in a protected breeding area in Italy. The bird accompanied Dr. Francesco Mezzatesta, Secretary General of the Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli, after a brief holiday in Malta last Easter.



When the Building Development Areas were first announced by the authorities there was a deafening silence among the naturalists and environmentalists. No one could believe that such a small country as Malta with such a depleted countryside could afford 21 new, large areas for building development, resulting in totally new towns. Furthermore the areas in question included locally important habitats such as, amongst others, cliff edges, valley sides and garrigue areas.

When the shock subsided there was an outcry, rumblings of which are still being heard to date mainly in the local papers. ICBP (Malta) was quick to present its comments on most of the sites to the authorities pointing out the detrimental effects that the areas would have on the natural environment. This was followed by various activities, culminating on 5th June, World Environment Day, carried out jointly by all the Maltese environment societies, on the initiative, in most cases, of Saviour Balzan and Natalino Fenech, PRO and Asst. Secretary respectively of the MOS.

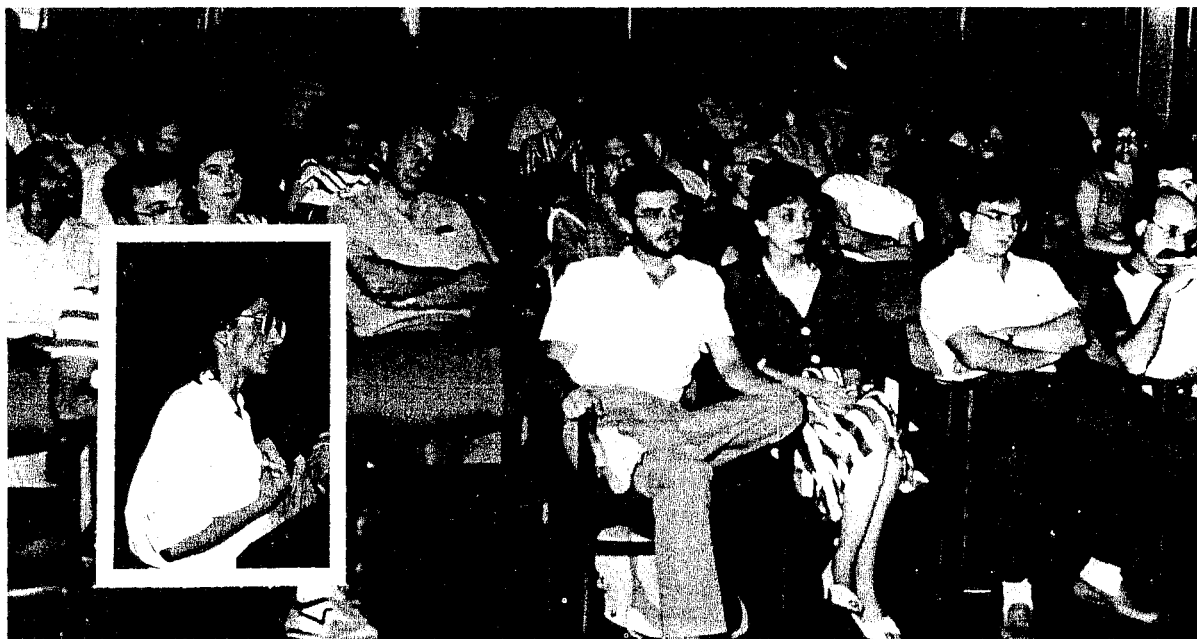
A public forum on this question, organised jointly by Din l-Art Helwa, MOS, SSCN, Men of the Trees, Wirt Ghawdex and the Green Movement, was held on 20th March at the Green Lounge of the Hotel Phoenicia. During the forum the MOS presented an audio-visual highlighting the destruction of the Maltese countryside by building development.

On 1st June the MOS presented a Festival at the Assembly Hall of the University with the theme - Festival for the Environment. This included an audio-visual on the

Maltese Natural Environment, a street theatre and various music numbers by several locally popular musical groups.

On World Environment Day the MOS presented the street theatre in Valletta and published a leaflet for distribution entitled 'Il-Kampanja Ikkundannata' (The Countryside is Condemned). In the evening of the same day the MOS jointly with Din l-Art Helwa, the SSCN, the Men of the Trees and the Green Movement organised another forum 'The Future of the Maltese Natural Environment' at the Hotel Excelsior. The panel of five speakers included the President of the Malta Labour Party, Dr. Alfred Sant and the General Secretary of the Nationalist Party, Dr. Louis Galea M.P., as well as Dr. P.J. Schembri, Mr. A.E. Baldacchino and Dr. J. Friggieri, with Dr. F. Ventura acting as Chairman.

In the meantime the Chamber of Architects joined the anti-BDAs movement and offered constructive criticism of the whole question. All these activities, including a spate of articles and correspondence on the subject, had a bearing on the authorities' view of the whole matter and when Parliament debated the BDAs, ironically on the same day of the forum, the Minister of Works himself brought down their number to eleven (ten in Malta and one in Gozo). Although this measure was heartening, the remaining BDAs will still affect the natural, ecological, historical, and agricultural aspects of the Maltese and Gozitan environment. This was pointed out in a memorandum submitted to the authorities by six environmental societies led by MOS.



A section of the audience at the forum. Inset : Ms P. Miceli, a journalist and an environmentalist, addressing the audience. (Photos : Joe Doublet)

• CONSERVATIONISTS SEEM TO HAVE AWAKENED TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS IMPOSED BY OUR BUILDING DEVELOPMENT. OUR "LARGE" POPULATION AND "SMALL" SURFACE AREA CAN HARDLY BE OF ANY HELP. LESS CONSOLING ARE THE AUTHORITIES WHO SEEM DETERMINED NOT TO TONE DOWN THIS DESTRUCTION. ON THE BRIGHT SIDE CONSERVATIONISTS ARE LOBBYING FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF PROPER LEGISLATION: FOR A GREENER AND MORE RATIONAL USE OF OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.



