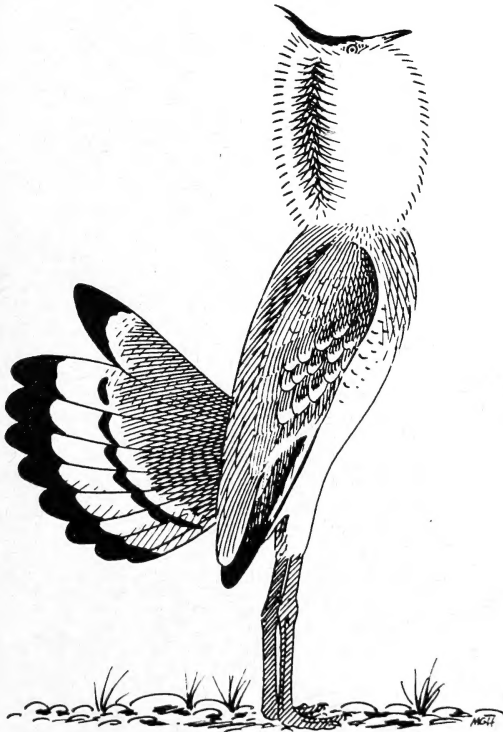


THE ORNITHOLOGICAL
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MIDDLE EAST



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EDITOR: D J Fisher

All records in this Bulletin are subject to acceptance by the relevant records committee of the country concerned.

Please note that details of expeditions, availability of expedition reports, news of members, other Societies and ornithological events are welcomed and may be printed in the Bulletin free of charge as "Announcements", subjects to the discretion of the Bulletin Editor.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Mike Hodgson for his cover illustration of an Arabian Bustard Ardeotis arabs and Hilary Welch for her illustration of Steppe Eagles Aquila nipalensis used on page 7.

AN AUTUMN IN ARABIA: THE OSME NORTH YEMEN EXPEDITION 1985

Michael Rands

OSME's first Expedition concluded its field work on 3rd December 1985, after 560 man-days of exciting research and birdwatching in the Yemen Arab Republic. Much analysis remains to be done on the information collected, but in this article I will describe the ornithological highlights of the trip; the "science" will follow in a whole issue of Sandgrouse which is to be devoted to the Expedition's findings.

During our nine weeks we positively identified 275 species, bringing Yemen's list to 340. Our records included thirteen new species for Yemen: Bittern Botaurus stellaris, Jack Snipe Lymnocyptes minimus, Pin-tailed Snipe Gallinago stenura, Bimaculated Lark Melanocorypha bimaculata, Garden Warbler Sylvia borin, Wood Warbler Phylloscopus sibilatrix, Demoiselle Crane Anthropoides virgo and Grey Hypocolius Hypocolius ampelinus making up the winter visitors and passage migrants; while Harlequin Quail Coturnix delegorguei, Olive Pigeon Columba arquatrix and Hume's Tawny Owl Strix butleri were almost certainly breeding in Yemen. We also had the world's westernmost record of Pheasant-tailed Jacana Hydrophasianus chirurgus, and on two separate occasions Wattled Starling Creatophora cineracea was seen.

One of the major objectives of the Expedition was to study the bird communities of the Tihamah, a narrow low-lying coastal plain that runs along most of the western edge of the Arabian Peninsula, with a view to making recommendations for bird conservation in this fascinating but rapidly developing region. Altogether we carried out 289 35-minute survey transects through all the major habitat types on the Tihamah, recording the numbers, position and activity of all birds. The habitats vary from specialised coastal vegetation such as mangrove swamp and date palm plantations, through mobile sand dunes and acacia

scrubland, to fertile and often highly cultivated areas towards the foothills of the Yemen highlands. Each of these habitats supports groups of resident species as well as being important feeding areas for passage migrants en route to Africa. Using this extensive set of data, we will be able to quantify the importance of each habitat to each bird species or group of species, and look at the way in which each habitat is being utilised. Although the survey work was often both exacting and exhausting, it also produced some of our most valuable bird sightings - in places not normally frequented by birdwatchers!

