

# BIRD'S EYE VIEW



SPECIAL ISSUE DECEMBER 1987



# BIRD'S EYE VIEW

No. 11 December 1987

The Ornithological Society  
P.O. Box 498, Valletta, Malta

MOS Patron: *The President of the Republic*

Hon. President: *Joe M. Attard*



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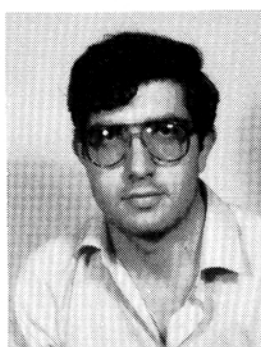
Officer: *Joe Sultana*

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**Front Cover:** The set of stamps issued by the Postal Authorities to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the MOS. The set depicts the Robin, the Hoopoe, the Peregrine Falcon and the Cory's Shearwater. This was the third time the Postal Authorities issued a set of bird stamps. The first, which was issued in September, 1971, consisted of two stamps depicting the Blue Rock Thrush, the National Bird of Malta, while the second was issued in January 1981 and depicted the Barn Owl, the Sardinian Warbler, the Woodchat Shrike and the Storm Petrel.

The Ornithological Society (M.O.S.), which was founded in 1962, has as its aims the study and protection of birds and their natural environment. The MOS, with a policy of conservation through education, runs an extensive educational campaign; publishes educational material regularly including the award winning books "A New Guide to the Birds of Malta" and "L-Aghsagar"; and organises various activities for its members, which presently number over 1000, as well as for the general public. The MOS, which has been instrumental in the setting up of Malta's national nature reserve, runs the Valletta Bird Ringing Scheme and publishes its scientific ornithological magazine "IL-MERILL" and its annual magazine "BIRD'S EYE VIEW", which focuses on the activities of the Society. The MOS has a thriving and active Youth Section (M.O.S.Y.) with its own publications "IN-NATURA" and "IL-KANGU".

## COMMENT

This issue of the Bird's Eye View is a special 25th Anniversary edition. Although in a very synthesised manner we tried to include the highlights of the past quarter of a century.

The veterans look back with a certain nostalgia and some will certainly bring back some memories of those days, whether during difficult or glorious times.

One's life is made of ups and downs. The same goes for a Society like ours.

During the past years, the Society has gone through various obstacles, and it was certainly due to the perseverance of some of the members, especially those on the Council and the Committee, together with the support of the members that the Society managed to survive.

During the last few years, the MOS changed drastically. This was mainly due to the influx of the younger generation inside the MOS Council which together with the expertise of the older group, produced new ideas and projects on which the Society worked. The ever-growing membership together with the ever increasing public opinion against illegal shooting and trapping of birds certainly reflects the results.

The future of the Society certainly depends on the membership and the diffusion of the MOS ideals by its members and supporters. The Council and Committees are striving in various ways to make up a more efficient MOS, thus the conservation message reaches a wider spectrum of people. The Government has an obligation to help in the Conservation of our local fauna and flora, by means of good legislation and other protective measures. But it is useless to have a legislation, with lack of its enforcement. This would only be a cosmetic make up to please both sides of the coin. The Government must give its due consideration by signing and ratifying International Conventions such as the Ramsar, CITES, the Bonn and Bern Conventions. It must be able to have a stable and efficient framework and body of people to be able to cater against any infringements of the legislation and for its improvement. The MOS has always offered its services for the sole aim of conservation of our environment including birdlife.

# MESSAGES ON THE OCCASION OF MOS 25th ANNIVERSARY

I believe that very few members of the M.O.S., especially those who are young, will be able to realise what it meant to start a society in Malta and Gozo twenty five years ago with a totally new concept of ideals which ran adversely to some of the local traditions. I cannot but recall with nostalgia those early days of our Society when we held our committee meetings at the residences of Domenic Cutajar, Tony D'Andria, Guido Lanfranco and Rico Scicluna. With the encouragement of Mrs. Elizabeth Coxon we started our Society and with the ever-increasing support of the R.S.P.B. and the I.C.B.P. and many individuals local and foreign we survived, and slowly increased in confidence, strength and number.

During its lifetime the M.O.S. had its ups and downs but looking back we must all feel proud of our Society as being the first national conservation body in Malta, which in spite of adversity and prejudice has been able to inculcate a fair amount of a caring mentality for the bird in the wild and also an interest in wild life and the protection of the environment.

As it is with pride that I look back, it is with as much confidence that I look forward. My hope rests on the young people of Malta and Gozo who have done so much in the past and are doing so much now to see less destruction in, and more respect and appreciation for, our shrinking countryside and what remains of its threatened wild-life.

Alone we cannot win the struggle. I therefore petition the Government and the Opposition to show more sense of political maturity and national pride in respect of our natural heritage, and I appeal to the Church Authorities to look at God's creation with the modern approach of "environmental theology". It is with this united effort that we can create a better and less hostile environment for our native birds and those visiting us and our shores from Europe and Africa.

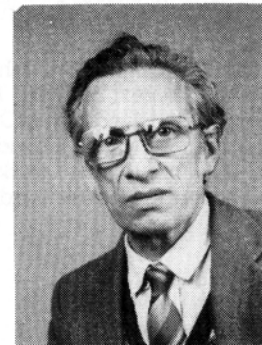
During the twenty five years of its life, the M.O.S. has attained much. Let us keep moving forward together.

**Joseph M. Attard**  
Honorary President.  
Co-founder  
MOS Council Member 1962-67  
MOS President 1968-75



Having been the first president of the MOS, I am particularly sensitive to the difficulties which I know face the Society, and still remember the very first difficulties 25 years ago. With the growing membership and increasing consciousness by the general public, appreciation and conservation of birds is becoming more evident. It is thanks to the hard work of the MOS and that of similar societies, that this conservation awareness has increased. I look forward to the time, when the uprising generation will take up bird study, observations and conservation rather than bird shooting, and little by little the latter will fade out to insignificance. Years have to pass, but with insistence on educating the young, we may still have our way in the future. May the MOS live through many more years to come.

**Guido Lanfranco**  
Co-founder  
MOS President 1962-67



Twenty-five years ago, when seven of us got together to found the Malta Ornithological Society, we were inspired by lofty ideals and great hopes for its future. Since then, the MOS has grown and developed in ways exceeding our wildest dreams. We handed the flag to you who came after, and you carried the battle into new arenas, yet always against the same implacable foe - the ignorance, selfishness and greed of our opponents. Memories come flooding back, and suddenly I long to be tramping through the *widien* with my MOS mates, watching for birds. I congratulate you all, and I salute you from Australia.