The Street Theatre in action. (Photo : Raymond Galea).

One of the musical groups at the Festival. (Photo : Joe Doublet).





The International Council for Bird Preservation is devoted entirely to the conservation of birds and their habitats. It was founded in 1922 and since then has grown into a federation of over 300 member organisations representing some ten million people in 100 countries.

#### • XV ICBP EUROPEAN CONFERENCE

A call for the protection of wildlife, birds in particular, from indiscriminate hunting in Malta, Italy, Greece and France has been made by the European Continental Section of ICBP. Malta was also urged to sign the major international conservation treaties. The occasion was the Section's 15th Conference, held in Rapperswil, Switzerland from the 22nd to 25th February 1985, under the auspices of ICBP's Swiss National Section. The Conference passed several resolutions and held a full day symposium on riverine forests in Europe.

During the Conference's sessions, the delegates from the 20 countries which were represented, including Malta, discussed a number of important conservation issues arising from the Section's work in 1984. Members of the European Section prepared a list of important bird areas for bird conservation for the European Community and for the Council of Europe. However, delegates recognised the need for more attention to the impact of land-use planning outside such areas if European bird species are to be protected. Pollution, especially acid rain, is also a serious problem that threatens to outpace the very positive progress made in conservation. Reports from National Sections on bird populations monitoring and law enforcement were also discussed. Malta also presented a paper on the increasing problem of bird-shooting at sea.

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To succeed the retiring Chairman, Dr John Temple-Lang, the Conference elected Joe Sultana, President of the MOS and Chairman of the Malta ICBP National Section.

In outlining its goals for the future, the Conference agreed to continue its inventory of important bird areas, especially expanding coverage into Eastern Europe; to focus on the large scale killing of migratory birds in such 'bottle-neck areas' as Malta, Cyprus, the Straits of Messina in Italy, the Gironde in France and the Passes of the Pyrenees; and to undertake the collection and dissemination of information on the impact of acid rain on bird species. The Conference recognised the importance of pursuing its goals and activities in Europe within the context of ICBP's nine principal areas of worldwide concern.

#### ICBP PUBLICATIONS

The ICBP newsletter has been given a new look as well as a new name 'World Birdwatch' as suggested by Sir Peter Scott. The expanded newsletter will include broader coverage of international bird conservation issues. Each issue of 'World Birdwatch' will focus on a major theme and the first number which has been issued last spring focuses on Migratory Birds and includes an article 'Shooting of Seabirds on the increase in Malta'. Future issues will focus on islands, followed by wetlands. ICBP also publishes quarterly the European Continental Section Newsletter.

RESOLUTION 8

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR BIRD PRESERVATION  
XV CONFERENCE OF THE EUROPEAN CONTINENTAL SECTION  
Rapperswill, Switzerland 22-23 February 1985

- BEING AWARE of the indiscriminate bird shooting which is carried out in the Maltese Islands to the detriment of migratory birds as well as to the birdlife of the islands;
- WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING that the Maltese authorities had enacted bird-laws in 1980 which afford protection to many species and afford birds protection in several bird sanctuaries;
- URGES the Maltese authorities to implement and enforce these laws for the better protection of birds;
- BEING AWARE of the problems which the Maltese natural environment faces due to a relatively high population, due to a rapid development necessary for the Maltese economy, as well as due to lack of appreciation of the Maltese natural heritage;
- URGES the Maltese authorities
- (a) to protect by legislation the Maltese flora and fauna, particularly those species which are endemic and/or endangered, and the rare and threatened Maltese habitats;
  - (b) to take into consideration the natural environment in every planned development;
  - (c) to initiate an extensive programme on environmental education with an emphasis on the natural environment; and
  - (d) to sign and ratify those international conventions dealing with the protection of wildlife namely Ramsar 1971, Washington 1973, Bonn 1979 and Berne 1979.

• WEBS CONFERENCE

Before the ICBP conference started the Working Group of European Bird Protection Societies (WEBS) held the 7th Meeting. WEBS is a discussion forum for the largest bird protection societies in each country of Europe. Fifteen member societies (OGV-Austria, DOF-Denmark, LPO-France, BDV-Fed. Rep. of Germany, HSPN-Greece, MME-Hungary, IWC-Ireland, LIPU-Italy, MOS-Malta, NVBV-Netherlands, NOF-Norway, Coda-Spain, SOF-Sweden, SLKV-Switzerland and RSPB-United Kingdom) were represented together with observers from Czechoslovakia, German Democratic Republic, Poland and Turkey. The functional relationship between WEBS and ICBP was discussed. It was also decided, amongst other things, that information should be collected on the various projects undertaken by member societies in collaboration with each other.

• ON THE HOMEFRONT

ICBP Malta, whose constituent bodies are the MOS, SSCN, SPCA and Men of the Trees, has sent a memorandum to the political parties urging them to include items dealing with the conservation of the natural environment in electoral manifestoes. The main proposals include the setting up of an Environment Board to formulate a coherent environmental plan for the Maltese Islands; the appointment of environmental wardens for the enforcement of environmental legislation; the initiation of an extensive programme on environmental education, with an emphasis on natural environment in schools; the protection of the Maltese flora and fauna and their habitats by passing modern environmental legislation; and the signing of international conventions dealing with the protection of wildlife.

# YEE VISITS MALTA AND SICILY

Messina in Sicily and Buskett area in Malta were the venues of an international camp course on bird protection problems during migration in September 1984. The course was sponsored by Youth and Environment Europe with the co-operation of the MOS Youths and the Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli (LIPU) of Italy. 25 participants hailing from the Netherlands, Belgium, Scotland, West Germany, Denmark, Italy, Yugoslavia, Spain, Portugal, Tunisia, Egypt and Malta took part.

The course commenced with a tour for the participants to various areas in Sicily and Reggio Calabria where key nature reserves were visited and local environment problems discussed.