Another major aim of the Expedition was to seek out and study the Arabian Bustard Ardeotis arabs. A recent survey in Saudi Arabia, by Richard Porter and others, suggested that this species may no longer survive in the Arabian Peninsula outside North Yemen: it was therefore most important to establish its status and glean what information we could about its ecology. We were fortunate enough to discover, early on in the Expedition, a display site or lek of six males - each male standing prominently on an irrigation bank amongst small fields. This area was visited at intervals throughout October and November and we obtained the first ever full field description of the males' advertising display: upright stance, ballooned neck, drooped wings and tail raised into a fan shape. At intervals of about 30 seconds the bird emits a liquid "puk-puk" call; this rather unexpected sound was recorded on tape by Phil Hollom - another first for the Expedition. Arabian Bustards were also found at two other sites on the Tihamah (altogether we recorded at least 16 individuals, all in cultivated areas), which indicates that North Yemen does still support a viable population of this magnificent species.

The south-west corner of the Arabian Peninsula also supports 13 endemic bird species, for which North Yemen is undoubtedly the stronghold. Very little is known about the ecology of these species

and our third main objective during the Expedition was to identify their habitat requirements, food plants and breeding behaviour. Most are poorly described in the existing literature, so every opportunity was taken to make full descriptions of both plumage and voice in the field and, in some cases, in the hand. By collecting detailed observations on standard recording forms, we began to build up a picture of the ecology of each species which will be used to make basic conservation recommendations. Each of these endemics will be the subject of its own paper in the Expedition's issue of Sandgrouse.

Our wide coverage of the highlands, where most of the endemics occur, identified many new sites for these species - especially the Arabian Accentor Prunella fagani, the Golden-winged Grosbeak Rhynchostruthus socotranus and the Arabian Red-legged Partridge Alectoris melanocephala. All the information that is now available suggests, encouragingly, that most of the endemics are widely distributed in Yemen and none appear to be immediately threatened. Nevertheless, they are all rare in global terms, and therefore deserve full protection and further study. It is a matter for some concern that no provision exists within the government of North Yemen for environmental protection, and we hope that in the long term the Expedition's findings may help to facilitate the setting up of National Parks or wildlife reserves and of legislation for the conservation of wildlife.

Throughout the Expedition much additional information was obtained. Descriptions of plant communities were made and a collection of plant material was donated to Kew Botanic Gardens. A total of 31 bird species were caught and ringed, producing biometric data for a variety of migrants as well as the endemics. Although the planned study of raptor migration proved impossible to carry out in detail, a substantial passage (dominated by 3364 Steppe Eagles Aquila nipalensis and 766 Steppe Buzzards Buteo buteo) was recorded at several sites

and it indicates that Yemen is certainly an important route for migrating birds of prey.

One of the highlights of the trip was undoubtedly the sighting of the group of 14 Bald Ibis Geronticus eremita, previously discovered by members of the Ornithological Society of North Yemen. These birds, which we observed over several days, may conceivably be part of an as yet undiscovered breeding population.

Clearly, much exciting ornithological work remains to be done in Yemen and we hope that this Expedition will have been the first of many organised under the auspices OSME. Those interested in learning more about the Expedition can obtain copies of the Preliminary Report (price £1.50 inc p&p in UK) from: Dr M Rands, The Game Conservancy, Fordingbridge, Hampshire, England. The Final Report will be available in autumn 1986. Finally, we hope that you will come to the joint OSME/ffPS meeting in London on 14th May (see page 39 for details), at which the Expedition's film will be shown for the first time in its completed form.

