**Ymarfer 5**

From time to time I receive picture postcards from friends on holiday in Italy. They show the canals of Venice, the cathedral at Milan, the Basilica of St Francis at Assisi, some of the lovely Alpine lakes, Vesuvius across the Bay of Naples and other splendours.

Italy is no doubt a wonderful country, but more and more of us are beginning to have doubts. The Italians may be enlightened in many ways, but barbarism is still rife there judging by the appalling all-year-round slaughter of wild birds, even the smallest birds, that goes on remorselessly. In Italy the gunmen even have the right to invade other people’s property in pursuit of their miserable sport.

Living as I do on an RSPB reserve, I see visitors every day following the trails or sitting in hides and getting endless delight from simply watching birds without ever disturbing them let alone wanting to kill them. So why can’t the Italians do the same? Why can’t they impose restrictions on shooting to bring it in line with the shooting laws of Northern Europe.

Heaven knows, we are far from perfect in our treatment of wild birds, but at least we don’t shoot robins, swallows, nightingales and other songsters. Nor birds of prey either. Mercifully, there is now a growing Italian lobby against the indiscriminate slaughter of birds and what we can all do is make our disapproval known, especially to anyone involved with Italian tourism.

[*The Guardian*]