From Sicily the course participants proceeded to Malta where fieldwork was carried out in the Buskett/Tas-Salib area. Statistical data with special reference to migrating birds of prey, as well as problems facing such migration was the basis of the fieldwork undertaken. Special attention was given to Honey Buzzards which are protected throughout Europe, including Malta, but which are still shot in large numbers both in south Italy and Sicily and in Malta, due to lack of law enforcement and a large number of irresponsible shooters.

Before the course ended the participants sent a petition to the President of the Republic asking to use her influence so



Members of YEE challenged the illegality of importing Italian protected finches into Malta, while on the ferry from Sicily. In the above photo, bird-traders are seen following an alerted customs officer to try to defend their case. (Photo: Saviour Balzan).



The course participants giving a helping hand to cover part of an island with shingle at Chadira Nature Reserve. (Photo: Saviour Balzan).

that bird-protection laws would be adequately enforced and illegal and indiscriminate shooting controlled.

The petition stated that the participants, representatives of various European youth and environment groups, were concerned about the local situation regarding migratory birds which are killed indiscriminately during migration over the Maltese Islands. They stated that they witnessed the shooting of several birds of prey in Malta even in bird sanctuaries such as Buskett. They had experienced threats and violent aggression while watching birds in

Buskett Gardens and at Tas-Salib. Two participants were also attacked by shooters while watching the MOS protest at Sliema. The petition emphasized that the protection of birds was an international matter and thousands of birds which breed in northern Europe were being killed while crossing the Mediterranean. Copies of the petition were sent to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Health & Environment, the Minister of Justice & Parliamentary Affairs and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The MOS held a press conference during which copies of the petition were distributed.



YEE Members during one of their regular outings to Buskett to carry out fieldwork. They are also seen being filmed for a TV programme. (Photos: John Portelli).



# NEWS & VIEWS



Joe Sultana

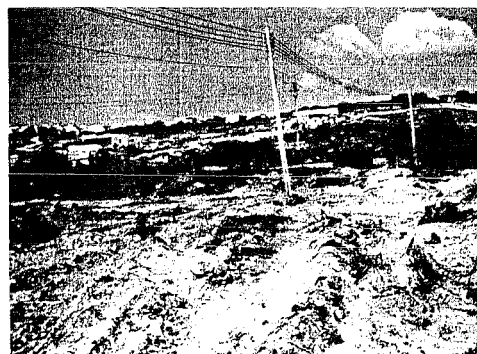
## "GHADIRA BY-PASS" .... MOS MEETS PM

Il-Hofra, a pocket-size marshy area at Mellieha Bay, 300m to the south of Ghadira Bird Reserve, was completely destroyed by the new Ghadira By-pass, a relatively huge road which is being built along the coast, slightly further inland from the old existing road, at Mellieha Bay. When Public Works Department's bulldozers were first seen in the area unannounced, MOS members rushed to the site at Il-Hofra to save a rare plant just in time before the bulldozers delivered the *coup de grace*. Several specimens of the sedge *Carex extensa*, known to grow in Malta only at Il-Hofra, were removed and transplanted into the Bird Reserve. It is a pity that Il-Hofra, a unique small salt marsh habitat of scientific and natural interest, could not be spared. Fortunately the sand dunes area by the north side of the reserve were saved after great efforts by

the MOS. Various meetings and representations were made with PWD officials.

The By-pass was also one of the main topics discussed during a meeting which an MOS delegation had with the Prime Minister Dr. C. Mifsud Bonnici, at his office at Castille. Present at the meeting were also the Minister of Health and Environment, Dr. V. Moran, and the Minister of Works, Mr. L. Sant. During the meeting the lack of enforcement of the existing bird laws was also discussed. The MOS delegation presented facts and figures on bird killing and stressed on the need of implementing and enforcing the bird laws especially in bird sanctuaries such as Buskett. The need of setting up an Environment Board with Parliamentary powers to take the natural environment into consideration in every planned development was also discussed with the Prime Minister. ●

The marsh at Il-Hofra before and after it was given the *coup de grace* by the bulldozers. (Photos : Raymond Galea).





## DBV YOUTHS IN MALTA



Saviour Balzan

About fifteen youths from the German Bird Protection Society - Deutsche Bund für Vogelschutz - spent a fortnight environmental camp in Malta in spring last year, organised by MOS. The DBV youths were joined by MOS youth leaders and Maltese students from the New Lyceum. They held various excursions, discussions and illustrated talks on environmental problems.

Other activities were also organised. Tree-planting was carried out with the co-operation of the Department of Agriculture at Wied is-Sewda, at the periphery of Ghadira Nature Reserve and at Lunzjata Valley, Gozo. DBV Youths also helped in cleaning the lower part of Lunzjata Valley, below Xlendi Road, and in fixing several notices with conservation messages at Buskett. The main action concerned frogs. This was held in a weekend at Chadwick Lakes where leaflets and stickers, campaigning against the capture of frogs, were distributed to the public. The public's response was very positive and opportunity was taken to discuss environmental problems with the people present at this recreational area.



Joe Mangion

Above : DBV Youths in action at Lunzjata.

Left : MOSY RECIPROCATES - A group of MOS Youths, led by Joe Mangion and Michael Zerafa, were the guests of the DBV in Germany. Here they are seen together in a forest.

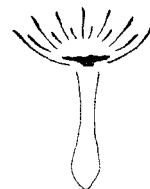
## DOLPHINS .... TO THE RESCUE

The Inland Sea at Dwejra, Gozo had two unexpected visitors in June last year. Two female Bottlenose Dolphins ended up trapped in the inland bay. Efforts by Task Force personnel helped by the SPCA failed to capture and release them through the cave entrance. The task was taken up by Mr Tony Lautier, an underwater instructor and nature lover, who, helped by a team of MOS and SSCN members, managed to capture both animals and release them in the open sea. The dolphins generated a lot of interest and many people flocked to Dwejra to see them. Opportunity was taken by MOS and an information leaflet on Dolphins, calling also for the conservation of marine life, was issued and distributed among the people who visited Dwejra.