DJIBOUTI II EXPEDITION

Geoff and Hilary Welch

As a follow-up to our preliminary expedition to Djibouti in March 1984, we made a return visit, in the autumn of 1985, from 9th October to 4th December. Our plans were to carry out further work on the endemic Djibouti Francolin Francolinus ochropectus and on raptor migration, receiving support from the OSME Conservation Research Fund for the latter study. On behalf of the World Wildlife Fund we also looked at the rare Bankoualé Palm Livistona carinensis and surveyed the southern half of the country for Arabian Bustards Ardeotis arabs.

In all respects the expedition was an outstanding success. The first four weeks were spent on the north-east coast, initially at Ras Siyan and then at Doumeira, looking for raptor migration across the Bab-el-Mandeb straits. For many years people have speculated that birds enter Africa across these straits but no-one has ever been there to find out. On our arrival at Ras Siyan on 15th October, winds were from the south and very little passage was observed. However, on 16th and 17th October, winds became north-westerly and there was an amazing movement of Steppe Buzzards Buteo buteo vulpinus with 16,581 recorded in two days. Smaller numbers of a further 20 species were also noted. After this the winds returned to the south and raptor migration virtually ceased although a few other birds continued to trickle through, including a Rufous Turtle Dove Streptopelia orientalis, Short-toed Lark Calandrella brachydactyla and a White-throated Bee-eater Merops albicollis. The winds remained in the south for the rest of our stay, so on 24th October we obtained permission to move north to Doumeira on the Ethiopian border, and this turned out to be the main site for raptor passage.

We arrived at Doumeira at about 10.30 and were stunned to see hundreds of raptors flying in off the sea at a height of only 60+m and thermalling in huge numbers inland over the desert. This time the predominant species was Steppe Eagle Aquila nipalensis with the staggering total of 60,583 in just eight and a half days! The best day was 25th October when 10,204 moved through, 4499 in just one hour!! We had to leave the area on 1st November, due to other expedition commitments, and as passage was obviously still continuing, the numbers of birds involved must be truly phenomenal. Despite the amazing spectacle we did not have many regrets when leaving Doumeira. With the nearest "town" 90km away and an awful road to drive to get to it, combined with constant wind-driven sand and little shade whilst counting, and virtually no birds to watch once the raptors "stopped" at 14.00, counting at Doumeira was not for the faint-hearted or the

the gay young socialite! Throughout the eight week stay in Djibouti, a minimum of 81,022 migrant raptors was recorded, which must make the country one of the major sites in Africa and the Middle East for observing raptor migration.

Work on the Djibouti Francolin mainly consisted of a search for the species in the Mabila mountains, 60km east of its only known site in the Forêt du Day National Park. The species was found to occur in the region of Goula, though only in small numbers, which is encouraging as the habitat there is very different to that in the National Park. Therefore there can now be increased hope for the species' survival even if the current deterioration of the Forêt du Day continues.

Following a four hour aerial survey on 5th November, to locate areas of suitable bustard habitat, ground surveys were carried out in the south of the country for six days at the end of our stay. These involved walking transects in the chosen areas, looking for bustards or their tracks. In all eleven transects were walked and evidence of bustards was found in seven areas, though only three birds were actually seen. It would appear from our work and from local information, that the species is widely, if somewhat thinly, spread throughout the country wherever the habitat is suitable. In Djibouti, bustards favour areas with sandy soil, a good cover of tall Acacia trees, with or without additional ground vegetation, and a good supply of insect food, mainly large grasshoppers.