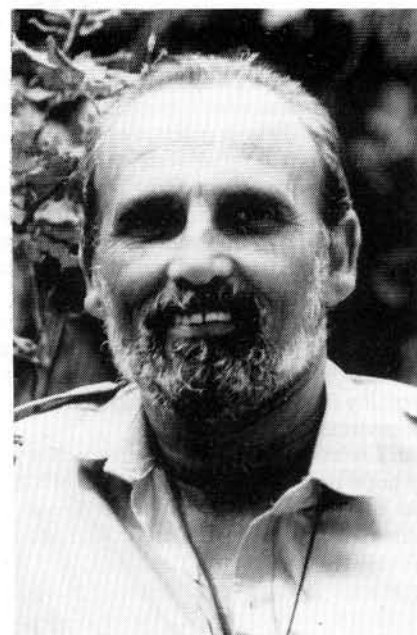
**Tony D'Andria Hunt**  
Co-founder  
Hon. Life Member





It does not seem so long ago, when on meeting my friend Joe Attard near the Auberge de Castille he informed me that a Society for the study and protection of birds was going to be set up. And yet this was in early 1962. Being both Gozitans, Joe urged me to help him set up the Gozo Branch . . . and I have been involved with the MOS since then. Those of us who have grown up with the MOS can appreciate the difficulties. But now, in spite of the fact that the situation of birds in Malta is still very bad, one can look with some satisfaction at the MOS. It has matured into a well organised society . . . one of the leading environmental NGO. The opening of its office and education centre culminated a long list of achievements acquired during its 25 years of existence. Taking the decision of relinquishing the post of President on the MOS 25th Anniversary was not an easy task. However my consolation lies with the fact that the new President, much younger and calmer than me, with the help of the Council will lead the MOS to continue grow stronger, which is most essential for the better protection of birds. I have been a teacher for 17 years during my 25 years involvement with MOS and this must have had a bearing to the fact that one of the MOS main policies is "Conservation through Education". Paul Portelli, too, is a teacher and this augurs well for the MOS to have a stronger and more forceful education campaign to help bring about a change in the mentality towards our feathered friends – the birds.

**Joe Sultana**  
**Gozo Br. Com. Member 1962–65**  
**MOS Asst. Sec. 1966**  
**MOS Secretary 1967–75**  
**MOS President 1976–87**



25 years have gone by since a small group of people determined to protect Malta's bird life founded the Malta Ornithological Society.

On thinking of that event, I think of the courage needed by those people who in a country where bird conservation was unheard of managed to establish a Society which through the hard work of several members grew up into Malta's leading nature protection Society.

As the new president of the MOS I cannot fail to mention the previous president Joe Sultana who for nearly 25 years dedicated his life towards his ideals of bird conservation. I have known Joe for the last ten years and like many others I have been inspired by his zeal.

Although this issue is to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the MOS I think it is appropriate to mention the next 25 years. If we want to see a day when birds fly unhindered over the Maltese Islands the MOS must keep growing. As in the past there will be ups and downs, there will be individuals who will try to hinder, some will try to discredit the MOS. Only through hard work and a determined effort will the people of the Maltese Islands accept the fact that birds form part of our International Heritage.

**Paul Portelli**  
**MOS Education Officer 1983–87**  
**MOS New President**





The achievements of the Ornithological Society of Malta are surely impressive. In only twenty-five years their ambitious educational campaigns have reached thousands, the government has been persuaded to pass new bird protection laws, and a new nature reserve has been set up. My personal experience of the Society and the indomitable spirit of its volunteers goes back to 1980: one of my first official visits as the new Director of ICBP brought me to Malta for the conference of the European Continental Section. Since then I have had plenty of opportunity to witness the dedication of MOS members and also some of the formidable obstacles that conservationists in Malta must overcome before our message can be heard – literally as I recall one visit to Buskett and the barrage of gunfire from within the reserve.

The links between MOS and ICBP go back even further – to 1963 when the Society became ICBP's Malta Section. I am delighted that, through the Migratory Birds Programme, ICBP can share with MOS some of the glory from its first quarter century. It is also most gratifying to see that ICBP's support has been more than matched by the donations and enthusiasm of Maltese conservationists so that MOS has now become the major voice for environmental protection on the islands. As has happened in countries all over the world, a concern for birds has initiated a public awareness of the environment as a whole. This is a source of special pride for ICBP.

Education has been the key to success of MOS and therefore it is particularly appropriate that as part of its 25th Anniversary celebrations, MOS is dedicating a new education centre. I know that there are many more hearts and minds to be won for conservation in Malta. But I am also glad that MOS is not confining itself to local issues and is already leading the way in building an active conservation movement all over the Mediterranean. ICBP looks forward to working with a strong partner on Malta for the next twenty-five years and beyond.

**Christoph Imboden**  
Director  
International Council for Bird Preservation



The RSPB would like to take the opportunity of the 25th birthday of the Ornithological Society to remember the efforts of those farsighted members of the Founding Committee of MOS. It was they who realised that the beauty of birds and the responsibility of every human to care for our common heritage was a cause worth fighting for and took the historic decision to found MOS.

In the early days it cannot have been easy, but with their persistence and skill, MOS has now grown into one of the most respected organisations in The European Bird Conservation Movement. From the outside of Malta, MOS can now clearly be seen as an organisation which knows where it is going and filled with the competent people who, by working together will certainly get it there. The successes of MOS are a model for all other organisations. In particular MOSY and the contacts with teachers throughout Malta must have done much to change the attitude of young people towards birds. The establishment of Ghadira Reserve was a milestone as was the passing of the bird protection law. I am proud to consider myself a colleague of all the members of MOS and to aspire with them the better protection of our birds and their habitats. I am absolutely confident that our joint cause is a cause that will be shared by more and more people and that we will see the continuing growth of MOS in future years.

**IAN PRESTT**  
Director  
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds



On behalf of the whole Italian League for the Protection of Birds, I am very happy to congratulate MOS for the 25th anniversary.

For many years, an old and strong friendship has bound our two Societies which have also had the chance to cooperate very favourably on a number of occasions. Because of our common geographical position, placed in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, Malta and Italy share many environmental problems and therefore need to help each other for their solution. The protection of migratory birds is probably our major common priority and, in past years, neither MOS nor LIPU have spared their efforts to improve the situation through prevention and education. But this important task has not been fulfilled yet and our joint struggle must be increased. This is why we both need the solidarity of all other European countries. Europe is the main answer to many of our problems and we therefore strongly advocate the entry of Malta into the EEC.

On this happy occasion, LIPU wishes MOS many other years of fruitful work and success. The stronger MOS becomes, the sooner our common challenge will be won!

**Francesco Mezzatesta**  
Secretary General  
Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli



I am honoured to be asked to send a brief message to *Bird's Eye View* for this important commemorative issue: particularly as the quality of the magazine nowadays demonstrates clearly the immense stride in professionalism which the MOS has made since the early days in the 1960s. It shows also how very worthwhile have been our long drawn-out efforts to support the Society in its struggle to promote the study and protection of wild birds in Malta as an alternative to their destruction or enforced captivity.

I look back to 1962 when I first met Joe Attard and attended the Exhibition of Bird photographs etc. that he had arranged in Gozo with the theme of Bird Protection in view. This was for us the beginning of a fruitful partnership. We were able to get RSPB interested in the newly born MOS and some small financial aid was forthcoming. Next year their Hon. Sec. Philip Brown came out to Malta and gave an illustrated lecture at the Public Library in Valletta.