Paul Portelli

## MOS YOUTHS ABROAD



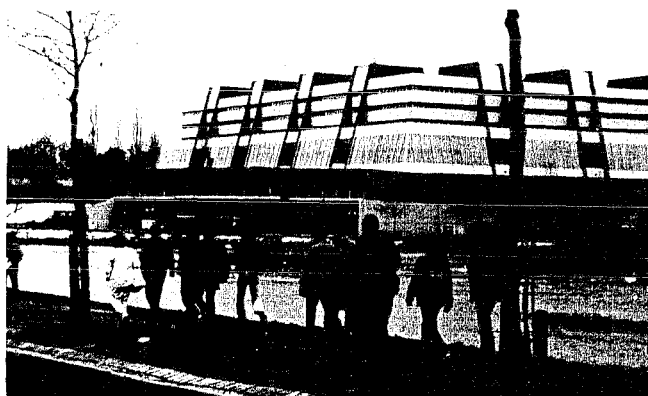
Christer Ågren, a leading environmentalist on acid rain, is seen here lecturing on acid rain problems during one of the participants' outings. (Photo: Joe Mangion).

MOSY members, Joseph Mangion and Charles Grima, attended a ten-day training course on Environmental Action in Uddevalla, Sweden in July 1984. The course was organised by YEE and Faltbiologerna and was attended by participants from Austria, the Netherlands, Federal Republic of Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Malta. The participants carried out studies on shore-life. During the excursions they discussed environmental problems, such as oil pollution and its effects on sea-birds, sulphur emissions and acid rain and the dumping of nuclear wastes. They also studied what environmental actions one could take in such cases and took part in the West Coast Boat Action which was being carried out on the west coast of Sweden at that time. ●

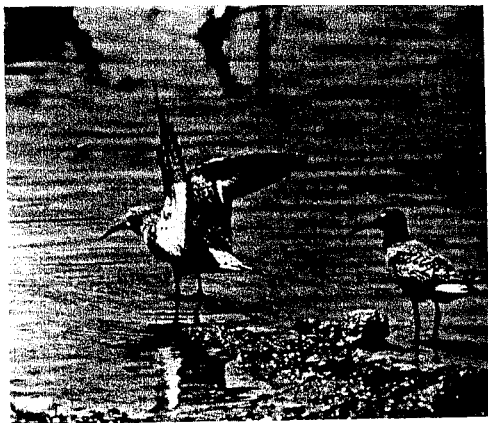
Paul Portelli, MOS Council Member, and Josette Cachia, MOSY Committee Member, both teachers, attended a course with the theme 'Practical Environmental Education - a way for the future' organised by the Youth & Environment Europe. The meeting was held at the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg in March 1985 and was attended by 38 participants representing the respective main environmental organisations in 14 European countries. During the meeting, several aspects of Environmental Education were discussed, including working in schools, in organisations and in communities. Several practical sessions, such as working with audio-visual material and the setting up of projects, were held. The group also visited a 'Classe verte', a typical French Field Studies Centre. ●



The participants are seen returning back to the European Youth Centre, near the Palais d'Europe in Strasbourg, after a field outing. (Photo : Paul Portelli).



## FOCUS ON NATURE

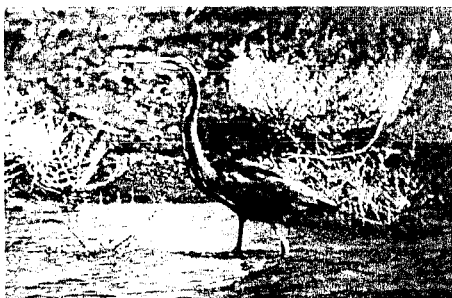
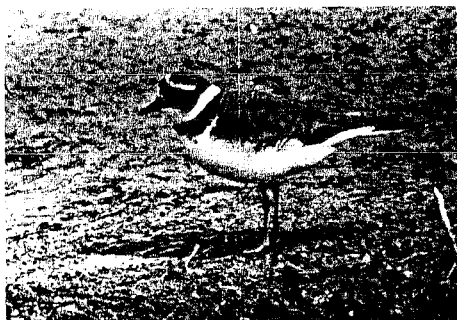


Colour photographs and transparencies focusing on Maltese Nature's beauty were on display at the annexe of St. John's Co-Cathedral, Valletta in January. The pictures were the entries for the third nature photography competition organised by the Society for the Study and Conservation of Nature (SSCN). The aim behind this annual activity is to propagate proper appreciation of our natural environment. John Alfred Portelli was judged Nature Photographer of the Year for his colour print entitled 'Mirror Orchid'. The colour slide section was won by Natalino Fenech with 'Curlew Sandpiper'. Natalino also won the first and second prizes with 'Chiffchaff' and 'Robin' respectively, awarded by the Ornithological Society (MOS) for the best bird pictures. The conservation of nature prize was won by Paul Portelli with his slide entitled 'Filfla Nature Reserve?'. ●

## NEW PUBLICATIONS

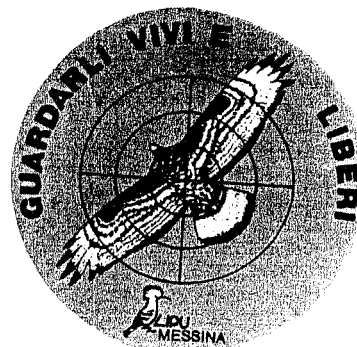
The second set of four postcards depicting wild birds in Malta has been issued. The photographs have been taken by MOS members showing that bird photography is also possible in Malta. The postcards show a Kingfisher at Xemxija and a Purple Heron at

Ghadira, both by Richard Cachia Zammit, a Sardinian Warbler at Attard by Natalino Fenech and a Little Ringed Plover at Ghadira by Raymond Galea. The postcards are issued in line with MOS motto 'TAKE PICTURES NOT LIVES'.