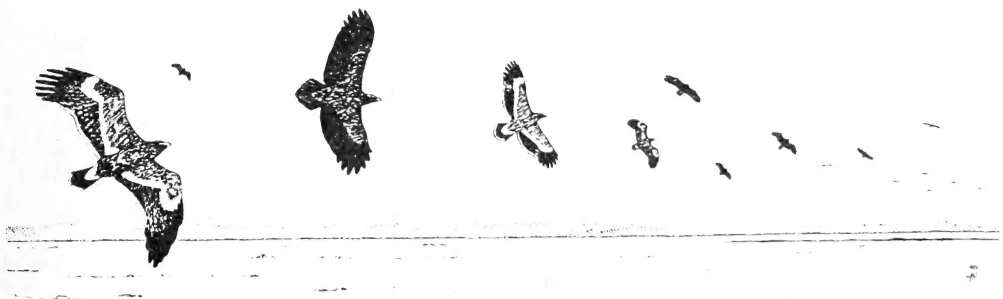
During the course of the expedition, a total of 219 species of bird were recorded, 56 of which were new for the published literature - an example of how poorly the country's wildlife is known. Of these two, a pytilia and a sunbird, are so far unidentified and we have been unable to track them down either in books or the British Museum. The pytilia looks like being either a new sub-species of Green-winged Pytilia Pytilia melba or possibly a new species - further research is

necessary. Regrettably the sunbird was in non-breeding plumage so, although it does not match anything in the British Museum, we cannot progress any further with its identity at present.

A full report of the expedition's results is in preparation; we hope it will be available in the second half of 1986.

We would like to take this opportunity of thanking the Ornithological Society of the Middle East, the World Wildlife Fund, the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society, the World Pheasant Association and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds for their financial support; the International Council for Bird Preservation for their encouragement; and Mr Izzo at Etablissements Marill in Djibouti for providing us with a four-wheel drive vehicle at a price we could afford.

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OSME SITES REGISTER SCHEME

N J Collar

Progress report no 2

To date, 115 forms have been returned by 22 contributors covering 13 of the 19 countries/geopolitical units within our area. Eleven forms have been single contributions; the remaining 104 are the work of just eleven people, namely M and J Hutton (25), A M Macfarlane (25), M I Evans (22), L N Anderson (8), F R Lambert (6), J Palfrey (5), D I M Wallace (5), D J Wilson (4), K M Olsen (2) and G W Rayner (2). Countries not yet with a site registered are Bahrain, Iran, Kuwait, Libya, Oman and South Yemen.

The first progress report (OSME Bull. 14, 1985: 8-10) requires correction: at the time of its publication, 61 (not 60) forms had been returned by 13 (not 12) contributors, and six (not 5) forms were single contributions from observers. Thus in the past year we have received 54 forms from nine observers (three new countries have been registered). The new sites (spellings as by the contributors, sites listed from north to south, countries listed alphabetically) are given below.

It will be immediately obvious that the scheme has been kept alive this past year through the activities of three people, two of them working as a team. The scarcity of material on such countries as Israel and Turkey is something members are warmly commended to make good in the coming year.

Iraq

Umm al-Khanazeer

33°19'N 44°26'E H Y Siman

Israel

Be'er Ora	29°43'N 34°57'E	K M Olsen
Yotvata	29°53'N 35°03'E	K M Olsen

Lebanon

Valley of Nahr Ibrahim	34°05'N 35°50'E	N H Khairallah
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Qatar

Abu Dluf	26°07'N 51°10'E	M & J Hutton
Zubarrah, south of the fort	25°58'N 51°01'E	M & J Hutton
Ras Qirtas	25°56'N 51°32'E	M & J Hutton
Ras Umm Laiji	25°50'N 51°35'E	M & J Hutton
Al Dakhira mangoves	25°44'N 51°34'E	M & J Hutton
Al Khor mangroves	25°42'N 51°33'E	M & J Hutton
Al Khor gardens	25°39'N 51°26'E	M & J Hutton
Peninsula on west coast	25°36'N 50°52'E	M & J Hutton
Bir Zekrit	25°29'N 50°50'E	M & J Hutton
Wajbah, Rayyan rubbish tip	25°17'N 51°24'E	M & J Hutton
Incinerator tip (Ras Abu Aboud)	25°17'N 51°36'E	M & J Hutton
Private Doha garden	25°16'N 51°34'E	M & J Hutton
Zoo garden	25°15'N 51°25'E	M & J Hutton
Wadi-as-Sameer old ponds	25°14'N 51°30'E	M & J Hutton
Umm Bab beach	25°13'N 50°46'E	M & J Hutton
Wakrah seashore	25°11'N 51°37'E	M & J Hutton
Abu Nkhala new ponds	25°10'N 51°23'E	M & J Hutton
Mukeinis farms	25°06'N 51°13'E	M & J Hutton
Umm Bab	25°04'N 50°52'E	M & J Hutton
Escarpment (west of Wadi Thyab)	25°00'N 50°53'E	M & J Hutton
Umm Said sewage works	24°58'N 51°34'E	M & J Hutton
Abu Samra	24°45'N 50°49'E	M & J Hutton