In 1965 on a spring visit to Malta, I was taken by Joe Attard on an early morning visit to the pool at Ghadira. Among other waders we saw an Avocet, a rare visitor to Malta. We hurried off to fetch a telescopic camera. On our return we found the Avocet had disappeared but a man with a gun was there instead, holding a suspicious parcel wrapped in brown paper. From that moment I realised how important it was for Ghadira to become the No. 1 Nature Reserve objective.

Over the years the MOS have put intense pressure on your Government to attain this end, and MBROC have never ceased lobbying all the International Protection of Wild Life Societies to contribute their influence, and if possible financial help, towards this object. You all know the wonderful success that resulted at last from all these efforts, with the setting up of the Ghadira Reserve in December 1978.

MRBOC's contribution to it of a substantial Hide overlooking the area was made possible financially by a mammoth Raffle which we held in the UK during 1981. Incidentally the First Prize in this Raffle was a specially painted picture by Sir Peter Scott, who has always been interested in the Ghadira project.

The Malta Bird Reserves Overseas Committee offer their very heartiest congratulations to the MOS on their 25 years of splendid service to the cause of Wild Bird Identification and Protection in Malta. Under the remarkable and devoted leadership of Joe Sultana and his talented Committee, you have gone from strength to strength, and are now internationally recognised as the leading Ornithological Society in the Mediterranean area and a powerful force internationally in the cause of Conservation.

**Mrs. Elisabeth Coxon**  
Founder of Malta Bird Reserves  
Overseas Committee



On behalf of the British Trust for Ornithology, The British Ringing Scheme and myself I would like to wish a very special good luck to MOS for its second 25 years. In particular it is very nice to look back, all those years, to the visits by BTO ringers to set up your ringing scheme and also to the visits of MOS members like Joe Sultana back to Britain to undertake training. I always read, with great interest, the two monthly ringing news when it reaches me and so all the very best to MOS and also to your ringing scheme.

**Chris Mead**  
Head  
Ringing & Migration Section  
British Trust for Ornithology



All species living in the world are parts of the natural heritage of all mankind. Focusing this sentence there is no doubt that all conservationists in Europe, Africa, America and elsewhere have to work together closely.

Birds and especially migrating birds are the best examples how important it is to concentrate protection efforts through close collaboration with organisations like the MOS and the DBV. It is not worth to say how much personal and financial aid DBV and others spent the MOS to struggle for bird and nature protection in Malta. On the other hand it is good to know that there are friends struggling in the same way as we do in our countries to save nature and endangered species from ignorance and destruction. I would like to remind: if the Honey Buzzard or the Robin is extincted, we not only loose a piece of nature but a piece of our heart too.

So we need to continue our struggle strongly and more efficiently staying close together.

On its 25th anniversary the MOS is a strong and well prepared nature conservation organisation to do their important work in a sensitive geographical area of bird migration. All of us invested in this new education centre, because public awareness and education is the best way to prevent future nature destruction and bird killing.

The DBV wishes our friends the very best for the future and good luck.

**Günter Mitlacher**  
Executive Director  
Deutscher Bund für Vogelschutz



On behalf of SLKV (Switzerland) I wish to congratulate MOS on its 25th Anniversary. Here in Switzerland, we admire the work and efforts of MOS to save our birds while migrating over the Maltese Islands. We had the pleasure to co-ordinate our efforts, in the past, to help MOS in its campaign to save migratory birds. This can be seen in the Maltese Booklet – Il-Passa ta' l-Aghsafir (Migration of Birds). MOS' efforts encourage us to continue supporting the bird conservation activities carried out in Malta in future.

**Fritz Hirt**  
President of SLKV (Swiss Committee for the Protection of Birds)



During these 25 years the MOS have made an immense effort for the conservation of birds in this part of the Mediterranean. In particular I will emphasize the work done by MOS to strengthen the legislation on hunting in Malta. The large scale shooting of migratory birds on Malta has been and still is a very severe problem the consequences of which reach far beyond the borders of Malta. No doubt the enthusiasm carried out by MOS has been an inspiration for other organisations in the area.

During the 25 years many important goals have been reached. However, there is still a lot to be done. Today more than ever before there is need for the continued efforts of the MOS.

Therefore it is with my warmest and most sincere feelings that I wish the MOS my best congratulations in occasion of your 25th Anniversary.

**Lorenz Ferdinand**  
Dr. scient.  
President  
Danish Ornithological Society



We would not like to miss this opportunity to convey to MOS how much we appreciate its hard work and hard-won successes over the years. We wish you many more years of that success in the future.

**Nergis Yazgan**  
President  
The Society for the Protection of Wildlife (Turkey)



We write to extend to the MOS our very best wishes on the occasion of your 25th Anniversary, to congratulate you on your past achievements and to express our confidence that your fight for the birds on Malta will end in victory. May the Honey Buzzards be resting undisturbed in Buskett Wood long before you celebrate your 50th!

**B.-U. Meyburg, Chairman**  
**R.D. Chancellor, Hon. Secretary**  
World Working Group of Birds of Prey





# THE FIRST BOLD STEP

When the small group of people met on 25th January 1962 to form the Malta Ornithological Society they probably did not realise the significant importance of the event. By founding the MOS they were pioneering the cause of the conservation of birds and their natural environment in the Maltese Islands. Today we salute Messrs Joe M. Attard, Dominic Cutajar, Tony D'Andria, Guido Lanfranco, Anthony Navarro, Victor Pisani and Henry Scicluna, who met on that historic date for bird study and protection in Malta.

The prevailing hostile environment towards birds made their task a difficult one. That first step was indeed a bold one. During MOS first year of existence this small group of people left no stone unturned; dissemination of information through lectures, excursions and educational material was reaching every corner of the islands.

TIMES OF MALTA 19.3.62



Some of the Society members who went along to the Museum grouped inside the hall.

## NEW SOCIETY VISITS BIRD MUSEUM

The newly-formed Malta Ornithological Society's first activity, which proved to be an interesting one, was a visit to the Bird Museum in Naxxar on Saturday. Members were taken on a tour of the museum by Mr. A. Sammut, building officer of the Museum.

Circ: 1/62

THE MALTA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The Malta Ornithological Society was set up in January 1962 by a group of persons interested in the life and welfare of local birds. The aim of the Society is to stimulate study, and propagate knowledge of our avian fauna, by various means, including lectures, bird-watching, excursions, publications, etc....

Malta's situation in the Mediterranean makes it an ideal place for the study of bird migration, and our observations will be a valuable contribution to world-wide ornithology. Some species on the verge of extinction can thus be also helped to stay longer on the face of the earth.

There are many who see our birds, but relatively few who know or understand their intimate ways of life. Bird study is a source of healthy and useful enjoyment for all ages.

By joining this Society you will be supporting a well-deserving cause. The Annual Subscription fee is 5/-.