The MOS has issued a poster in spring 1985 as part of its continuous campaign to create public awareness of the protection of various bird species. The 500 copies of the poster, which were originally donated to MOS by 'Town and Gown Travel' of Oxford on Mr. Mont Hiron's suggestion, features a number of colour pictures showing various migrant species. MOS over-printed the mes-



sage 'Sbieh jittajru hielsa' (Beautiful flying free).

MOS also published a sticker which was donated to the Messina Section of Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli (LIPU). The sticker which depicts an underview of a Honey Buzzard in flight, carries the message 'Guardarli Vivi E Liberi' (Watch it alive and free). A large number of Honey Buzzards are shot at Messina annually and the Messina Section of LIPU has organised various protests against the illegal shooting of this species. MOS contribution was made to support and encourage our Sicilian counterparts. ●

## 1675 ESSAYS ON CONSERVATION

The MOS Education Committee and the MOS Youths organised an essay competition for all categories in schools last scholastic year. The competition was launched after the Easter holidays and within a few days the first essays started to arrive. By the closing date a veritable flood of essays had reached MOS. A total of 1675 students from 48 schools participated. The results were announced during a prize giving ceremony held at the Scouts Headquarters on 19th June. Book tokens and books were presented to the winners of each category by Mrs Lucy Sultana. Consolation Prizes, which included posters and free MOSY membership were given to the runners up. A complete set of posters was presented to the Junior Lyceum, Tal-Hanqaq, as a prize for the school with the largest number of participants. ●



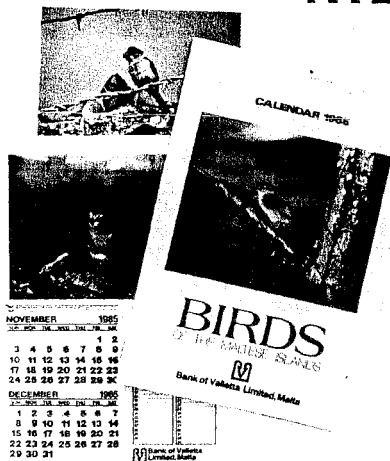
Joe Doublet

## SAINTLY SHOOTERS

The occasion was the feast of Our Lady of the Grotto celebrated by the Dominicans of St. Dominic's Church, Rabat. The Dominicans invited (!) shotgun owners to take part in the procession. The legend goes that a bird shooter slept uninterruptedly for many years in the grotto because he had a vivid dream about Our Lady. The practice started in 1958 and the shooter's role is to assemble on either side of the church parvis to fire fusillades with blank cartridges into the air as the image of Our Lady is carried in and out of the church (what moving devotion!!). But on Sunday, 2nd June, the Dominicans got more than what they bargained for. The supposedly blank shotgun cartridges brought down

a number of pigeons and smashed several lights on the facade of St. Dominic's church. The pigeons that were shot down were from the small colony which nests in nooks in the church's facade. The first fusillade disturbed them from their nests, the second sealed their fate. Apparently, but not surprisingly, some of the shooters wanted to make an exhibition of their prowess and substituted the blank cartridges with live ammunition. The Dominicans should know better. The shooter's dream of several years duration about Our Lady should be interpreted as an act to keep the shooter away from killing birds, which after all is a violation of God's natural laws. A refresher course of St. Francis' attitude towards nature would certainly not be amiss. DOMINICANS PLEASE NOTE! ●

## MEMOS



The MOS also supplied bird photographs taken by MOS members to an advertising company to produce the 1985 Calendar and a set of four Christmas Cards for the Bank of Valletta. The Calendar entitled 'Birds of the Maltese Islands' depicted the Sardinian Warbler, the Chiffchaff, the Little Egret, the Robin, the Spotted Flycatcher, the Tree Sparrow and the Fan-tailed Warbler. It proved to be very popular and the Bank of Valletta had to order a second run. Publicity to MOS was given on every page.

### • BIRD PAINTING COMPETITION

A bird painting competition, sponsored by the MOS, was organised in April 1984 by the Secondary School of Gzira. The prizes were distributed among the 14 winners (first four prizes and ten consolation prizes) by the Minister of Culture on the School's Prize Day.

### • "A YEAR WITH THE SHEARWATERS"

A large audience of MOS members, supporters and friends were regaled in January to an hour-long audio-visual entitled 'A Year with the Shearwaters' produced by Richard Cachia Zammit and John Borg, two MOS bird ringers, who are carrying out studies on the Cory's Shearwater in Malta. The collection of magnificent transparencies, supported by excellent music, took the audience along some of Malta's finest cliffs where the Shearwaters breed.

### • TV DEBATE

Bird-shooting and the Environment was the topic of a TV debate in March between the MOS, represented by Messrs. Alfred E. Baldacchino and Natalino Fenech, Secretary and Asst. Secretary respectively, and the Shooters and Trappers Association represented by Vice-President Joe Scicluna and Committee Member Victor Vella. The latter is one of the persons appearing in court in connection with the September incidents at Sliema during the MOS protest. The outbursts of the shooters' representatives on TV, at best hysterical and farcical, and their insistence that they exist for the protection of the environment (!) made MOS' side look great.

### • ECOLOGY AND RELIGION

St. Francis and Nature Conservation was the theme of a forum organised in April at St. Joseph's School by the students of the three Franciscan Orders. MOS was represented by Joe Sultana, who spoke on 'Why Conserve Birds' and by Richard Cachia Zammit and John Borg who presented an audio-visual on the same topic. It was encouraging to see that a number of the audience were members of religious orders. This was probably the first time that such an activity solely on conservation was organised in Malta by members of a religious order. ●

# 23rd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

THE 23RD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING WAS HELD ON 27TH MARCH 1985, AT THE BOYS SCOUTS ISLAND HEADQUARTERS, FLORIANA.

## • PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you, on behalf of the Council, to the 23rd Annual General Meeting. After an enjoyable half hour with the Shearwaters I ask you to bear with me through the administrative procedure of the meeting.

Today we have the opportunity to have a good look at what the MOS was up to during the past twelve months. I can assure you that they were months of continuous activities, as we shall see from the Secretary's Report.

However, in spite of what has been carried out, the situation of bird killing in our islands is still most alarming. The bird protection laws are still being outrightly violated and, except in a few cases when MOS took the necessary action, hardly ever enforced. The nauseating destruction of bird life is now not only confined to the Maltese countryside, but also beyond Malta's coastline. The situation cannot be tolerated any longer. We must continue to voice our concern; we must continue to protest. We must also take action and report infringements. All members are urged to protest with the authorities, to write in the papers and to report the illegal activities which are resulting in an intolerable situation.

In the meantime the MOS will continue with its educational campaign, leaving no stone unturned, and using every available means to help change the prevailing mentality towards bird life, as well as, to arouse the public conscience. In the past year the MOS has joined forces with other societies with similar aims to carry out nature conservation activities. Hopefully, this wise policy, will prevail in the future especially in those cases where the safeguarding of the whole ambit of the natural environment is concerned.

The MOS Council is in the process of preparing the programme for the next twelve months - a programme full of a variety of activities, publications and campaigns all aimed at the education of the public in general. Work will also continue on the MOS premises which unfortunately is not yet functioning. To save money a lot of work is being carried out voluntarily and this takes longer to complete as it has to be carried out during the spare time.

Those of you who have been associated with the MOS for a long time must have noticed the growth of our Society which has necessitated changes in the rules and regulations which govern it. The need for modifications and addenda to the rules has been felt necessary again. In fact, one of the main items of today's agenda is the approval of a revised statute, which suggests, amongst other things, slight modifications in the MOS objectives and in the structure of the Council and the various Committees. It also includes new clauses which introduces an electoral commission to be responsible for the elections for the Council.

I wish to end this address by urging all the members to help enroll new members. The MOS like all other societies, depends on its membership, and we should all strive to have a stronger MOS for the benefits of birds and their natural habitat. I wish to thank all the Council and Committee Members, as well as all the other members, for their unfailing support to MOS. Thank you for your attention.

Joe Sultana  
President

## • SECRETARY'S REPORT

29TH MARCH 1984 TO 27TH MARCH 1985

1984 will go on record as the second successive year during which MOS members were brutally attacked by shooters for publicly protesting against the illegal killing of protected birds of prey at the Buskett bird sanctuary. A group of about 80 shooters, some wearing their association's T-shirts attacked the MOS members while these were about to start their street action. Mr Michael Grima, MOS Youths Officer, had to be rushed to hospital suffering from serious eye injuries after being punched in the face, and fragments from his glasses penetrated his eyeballs. Two foreigners, who were photographing the street action, and a policeman were also injured. Twelve shooters, including the President of the shooters' association have been charged by the Police and are awaiting prosecution.

Such barbaric behaviour has only contributed to show the general public what bird shooting in Malta really is. The general public is becoming more conscious of the need to curb the illegal, uncontrolled and indiscriminate shooting going on. This has also reflected in the overall total number of MOS subscribed members for 1984, at the end of which, the MOS registered an increase of 8%, bringing the total up to 782 members. Once again the MOS Youths registered the greatest number of new members (134) to bring the total number of MOS Youths up to 317, that is 40% of all MOS members. The following is a breakdown of all members as 31st December 1984.

	1983	1984	New	Outstanding	Resigned/ Deceased
Local					
Full Members	192	231	73	15	12
Life Members	17	15	-	-	2
Hon. Life Members	2	2	-	-	-
Youths	321	317	134	125	3
School Delegates	51	63	12	-	1
Overseas					
Full Members	89	117	36	11	1
Life Members	31	32	1	-	-
Hon. Life Members	5	5	-	-	-
Total	708	782	256	151	18

### INTERNAL ACTIVITIES

During the period under review the Council held 13 sittings with another four meetings in Committee. Besides there were a further 16 meetings of all the other committees. 19 circulars were sent out to the various members, 7 of these issued to MOS full members. 28 press releases were issued to the mass media. 9 illustrated talks were given to members with 2 other talks being given to other bodies. 12 outings were organised and 4 delegations met various personalities. The MOS was represented in 7 debates and/or interviews. Perhaps it would be most appropriate to mention the first ever audio-visual production held by the MOS, and organised by Messrs John Borg and Richard Cachia Zammit. I am referring to 'A Year with the Shearwaters' which has again been repeated this evening for the benefit of all those present. Since the last MOS Council election Messrs Louis Cassar and Joe Doublet have been co-opted to serve on the Council.

### OTHER ACTIVITIES

The past twelve months have seen the MOS working closer with other Societies in the field of nature conservation. Various articles, press releases and reports were drawn up in conjunction with the Society for the Study and Conservation of Nature (SSCN). Amongst these were the report drawn up on the 'Risq il-Widien Project', press releases on the need for protection of Ghar il-Friefet at Birzebbuga, and articles in local newspapers. Furthermore the MOS publication L-GHASFUR U L-AMBJENT NATURALI is now being published jointly with the SSCN as from issue number 4. A new joint Committee on Nature Conservation is also being finalised between the two Societies.

Recently the MOS held a protest march against the destruction of Ghar il-Friefet. This was attended by the SSCN, the Men of the Trees, the Grupp Arkeologiku Malti, Moviment '83 the Green Movement, Din l-Art Helwa, the Society for the Protection and Care of Animals, and the Golden Award Holders Association. A forum with the theme 'It-Ilheddida Ghall-Ambjent f'Artna' (The Threat to our Country's Environment) was organised on the 20th March 1985 in conjunction with the SSCN, Din l-Art Helwa, Green Movement, Men of the Trees and

Wirt Ghawdex. MOS members were also involved in the release of two dolphins which were trapped in the inland sea at Dwejra, Gozo.