Qatar cont

Traina gardens	24°45'N 51°12'E	M & J Hutton
Inland sea (Khor Al Udeid)	24°37'N 51°20'E	M & J Hutton
name withheld		M & J Hutton

Turkey

Marmara Gölü	38°35'N 28°00'E	J K R Melrose
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United Arab Emirates

Khor Kalba	25°05'N 56°20'E	F E Warr
Abu Dhabi	24°26'N 54°24'E	M C Crumie

North Yemen

Wadi Sharas	15°43'N 43°39'E	M I Evans
Kawkaban	15°30'N 43°54'E	M I Evans
Haddah area	15°18'N 44°10'E	M I Evans
Jabal an Nabi Shu'ayb	15°17'N 43°59'E	M I Evans
Al 'Urr	15°15'N 43°53'E	M I Evans
Sha'ban	15°13'N 44°01'E	M I Evans
Hammam 'Ali	15°12'N 43°49'E	M I Evans
Al Aljam	15°10'N 44°14'E	M I Evans
Wadi Shadhb	15°08'N 43°37'E	M I Evans
Wadi Ashshar	15°04'N 44°13'E	M I Evans
Wadi Buqlan	15°03'N 44°09'E	M I Evans
Qa'al Haql & Wadi Rakhman	14°57'N 44°07'E	M I Evans
Hodeidah mudflats	14°48'N 42°57'E	M I Evans
Jabal Dawran	14°44'N 44°12'E	M I Evans
Al Midman	14°44'N 43°24'E	M I Evans
Turkish fort near Nukhaylah	14°38'N 43°00'E	M I Evans
Wadi Ash Shalalah	14°17'N 44°33'E	M I Evans

North Yemen cont

Sa'ilat al 'Ayn	13°58'N 44°04'E	M I Evans
Taiz reservoirs	13°39'N 44°00'E	M I Evans
Taiz rubbish tip/marsh (Hidhran)	13°36'N 43°56'E	M I Evans
Jabal Sabir	13°31'N 44°03'E	M I Evans
At Turbah	13°13'N 44°08'E	M I Evans

Probable Breeding of White-breasted Kingfisher in Egypt

David Merrie, Sherif Baha El Din, Stan Howe and Ahmed Riad

Prior to 1984 records of the White-breasted or Smyrna Kingfisher Halcyon smyrnensis in Egypt are few. Meinertzhagen (1930), comments that "it seems probable that the species occasionally straggles to within Egyptian limits", and cites two records from Sinai and one from Zagazig. More recent records are:-

Aug/Oct 1978 one in each month, Zaranik	- Petersen & Sorensen
Oct 1979 one caught at Zaranik, North Sinai	- Petersen & Sorensen
Sept 1980 El Arish, North Sinai	- Petersen & Sorensen
Aug/Sept 1981 3 singles, Zaranik	- Petersen & Sorensen
Feb 1982 Suez	- M C Jennings
Sept 1982 Zaranik	- S Baha el Din & W Salama

These records suggest a limited post breeding dispersal from possibly Israel or Lebanon with occasional wintering within North-eastern Egypt.

Cramp (1985) states that in Israel the species "has increased with growth of agriculture, which produces one of its main foods, mole-cricket Gryllotalpa gryllotalpa; apparently resistant to heavy

pesticide in these areas. (HM)" and that it is "Basically resident throughout range, but individuals wander to uncertain extent outside breeding range."