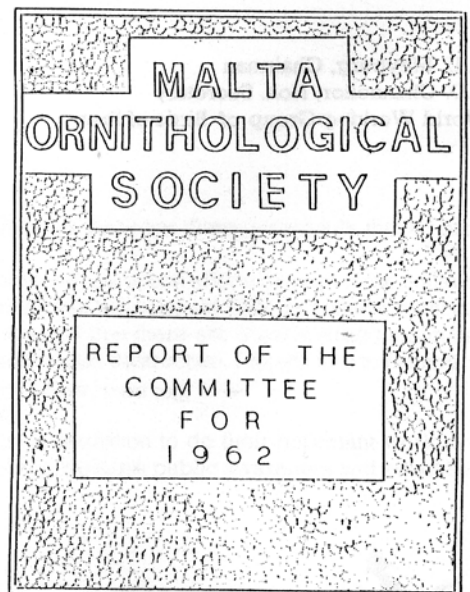
The Committee for the year 1962 is as follows:  
 President: Mr. G. Lanfranco, F.I.L.S., P.Z.S., M.B.O.U., F.B.S.I.  
 Vice President: Mr. T. D'Andria, M.B.O.U.  
 Hon. Secretary: Mr. D. Cutajar, Hon. Treasurer: Mr. V. Pisani  
 Members: Dr. H. Scicluna, L.L.D., Mr. J. Attard, Mr. A. Navarro.

MOS first circular.



Joe Camilleri

The first bird study and protection exhibition held at the Xaghra Cultural Centre by the MOS Gozo Branch in September 1963.



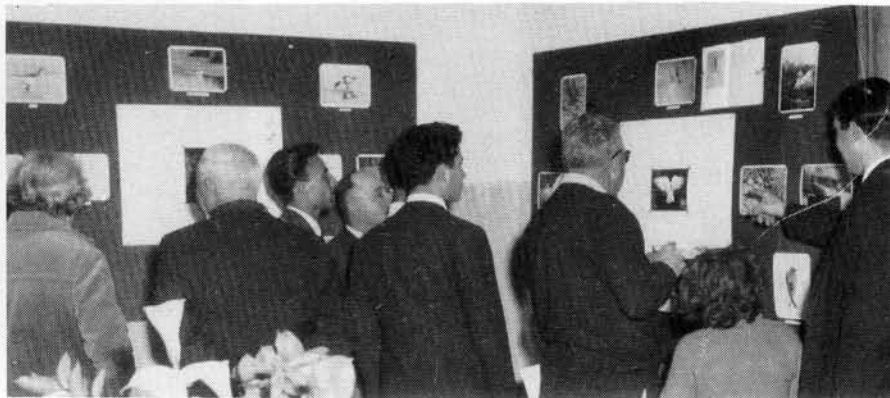
MOS first annual report.

# THE EARLY YEARS

After its first two active years, MOS calls were still falling on deaf ears. This had a chilling effect on the organisers and during the two year lean period which followed, MOS, although keeping its identity, merged with the Natural History Society of Malta. This merger continued until 1967. During the merger, with more new blood at the helm by the end of 1968, the MOS started regaining impetus; and it never looked back. Two unrelated occurrences encouraged MOS to gather momentum – the setting up of the MOS Bird Ringing Scheme and the victory in the struggle to divert a road which was going to pass through the heart of Ghadira, today a Nature Reserve.

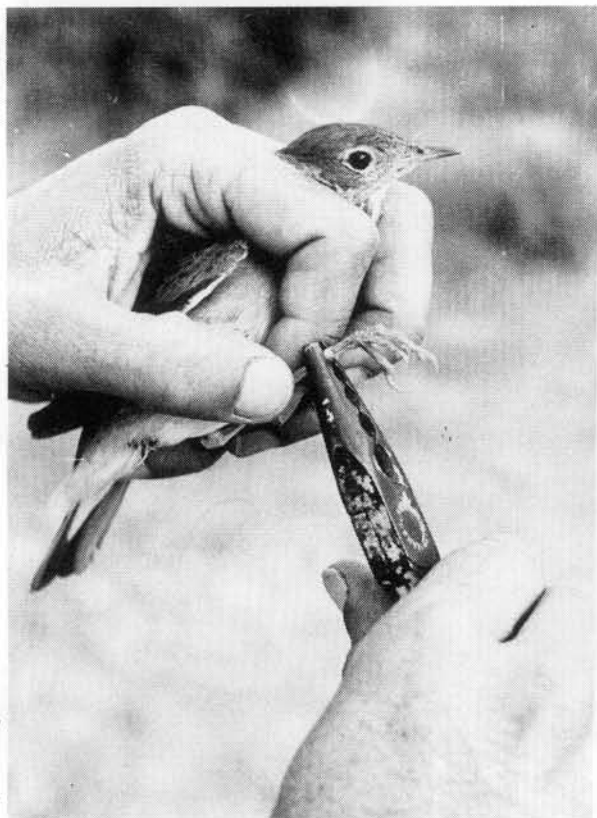


First MOS poster issued with the help of RSPB (UK).



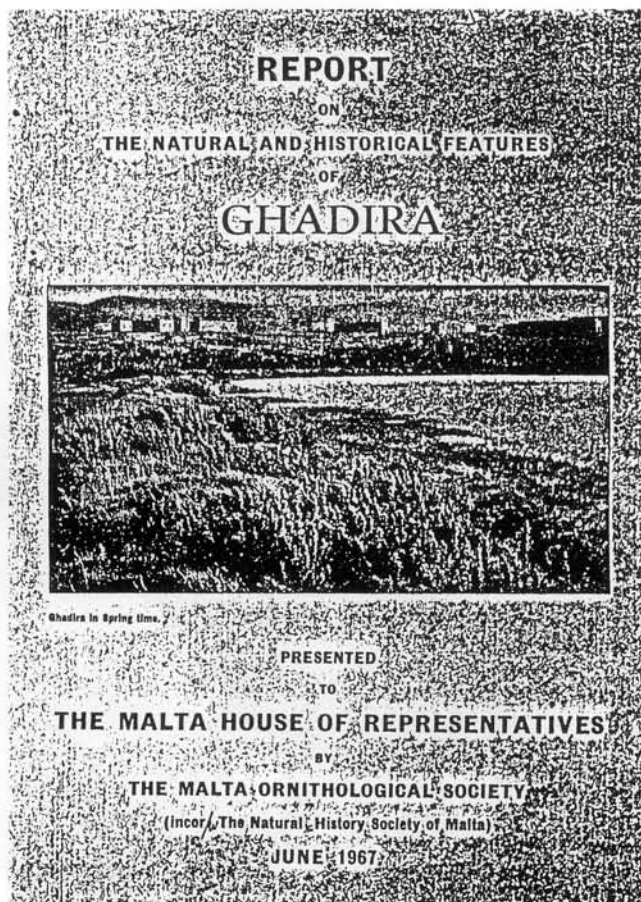
First bird photography exhibition held at the Xaghra Cultural Centre by the MOS Gozo Branch in March 1965.

Joe Camilleri



John Azzopardi

The MOS bird ringing scheme was started in 1965.