An international camp was organised by the MOS Youths in conjunction with Youth and Environment Europe and the Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli of Sicily. This camp on bird protection was held at Villa Psalgon, Dingli and was attended by participants from 12 different countries. The Youths also organised another camp at Villa Psalgon in conjunction with the Youths of the Deutsche Bund für Vogelschutz. A Field Biological camp was also organised by the MOS Youths during a weekend in Gozo.

The MOS was represented at the ICBP/WEBS meeting in September 1984 at Rochefort, France by Messrs Alfred E. Baldacchino and Joe Sultana. Mr Sultana also represented the MOS at the ICBP/WEBS meeting in 1985 at Rapperswill, Switzerland, where he was unanimously elected Chairman of the ICBP European Section. Mr Saviour Balzan, Public Relations Officer, was appointed as Mediterranean representative for Youth and Environment Europe. Messrs Joe Mangion and Charles Grech, both MOS Youths, attended an IYF Camp in Sweden.

During the last twelve months the MOS set up educational and informative stands at the Malta International Trade Fair, Naxxar; the Flower Show and the Fur & Feather Show, both at San Anton Gardens. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals also invited the MOS to participate at its Annual Fair at Attard.

#### COMMITTEES

##### 1 - The MOS Youths Committee.

For the fourth year running the MOS Youths were under the Chairmanship of Mr Michael Grima. Mr Joe Doublet was again the Youths Secretary for the second year running. The MOS Youths held 9 committee meetings, issued 8 circulars and organised 11 activities. A field biological course was held over a weekend in Gozo. Two international camps, one with the co-operation of Youth and Environment Europe and LIPU of Sicily and the other in collaboration with the Deutsche Bund für Vogelschutz, were held at Villa Psalgon, Dingli. The Youths also organised a raffle for all MOS members, the proceeds of which went towards the purchase of office equipment. A Gestetner duplicating machine and an electronic stencil were bought out of such fund. The Youths published two issues of IL-Kangu during the last twelve months. As mentioned above the MOS Youths were also responsible for the organisation of the street action held on 15th September 1984.

##### 2 - Bird-Ringing Scheme

Mr Joe Sultana and Mr Charles Gauci were again Ringing Officer and Ringing Secretary respectively, of the Bird-Ringing Scheme. The scheme started with 14 ringers and finished the year with 12 ringers on its books. 8718 birds were ringed during 1984 bringing the total number of birds ringed since 1965 up to 141,226 of 148 species. For the first time no new species were added to the ringing list during the last year. The scheme held one meeting for all MOS ringers and issued its two monthly newsletter regularly. Only two birds were reported from abroad - the first recovery of a Herring Gull (in Libya) and a Sand Martin in Czechoslovakia.

##### 3 - Education Committee

A new education committee was set up as indicated in our last report. This was chaired by Mr Paul Portelli, the School Delegates Officer, with Miss Desiree Coleiro as Secretary. The Committee held two meetings since its formation and is presently working on audio-visual programmes for schools. The committee is also planning an essay competition to be launched next Easter.

##### 4 - Audio-Visual Committee

The Audio-Visual Committee was under the Chairmanship of Mr Lawrence Darmanin with Mr Tony Meli as Secretary. The committee held five committee meetings during the last twelve months, and are busily preparing audio-visual programmes for schools in conjunction with the education committee. Such liaison between these two committees may have to be strengthened in the very near future and this may mean the amalgamation of these two committees into one committee.

#### PUBLICATIONS

During the last twelve months IL-MERILL no. 22 was published. BIRD'S EYE VIEW nos 8 & 9 were also published and together with IL-MERILL were sent to all MOS members. The set of three exercise books referred to in our last report were also published and stocks were soon exhausted. Last month the MOS published the second set of bird postcards with photos taken by members. The promised membership form in full colour was also published and is also in circulation.

Various leaflets were published amongst which were those for the street action, that for Għar il-Friefet protest, a marine-life conservation leaflet used during the Dolphins'



rescue and a topic sheet sent to those asking for information on birds. The MOS also provided bird photographs for a 1985 calendar published by the Bank of Valletta. A new Robin poster, sticker and leaflet are at present being prepared for a campaign to be launched in conjunction with the Robin's return next autumn.

In short these were the main activities organised by the MOS for the further study, appreciation and protection of birds in Malta. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the MOS members, the committee members and all the Council members for their efforts and contributions towards such aims. I would also like to thank all those societies and organisations who have directly or indirectly helped or participated in all these activities both from an administrative, organisational or practical point of view. Despite all threats, both physical or verbal, the MOS is proud to be one of the leading societies campaigning for a better natural environment for the benefit of all the wildlife and also for the benefit of all the Maltese people. And I am sure that you, as MOS members are proud to belong to such a movement. Thank you.

Alfred E. Baldacchino

Hon. General Secretary

## • TREASURERS REPORT

### INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 1984

INCOME	Lm	Lm
Subscriptions		1053.40,6
Donations - general	108.31,0	
- specific	<u>504.60,5</u>	612.91,5
Activities		11.00,0
Interest received		146.50,0
Audio-visuals - donation	37.78,0	
LESS Expenses re audio-visuals	<u>19.79,0</u>	17.99,0
IYF Camp - sponsorship	1747.79,0	
LESS Expenses re IYF Camp	<u>1737.66,0</u>	10.13,0
September Protest - donation	251.48,0	
LESS Expenses re Protest	<u>169.05,0</u>	82.43,0
Proceeds from Educ. Material		
"L-Aghsafir"	89.21,0	
English Guide	299.19,8	
"Il-Merill" bulletins	10.50,0	
T-shirts	66.35,0	
Stickers(Sbieh Jittajru Hielso)	100.74,2	
Other stickers	133.79,4	
Breeding Birds Charts	79.50,0	
Dutch Posters	68.06,4	
'S.W.G.' Posters	61.00,0	
Drawing Books	20.50,0	
Exercise Books	132.46,7	
Postcards	359.61,0	
Others	<u>40.53,0</u>	1461.46,5
"L-Ghasfur" Sales & Adverts		30.92,0
Sundry Income		<u>51.10,0</u>
		3477.85,6
Less EXPENDITURE		
Operating Expenses :		
Postages		365.96,5
Stationery		299.14,0
Loss on Exchange		82.17,7
Depreciation (Note 1)		138.91,0
Provision for Doubtful Debts		40.00,0
Sundry Expenses(Note 2)		<u>432.87,8</u>