On 24th November 1984, S Howe and D Merrie were birdwatching at the place marked on old maps as Birket el Hagg. It is now known as Gebel Asfar and is the site of an enormous sewage farm north-east of Cairo, so matured that there are now groves of tall orchards and exotic trees such as Eucalyptus and Casuarina up to 50m high. We were passing a mixed orchard of trees about 12m high, which had been recently flooded with sewage, when we heard a loud, clear ringing cry. This emanated from a White-breasted Kingfisher which we soon located about 50m away. The bird kept mainly to the tops of the trees and eventually flew out of sight with its dipping woodpecker-like flight.

We put this down as another vagrant record until May 1985 when on the 4th of the month D Merrie encountered two birds singing clamorously in a well wooded area some 2km away from the first location. The extended musical babbling song overrode a fluty congregation of common Bulbuls Pycnonotus barbatus and had that quality of "once heard never forgotten".

The new location was adjacent to a wide canal with extensive high sandy banks in which were many burrows belonging variously to rodents, hoopoes Upupa epops etc. As well as the tall trees in which the birds were first seen there were fields of arable crops, citrus fruit groves, a marsh of tall reeds and date palms.

Subsequent visits to this area were made by D Merrie, Sherif Baha El Din, S Howe and Ahmed Riad on 17th and 27th May, 7th June and 26th July and in the autumn on 11th October and 15th November. On some of these occasions the birds were shown to other visiting birdwatchers.

In May and June the birds soon drew attention to themselves with their loud clear calls. Invariably they were first seen either in the tops of tall trees or looping in flight between them. On 7th June two were seen flying low behind bushes near the sandy canal bank but were never actually seen to enter a burrow. About 500m away a second pair was seen. Although some time had elapsed while we walked from one location to another we considered it was unlikely this was the same pair. This second pair were engaging in a sort of duet, one perched high on a summit twig of a dead leafless tree, the other nearby in an Eucalyptus tree. Unfortunately absence on holidays precluded us from following the pairs' history through July and August. However, visits to the area resumed in the autumn and isolated Kingfishers were seen in different places throughout October and November. It seems that the birds are well established and almost certainly attempted breeding or bred. If so this would be the first breeding of the species on the continent of Africa. It is hoped that we will be able to keep the birds under close review during the 1986 breeding season.

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PREDATION ON A SNAKE-EYED LIZARD BY A HOOPOE

Henk K Mienis

Hoopoes Upupa epops are known to prey occasionally on reptiles. This is excellently documented by a photograph in Roedelberger & Groschoff (1963: 175), which shows a Hoopoe with a lizard in its bill and yet actual observations of predation on reptiles are rarely reported.

On 8th August 1985 I was lucky enough to witness such an event. While scouting the cottonfields of Kibbutz Netzer Sereni, Israel, for insect pests, two Hoopoes were seen foraging at the edge of a field among some ruderal vegetation. The area in question is densely populated by Snake-eyed Lizards Ophisops elegans.

To my surprise one of the birds managed to catch an adult Snake-eyed Lizard of \pm 15cm length. It kept the lizard in its bill for a while held at midbody. Then the victim was thrown into the air in typical Hoopoe-manner and caught again head down in the open bill after which it was swallowed completely.

Reference

Roedelberger F A & V I Groschoff, 1963. The wonders of wildlife in Europe. 232pp. London, New York, Toronto.

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HERRING GULLS NESTING ON ROOFTOPS IN ISTANBUL

J S M Albrecht

Considering that the first ever occurrence of Herring Gulls Larus argentatus nesting on roofs was reported from the Bulgarian Black Sea coastal towns by Reisner in 1894 (reported by Goethe, 1960), it is surprising that there are no previous reports of rooftop nesting from

Turkey. Several hundred Herring Gulls were reported nesting on rooftops in Burgas on the Bulgarian coast in 1960 (Mountford & Ferguson-Lees, 1961) and these were still nesting there in 1970 (Cramp 1971).