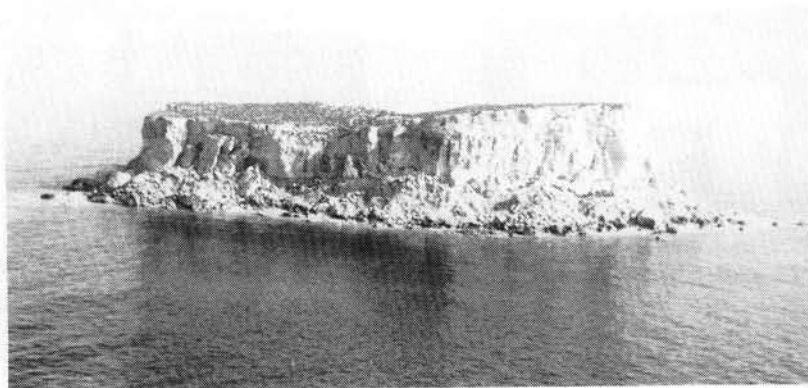


The report of Ghadira was instrumental in the change of road plans.

# CAMPAIGNING FOR THE PRESERVATION OF FILFLA

The MOS soon realised that it was useless to protect the birds without protecting their habitat and during its second year of existence it initiated a campaign to save Filfla, Malta's main sea-birds breeding station, from the use of a gunnery target. It stressed the international importance of Filfla as a site of special interest. The campaign continued with the publication of "Bird Studies on Filfla" and success was crowned in 1971 when bombing practices were stopped. And in this year of the MOS 25th anniversary celebrations Filfla is now being declared a nature reserve where its special and important flora and fauna will be safeguarded for present and future generations.

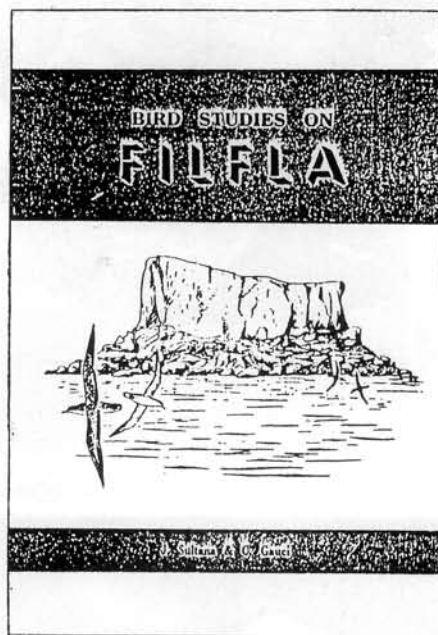
Joe Sultana



Joe A. Doublet



*Lampedusa gattoi* – one of the two endemic land snails found on the islet.



Joe Sultana



Filfla holds one of the finest bird colonies of the Storm Petrel in the Mediterranean.



Joe Sultana

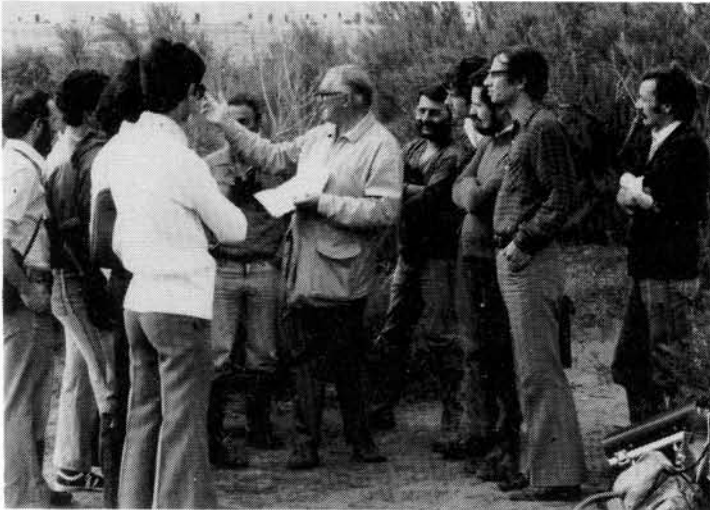
The Cory's Shearwater is one of the seabirds which breed on the islet.



# GHADIRA NATURE RESERVE

Protests, education campaigns and press releases did not constitute all the functions of the MOS. Since the success achieved by deviating the road which was going to pass through the pool at Ghadira in 1967, the MOS had set its heart on the place. At that time this area, which was public land, was leased for shooting by a rich hunter. The MOS realised that it was the ideal place to set up a reserve there. Perseverance and insistence, at last won the day – Ghadira was destined to become Malta's first nature reserve.

Richard Cachia Zammit



*Bert Axell discussing his plans for Ghadira with members. Charles Gauci (MOS Ringing Secretary since 1977 & Warden at Ghadira) is seen at extreme right.*



Joe Sultana

*MOS voluntary service in the early days of the reserve.*

Richard Cachia Zammit



*Ducks and coots at Ghadira.*



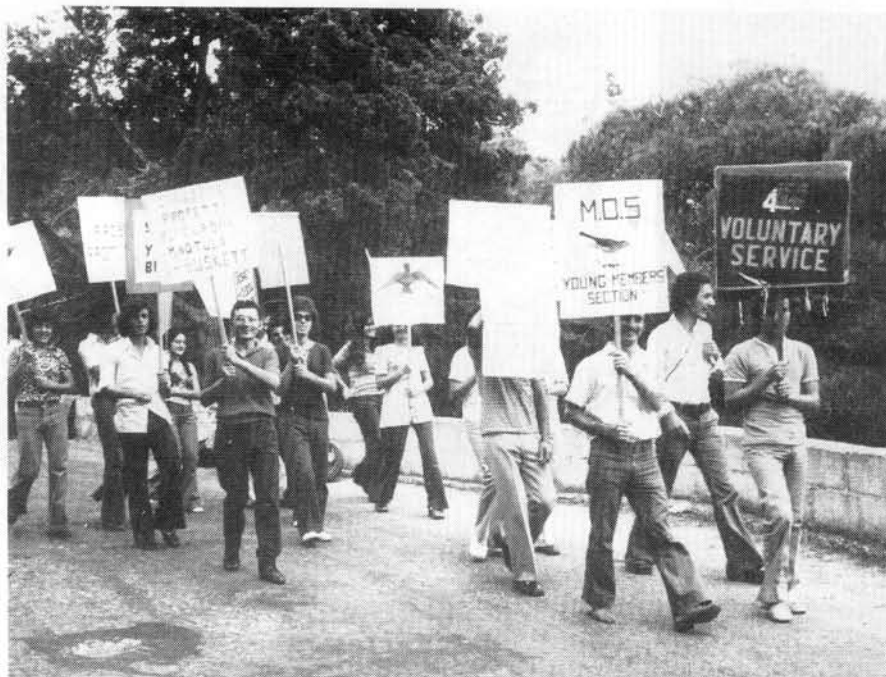
Joe Sultana

*A general view of the reserve during a visit by school children.*

# MOS YOUTHS

The success achieved in the mid-sixties regarding Ghadira and the ornithological studies which were being efficiently carried out helped immensely in increasing MOS image and esteem in local quarters. Membership increased and before the end of the sixties the MOS formed a youth section, which turned out to be a sound investment for the MOS future. The MOS Youths, as they are now popularly known, today number over 700. They have provided most of the present MOS leading members as well as Malta's foremost conservationists.