Other Expenses :		
Wooden stand for fairs		55.40,0
Premises renovation expenses	68.63,0	
LESS transfer from Reserves	68.63,0	nil
"Il-Kangu" - Cost	86.67,0	
LESS transfer from Reserves	86.67,0	nil
"Bird's Eye View" - Cost	162.85,0	
LESS Sales	8.56,0	
LESS transfer from Reserves	154.29,0	nil
Membership forms - Cost	278.75,0	
LESS transfer from Reserves	250.00,0	28.75,0
Excess of Income over Expenditure transferred to Appropriation a/c		<u>2034.63,6</u>

#### APPROPRIATION ACCOUNT

Balance b/f from Income & Expenditure Account		2034.63,5
Add transfers from Reserves :		
Exercise books	13.13,3	
Maltese Guide	18.58,3	
Premises	175.28,0	
Printing Machine	955.00,0	1161.99,6
		<u>3196.63,2</u>
Less transfer to Reserves :		
Bird's Eye View	154.29,0	
Il-Kangu	86.67,0	
Educational Publications	199.48,0	
Specific campaigns	305.12,5	745.56,3
Surplus transferred to Accumulated Fund		<u>2451.06,7</u>

#### BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 1984

Fixed Assets	6000.00,0	
Premises	164.80,0	
Fixtures, Furniture etc. (Note 3)	859.50,0	
Office Equipment (Note 3)	100.00,0	7124.30,8
Projector (Note 3)		
Imprests	1000.00,0	
Valletta Bird Ringing Scheme	70.00,0	1070.00,0
MOS/SSCN Joint Publication		4909.34,8
Current Assets	615.97,1	
Stocks	40.00,0	575.97,1
Less Prov. for Doubtful Debts	4243.87,8	
Cash - Funds	1491.83,5	5735.71,3
- General		<u>19415.34,0</u>
Accumulated Fund	10422.98,6	
Balance b/f from 31.12.83	2451.06,7	12874.05,3
Add Appropriation balance		5307.62,3
General Reserves (Note 4)		930.36,0
Loans		
Current liabilities	163.75,0	
Advance subscriptions - 1985	14.00,0	
- 1986/89	125.55,4	303.30,4
Creditors		<u>19415.34,0</u>

## NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

### Note 1 - Depreciation Lm138.91,0

Depreciation is calculated on the straight-line basis. No depreciation is charged on Premises while other fixed assets are depreciated at the rate of 10% per annum. (See note 3)

### Note 2 - Sundry Expenses Lm432.87,8

Made up as follows, rounded to nearest Lm1 :-

Telephone calls/telegrams 72; Photographic expenses 51; Subscriptions 11; Photocopies 57; Complimentaries 75; Expenses re injured birds 15; Equipment repairs 11; Cash discrepancies at fairs 15; P.O.Box rent 10; Donation 27; Water & Electricity 23; Prizes 15; Expenses re DBV Camp 14; Booklets and Reports 11; Other Expenses 11.

### Note 3 - Fixed assets other than Premises

	F.F.etc.	Off.Equip.	Projector
Cost as on 01.01.84	8.82,0	nil	250.00,0
Additions in 1984	<u>175.28,0</u>	<u>955.00,0</u>	<u>nil</u>
Cost as on 31.12.84	184.10,0	955.00,0	250.00,0
Less accum. depreciation	<u>19.29,2</u>	<u>95.50,0</u>	<u>150.00,0</u>
	<u>164.80,8</u>	<u>859.50,0</u>	<u>100.00,0</u>

### Note 4 - General Reserves Lm5307.62,3

Made up as follows :

Il-Merill 800; Bird's Eye View 400; L-Ghasfur 230; Il-Kangu 150; Posters 60; Educational Publications 396.38,8; Stickers 144.23,0; Travel 361.78,0; Specific Campaigns 305.12,5.

	Ghadira	Premises	Printing Machine
Balance b/f from 1983	1260.06,2	1211.52,0	933.24,0
Add donations, refunds 7 fund raising	<u>585.89,0</u>	<u>127.78,0</u>	<u>479.47,8</u>
	1845.95,2	1339.30,0	1412.71,8
Less expenses re Ghadira	<u>938.96,0</u>	-	-
Less t/f/s re 1984 accounts	-	<u>243.91,0</u>	<u>955.00,0</u>
	<u>906.99,2</u>	<u>1095.39,0</u>	<u>457.71,8</u>

Denis Cachia

Hon. Treasurer

# SEA SHOOTING

## A NEW HAZARD FOR BIRDS

It is most unfortunate that in recent years Malta has seen a dramatic increase in shooting at sea. Equipped with powerful motorised rubber dinghies, which are able to outstrip a bird in flight, shooters are killing birds at sea in alarming numbers. This has created another hazard not only for migrating birds but also for the few breeding species of Malta's sea cliffs. The last pair of Peregrine Falcons fell victim to this latest prowess in bird shooting. It is illegal to shoot within three kilometres offshore. But even this regulation is regularly and openly broken. The worst sufferers of sea shooting are the ducks, grebes, cormorants and gannets, gulls and terns, herons and egrets. Even birds of prey have been seen being shot as they get closer to land. And all this is carried out in the name of 'SPORT', not for food, but to adorn show cases with staring, glassy-eyed effigies.



AN MOS PUBLICATION

PO BOX 498 VALLETTA MALTA.