I first observed rooftop nesting in Turkey in 1979 when a pair of Herring Gulls had one well-grown young on a roof on Büyükada, the largest of the Princes Islands in the Sea of Marmara, on 6th July. In 1983 I spent most of July in Istanbul where many of the roofs in the Taksim/Beyoglu/Tepebasi area appeared to be occupied by nesting Herring Gulls. One pair close to the British Consulate had two well-grown young which were able to fly in mid-July. These observations appear to be consistent with egg laying in the second half of April.

The observations referred to and reported here seem to be the only known records of rooftop nesting by gulls in the Mediterranean and Black Sea region. In view of the numbers nesting in Istanbul (probably at least several hundred pairs) it seems unlikely that the phenomenon is very recent or restricted to the Black Sea/Marmara Sea region. I should be grateful for any roof nesting records from Turkey that pre-date mine and also for any other reports of roof nesting by gulls in the Mediterranean or Black Sea basins or elsewhere in the Middle East region.

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- 12 Hemmingford Road, Cambridge CB1 3BZ, England.

FOUR UNUSUAL RECORDS FROM THE LEBANON

Nabil H Khairallah

The following four species were recorded within the Lebanese boundaries on different occasions.

Sooty Shearwater Puffinus griseus

16th March 1981; two dark birds were spotted among a mixed flock of gulls in Saint George's Bay just north of Beirut. Upon approaching, some birds took flight including the two darker ones. However, the distance was sufficient to afford a clear view of these birds while sitting and on the wing and for size comparison with the gulls. They were very clearly Sooty Shearwaters. This species has been previously recorded in Israel on five occasions (Paran 1979). However, there are no other records for the whole of the Eastern Mediterranean. The observer is quite experienced with sea birds, having spent more than seven years birdwatching on the Scottish shores and islands.

Eleonora's Falcon Falco eleonora

29th May 1985; a single bird was spotted on a 70m high sea cliff just south of Nahr el Kalb in an area renowned for its cliffs and their proximity to the sea shore - typical Eleonora's Falcon habitat.

S Vere-Benson (1970) states that this bird has been recorded several times in Lebanon, yet there is no published material substantiating or indicating the locality or season when such sightings took place. This single bird was watched carefully from a comparatively short distance for some time and was identified confidently.

Magpie Pica pica

15th April 1984; a single bird was observed in the late afternoon in the woods just north of Baabda (33°51'N, 35°32'E). This species has been described by S Vere-Benson (1970) as: "Several were reported in southern Lebanon in October (1967) and others in August (1968) by four or five observers." No other records are published for the country nor did I observe it during more than fifteen years birdwatching in the Mount Lebanon and Bekaa area.

Rose-coloured Starling Sturnus roseus

October 1970; a flock of 20 was seen to fly in to roost in an apple orchard at late dusk, in the Bekaa Valley, near Tel Hezzin. Shots were heard, after which the flock took to flight again. Two hunters emerged perplexed yet proudly carrying three individuals. This species has been described by S Vere-Benson (1970) as "... appears to be a late and very erratic spring and summer vagrant and is occasional till late autumn." However, it was not included in Macfarlane (1978) nor in any other published species lists. The birds were identified conclusively in the hand.

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NEWS AND INFORMATION

While the OSME Bulletin has always published items of news and information in previous numbers we hope from now on to make it a regular feature of each Bulletin. If anyone has relevant information please send it to The Editor, OSME Bulletin, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, England. The deadline for the next Bulletin is 15th August.

NATIVE LANGUAGE POPULAR BIRDBOOKS

Eighteen months ago we reported that ICBP's Migratory Committee were preparing a popular bird book suitable for children. The book, complete with colour plates, would be translated and published in the various countries of the Mediterranean region (OSME Bull 13:14). So far these attractive books have been produced for the following countries: Portugal, Morocco, Greece, Turkey (April 1986) and Lebanon. They are available free of charge from wildlife societies within the country concerned:

Greece: Hellenic Ornithological Society, P O Box 64052, GR 15701 Zographos, Greece.