The Times



*The first protest march by MOS Youths against bird shooting at Buskett bird sanctuary (October 1973).*

Joe Sultana



*MOS Youths preparing posters for a protest march.*

Joe Sultana



*Campaigning against the illegal trapping of Robins.*

# BIRDS AN INTERNATIONAL HERITAGE

The MOS always believed in the concept that birds are an international heritage and soon after its inception, organised a national section of the International Council for Bird Preservation with the help of other NGOs – The Society for the Study and Conservation of Nature, Men of the Trees and the Society for the Protection and Care of Animals. The International Council for Bird Preservation through its Migratory Birds Programme has helped MOS with various birds conservation projects. In 1980 the MOS was entrusted with the organisation of the XII ICBP European Section Conference, an event which certainly boosted MOS image both locally as well as internationally. MOS has also taken part in several international meetings overseas.

Dutch ICBP Section



The participants at the ICBP XV World Conference, Texel, The Netherlands – September 1970. This was the first time that Malta participated in an international bird protection forum.

Hungarian Ornithological Society



Joe Sultana, who was elected Chairman of ICBP European Continental Section in Rapperswil, Switzerland in 1985, is seen addressing the VXI European Conference which he chaired at Visegrad, Hungary in May 1987.



Brian K. German (MOS Asst. Sec. 1971-72 and Treasurer 1973-81) was elected Vice Chairman of The European Section of ICBP.

Benny Zaffareze



The XII ICBP European Conference was held in Malta in November 1980. John Azzopardi, then ICBP Malta Chairman is seen inviting the President of the Republic (sitting on his left) to open officially the Conference.



Alfred E. Baldacchino (MOS Asst. Sec./PRO 1973-75 and General Secretary 1976-86) was appointed member of the ICBP European Committee for the Prevention of Mass Destruction of Migratory Birds in 1980.

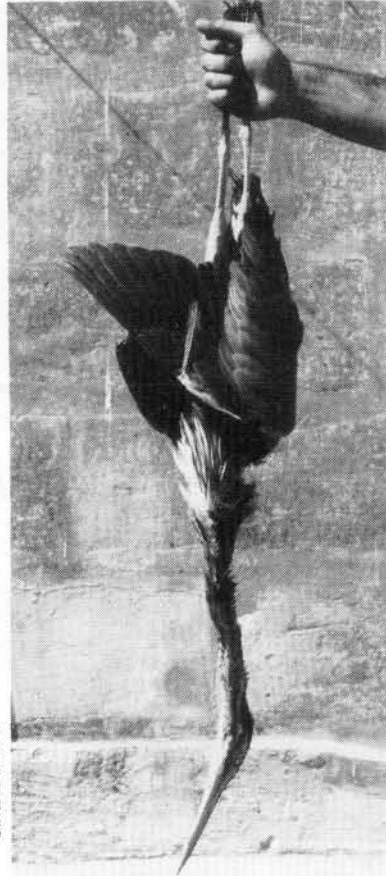


# NEW BIRD PROTECTION REGULATIONS

1980 saw the publication of new bird protection regulations. These, although having several shortcomings, were regarded as a milestone in local bird protection history. However it was soon realised, through bitter experience, that law enactment and law enforcement are two different things altogether. Unfortunately bird killing and trapping, a lot of it illegal, was and still is the order of the day. Furthermore February 1987 saw the publication of a legal notice 18 of 1987 shortening the already short close season for shooting and trapping by 27 days. As the Act of 1980 had stipulated the dates of the close season this new regulation is ultra vires and the MOS has been since then, urging the Government to revoke it.



*The Times Poster on 11/8/1980 announcing the new regulations.*



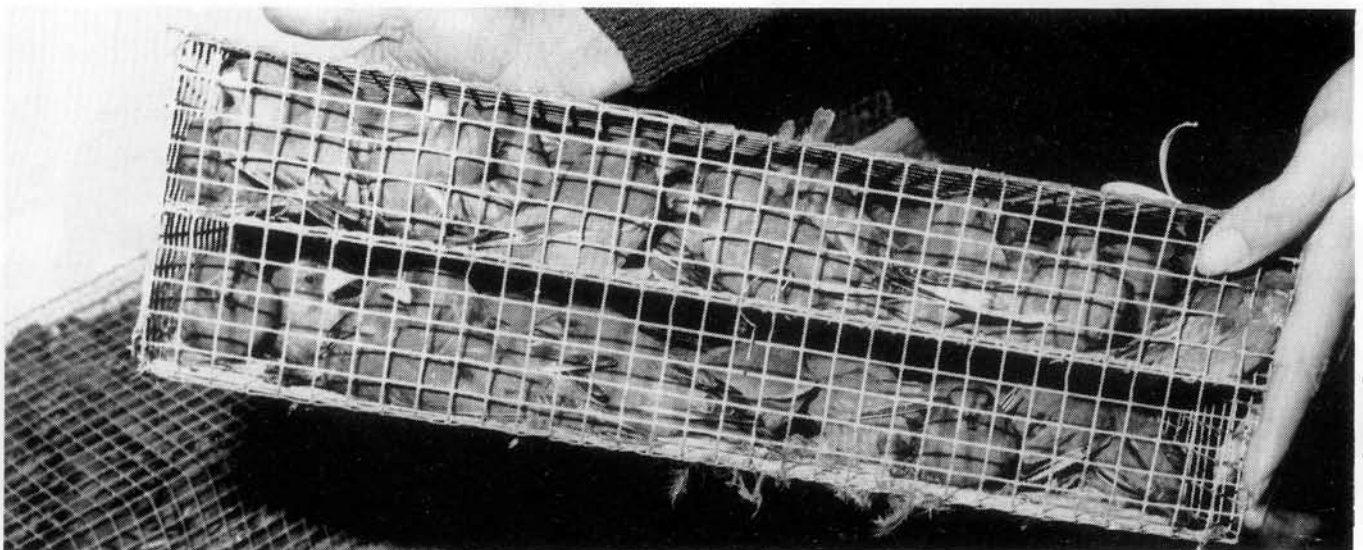
*Saviour Balzan*

*The new regulations do not protect herons and egrets.*



*Joe Sultana*

*A wounded Honey Buzzard. Although protected birds of prey are still indiscriminately shot.*



*John Azzopardi*

*Hundreds of finches are also illegally imported, crammed in small compartments.*

# A CONTINUOUS EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

International expertise and help proved useful for the MOS to embark on nation-wide ventures in the educational field. Through the launching of education campaigns in schools, MOS started to reach a larger section of the younger generation.



John Azzopardi

*A public exhibition of posters at City Gate, Valletta (October 1974).*



Alfred E. Baldacchino

*MOS helps schools at set up bird protection exhibitions.*



Joe Sultana

*Members working in the new premises.*

# MOS in The Mass Media

The press, radio and TV were the means which were frequently used by the MOS to propagate its ideals. They were used through frequent articles, numerous press releases and several programmes on radio, as well as on TV, enlightening the public and educating the younger generation in the appreciation of birds and nature.

2 — IN... TAGHNA, it-Tnejn '7 ta' Settembru, 1984

## MANIFESTAZZJONI MILL-MOS FIL-BELT U TAS-SLIEMA

Il-fergha tal-Moviment Ornitologika (MOS) għall-manifestazzjoni pubblika fil-Belt u Tas-Sliema għaxija.

Fil-manifestazzjoni għażiż tal-biċċi

THE SU

## M.O.S. AIMS

Editor

Letter

Mr. Alfred E. Honorary General Ornithological

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looked game  
will r

IT-TORĊA - Il-Hadd, 16 ta' Settembru, 1984

## Membri tal-MOS jallegaw li gew imsawwta

• VALLETTA, il-Hadd, għas-Socjetà Ornitologika (MOS) illum li l-bierah fil-kellhom ihass pubblika li hiex isci

## ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY AGAINST INDISCRIMINATE OF BIRD

By a Staff Reporter  
Ornithological Soci  
this afternoon march  
a part of a camp  
the slaughter of bir  
for bird hunters  
serve the law and  
officially designat  
campaign, which  
of the

## IL-MOS tilm ghasa

• VALLETTA, il-Hadd, għas-Socjetà Ornitologika (MOS) illum li l-bierah fil-kellhom ihass pubblika li hiex isci

## SEA SHOOTING

From the PRO, The Ornithological Society (MOS)  
Sir, — Undoubtedly the occurrence of birds flying free on the Islands seems to be something linked with the past. We strongly believe that the indiscriminate slaughter of birdlife on and around our Islands is the cause of no or few birds at all.

## THE TIMES, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 1983 ITALIAN INJURED IN MOS PROTEST MARCH

By a Staff Reporter  
Two incidents and ten  
day afternoon and  
march by the

## Save the robin campaign

## CORRESPONDENCE:

## BUSKETT AS A BIRD SANG

Mr. Savin  
Ornithological  
The MOS

## MOS poster

Ornithological Society  
has published a poster as  
a campaign to create  
awareness of the protec  
tion of bird species.  
The poster features a number  
of birds showing  
birds and  
flying free).



## da ta' hajb

ghall-Istampa ilmentat  
il pajjiz civilizzat li saret  
koll kaċċaturi dehru jgħru  
du ghasafar saħansitra pro-





# MOS – A PUBLISHING HOUSE FOR CONSERVATION

When the initial hard years were over and unending voluntary work by several dedicated members were the order of the day, MOS was slowly but steadily transformed into an efficient voluntary organisation with several publications to its credit.



John Azopardi

# PROTESTS

Awareness of the plight of birds in Malta increased tremendously. This was boosted by several protests and demonstrations mostly organised by MOS Youths in public places. Opposition by shooters and trappers was not lacking and on one occasion their actions ended in court while some members had to be hospitalised.



Laurence Darmanin

Protesting at Buskett against the illegal killing of birds of prey (September 1983).



Joe Sultana

Protesting at Valletta against the illegal killing of birds (September 1984).



Alfred E. Baldacchino

One member was injured when stones were thrown at the MOS protestors at Buskett (September 1983).



Joe Sultana

Michael Grima, then MOSY Officer, was hospitalized when he was beaten during an MOS protest at Sliema (September 1984).

# DAR IL-MERILL

The running of the MOS was always carried out from council members' houses, with patient wives having to put up with long heated arguments debating hot issues during council and committees meetings. As the MOS grew it was increasingly being felt that a centralised MOS headquarters was becoming a necessity.

A long disused bakery close to the centre of Valletta was finally bought in 1983. Considering the state in which the place was, it was not an easy decision. But where there is a will there is a way. And after an uncountable number of voluntary man hours of work the old, rat-infested bakery was transformed into a modern administration office, a reception area, a board meeting room and a workshop.



Joe A. Doublet

*The facade of Dar il-Merill.*



John Portelli

*The President of the Republic and Mrs. Xuereb signing the visitors' book.*

*The workshop looks frequently like a busy bee hive.*



Joe Sultana



# MOS 25th Anniversary Celebrations

October 3rd had to be MOS great day in 1987, MOS 25th Anniversary year. The official opening of its Info Centre and Office by H.E. Mr. Paul Xuereb, Acting President of the Republic was an event awaited by most MOS members.

H.E. Mr. Paul Xuereb, accompanied by Mrs. Xuereb arrived at 6.30 p.m. He was welcomed by the MOS President and Council as well as a large number of distinguished guests.

In his welcoming speech, Mr. Joe Sultana, then President of the MOS, stated that the MOS office, named Dar il-Merill, would be mainly used as an Information Centre aimed at serving as an educational medium, and that it was hoped that in the near future it would be manned by a full time Director employed by the MOS.

The Acting President of the Republic replied by dwelling at length on the need to educate children from their Kindergarten days to appreciate nature and its beauty. His excellency also criticized people who illegally shot birds and said that he could see no pleasure in this "hobby".

After unveiling a comemorative plaque, Mr. Xuereb was presented with an MOS memento while Mrs. Xuereb was presented with a bouquet of flowers. The plaque was blessed by the Chaplain of the Saint Augustine Church.

The inauguration was followed by an audio-visual feature entitled '25 year Struggle for Birds' which was produced by Richard Cachia Zammit helped by John Borg, Joseph M. Mangion and Joe Sultana and some active young members of the Society. A reception followed during which special mementoes were presented to founder members and representatives of foreign Societies.

Among the guests were three of the co-founders of the Society, namely Mr. Joe M. Attard, Mr. Guido Lanfranco and Mr. Victor Pisani, together with several representatives of International and National bird protection Societies.

These included Drs Wim Verheugt, Migratory Birds Programme Co-ordinator of the International Council for Bird Preservation, Dr Art N. Lance, Head of the Conservation Department of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (UK), Dr Francesco Mezzatesta, General Secretary of *Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli*, Dr Fritz Hirt, President of the Swiss National Committee for Bird Protection, Miss Katalin Madas, Secretary of the Baranya Group of the Hungarian Ornithological Society, Mrs. Elizabeth Coxon and Mr. Mont Hirons of the Malta Bird Reserves Overseas Committee (UK), Mr. and Mrs. Rodney Ingram of the Northamptonshire Bird Club, Miss Anna Giordano, LIPU representative in Messina, Mr. Jeff McCusker, USA Peace



John Portelli

*The President of the Republic, Mr. Paul Xuereb, is being invited to declare officially the opening of the MOS Office, with from left to right, Joe M. Attard, Joe A. Doublet, Paul Portelli and Joe Sultana.*



John Portelli

*The President of the Republic and his wife Mrs. Xuereb with the overseas guests.*



John Portelli

*Some of the guests signing the visitors book.*

Corps volunteer in Morocco and Mr. Mustapha El Hamzaoui of the Moroccan Department of Forestry.

Past and present MOS Council and Committee members were also present, as well as representatives of the Society for the Study and Conservation of Nature, *Zghazagh Ghall-Ambjent*, *Din l-Art Helwa*, Society for the Protection and Care of Animals, and the Photographic Society.

During the evening Mrs. Elizabeth Coxon presented Mr. Alex Casha with £m50 worth of books as part of the Elizabeth Coxon Award.

Mrs. Olympia Theuma made all the flower arrangement for the occasion.

A one day International Seminar on "Bird Protection Problems" was held on the 4th of October, as part of the 25th Anniversary Celebrations. The Seminar, held at the Environment Division's Hall of the Ministry of Education at Beltisseb, was chaired by Mr. Joe Sultana, then President of the MOS. In fact during the introductory speech, Mr. Sultana said that during the previous Council meeting he had asked the Council members to elect a new President. Mr. Paul Portelli was elected as President of the Society as from that day. During his introductory speech, Mr. Portelli thanked Mr. Sultana for his services rendered to the Society and hoped that under his leadership the Society would continue to grow stronger, thus birds would have a better future over the Maltese Islands. There were several presentations illustrated with coloured slides, highlighting some of the difficulties birds face during migration. Habitat destruction and disturbance, as well as the activities of some of the leading national European Societies for bird protection were also documented.

The morning session was opened by one of the main speakers, Drs Wim Verheugt, who gave an account of the work of the International Council for Bird Preservation, especially in the field of combating the mass destruction of migratory birds.

This was followed by Dr. Francesco Mezzatesta, who highlighted the birds protection problems in Italy and the work which his organisation, LIPU carries out to protect birdlife in Italy.

Mr. Natalino Fenech spoke about "Birds, habitats and problems in Tunisia" while Miss Anna Giordano spoke of her experience in Bird protection in Sicily. The morning session was closed by Mr. Paul Portelli, the new MOS President, who gave a detailed account of the MOS role in bird conservation in Malta.

The afternoon session was opened by Mr. Art N. Lance, who spoke about the role of his Society, RSPB in the United Kingdom, as well as its involvement to



*Joe A. Doublet, MOS Hon. General Secretary cutting the MOS 25th Anniversary cake.*



*The President of the Republic and Mrs. Xuereb with the MOS Council and Co-founders.*



*The Hon. Minister of Education and Environment, Dr. Ugo Mifsud Bonnici, who closed the international seminar, was presented with a memento of the 25th Anniversary by Paul Portelli, new MOS President.*

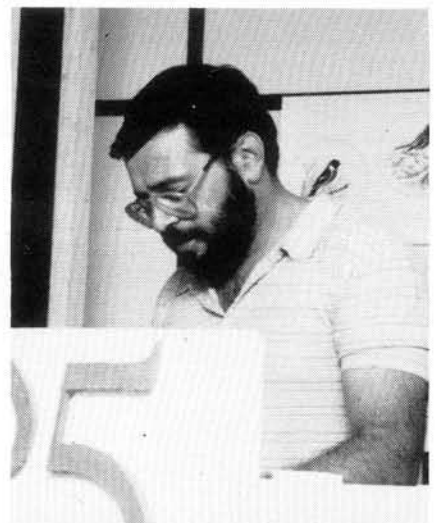
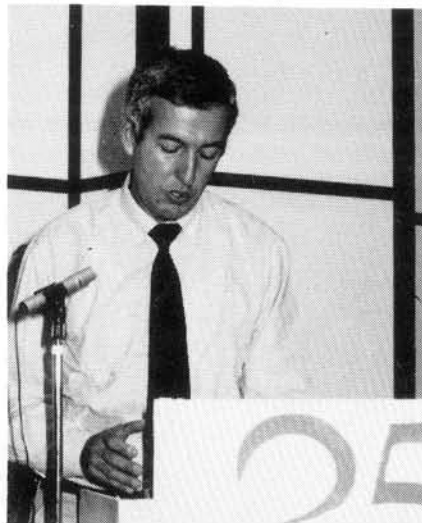


help bird protection overseas. Mr. Fritz Hirt spoke about "Bird Protection in Switzerland" while Mr. Saviour Balzan spoke about "Bird protection problems in Cyprus".

The role of the Ghadira Nature Reserve in education was the subject tackled by Mr. Charles Gauci, warden at the reserve and ringing secretary of the MOS. He gave an account of the work carried out by MOS to convert the area into a Nature Reserve. Miss Madas Katalyn spoke on the educational aspects of the bird ringing camp at Sumony in Hungary. The session was closed by Mr. Mustapha El Hamzaoui, who dealt with the aims and functions of the Conservation Education Centre in Morocco. The last speaker was Mr. Richard Cachia Zammit, who spoke about bird conservation problems in Malta.

Dr. Ugo Mifsud Bonnici, Minister of Education and Environment was the guest of honour at the Seminar. In his closing speech he said that he will be presenting a suggestion to the Cabinet to declare the islet of Filfla, a Nature Reserve. This was welcomed with a great applause.

Mr. Paul Portelli, then presented the Honourable Minister with a 25th Anniversary Memento.



*Some of the speakers at the Seminar Fritz Hirt and Saviour Balzan, (top row) and Francesco Mezzatesta and Richard Cachia Zammit.*



John Portelli

*Some of the Council Members celebrating with a well merited glass of champagne.*



**CAN YOU AFFORD  
NOT TO HELP?**

### WILD BIRDS NEED YOUR HELP...

Birds are an international heritage. Everybody has the right to enjoy them unharmed in their natural habitat. Besides playing an important role in the balance of nature, birds fill our country with their colour and song. They also contribute to our satisfaction when we watch them, study them and photograph them.

But not everybody knows how to appreciate birds. During migration many birds are killed year after year and those that can settle and breed are not given any chance. Bird migration offers a wonderful spectacle if studied and enjoyed in a positive way.

### ...SO DOES THE COUNTRYSIDE

Birdlife is dependent on the countryside. It is also unfortunate that not much care is being given to the protection of our countryside. The natural environment of our islands provide a variety of unique habitats comprising cliffs, valleys and pockets of maquis to large stretches of garigue. This needs protection too.

### ...SO DOES THE MOS

The MOS is working hard to protect wild birds and their natural habitat so that birds can fly freely and safely in our country to be enjoyed by one and all. However, without your support it will be difficult to achieve our aims. By becoming an MOS member, you will be offered the chance to understand and enjoy birdlife. You will also have the satisfaction of contributing towards the protection of our natural heritage.

To join the MOS, complete the application form and return it with your subscription to:

The Membership Secretary,  
MOS  
P.O. Box 498,  
VALLETTA - Malta.



Saviour Balzan

## JOIN THE MOS

### SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

Full member	Lm 2.00
Youth (under 18)	Lm 0.75
Life Member	Lm 50.0

Name				
Surname				
Address				
Telephone				
Date of birth	(if 24 and under)			
	I enclose my subscription* (cheque/ postal order) to the value of:			
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">LM</div>			
Signature				
Date				







(Photo: Joe Sultana)

Filfla Islet supports one of the largest known Mediterranean colonies of the Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* as well as colonies of Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* and Yellow-legged Herring Gull *Larus argentatus michahellis*.

This islet is also important for its endemic species; a lizard *Podarcis filfolensis filfolensis* and two very rare land snails *Trochoidea pyramidata despotti* and *Lampedusa gattoi*.



AN MOS PUBLICATION

P.O. Box 498, Valletta, Malta

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