Turkey: Mrs Negris Yazgan, President, The Society for the Protection of Wildlife, Cerdet Pasa Cad 376/3, Bebek, Istanbul, Turkey.

Lebanon: Friends of Nature, P O Box 11 8281, Beirut, Lebanon.

Other countries/further information: Wim Verheugt, ICBP, 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL, England.

Other countries with books in preparation include Cyprus, Tunisia and Spain.

TAYYUR OMAN

An Arabic edition of Birds of Oman by Michael Gallagher and Martin Woodcock has now been published (1985) by Quartet Books. The text of the original English edition of 1980 (see review in OSME Bulletin No 6) has been revised and up-dated. The plates remain the same, though the cover illustration has been changed, and the maps have been improved. An appendix includes a dozen species recently recorded in Oman for the first time: Sooty Shearwater Puffinus griseus, Mute Swan Cygnus olor, Harlequin Quail Coturnix delegorguei, Allen's Gallinule Porphyryla alleni, Painted Snipe Rostratula bengalensis, Great Knot Calidris tenuirostris, Great Spotted Cuckoo Clamator glandarius, Golden Pipit Tmetothylacus tenellus, Pied Stonechat Saxicola caprata, Blue and White Flycatcher Muscicapa cyanomelana, Nile Valley Sunbird Anthreptes metallicus and Long-tailed Shrike Lanius schach.

We hope that our members and friends in Oman and other parts of Arabia will bring this book to the attention of their Arab colleagues and that some of the local natural history groups will find room for it in their libraries. The price in the United Kingdom is £35 and further information about availability can be obtained from Quartet Books of 27/29 Goadge Street, London, W1P 1FD. There is a copy, presented by the publishers, in the OSME library at Sandy.

BINOCULARS AND BIRD IDENTIFICATION BOOKS

The British Committee for the Prevention of Mass Destruction of Migratory Birds has collected binoculars and bird identification guides to encourage birdwatching and thus promote bird protection and conservation in Europe, Africa and the Middle East - areas which share a common migratory bird population. The binoculars and books are available free of charge to bird protection societies and similar organisations engaged in bird protection - particularly of migratory

birds - to encourage birdwatching especially amongst children and young people. If anyone is interested in obtaining binoculars and/or bird books they should write to : Stop the Massacre Committee, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, England. Donations of old binoculars (damaged ones will be repaired by the committee) and field guides will be gratefully received at the above address. A car sticker (price 50p or free with donations over £5) is also available.

RAPTOR SHOOTING and WETLAND DESTRUCTION in TURKEY

Turkey is a member of the Council of Europe and has obligations under the Bern Convention for the protection of wildlife and its habitats. Raptor shooting is widespread in North-east Turkey where Honey Buzzards Pernis apivorus, Booted Eagle Hieraaetus pennatus and Montagu's Harrier Circus pygargus are amongst the many species that are indiscriminately shot. Sparrowhawk Accipter nisus catching is also common especially in the Borcka/Aravi area. Sparrowhawks are used for Quail Coturnix coturnix hunting in the autumn. Some Sparrowhawks are later released but many stay in captivity.

Turkey's wetlands are of outstanding importance not only for migrating birds but especially as wintering habitats for large numbers of water birds. Many of these wetlands are under threat of drainage and development for agriculture. Two of the sites under threat are Amik Gölü (36°20'N 36°10'E) which has already been extensively drained, but for which there is little recent information; and Eregli Gölü (37°33'N 33°49'E) with an area of 50,000 hectares.

Dogal Hayati Koruma Dernegi (The Society for the Protection of Wildlife) in Turkey is collecting information on both raptor shooting and wetland destruction. Anyone wanting more details or with information to give should contact Mrs Nergis Yazgan, President, The Society for the Protection of Wildlife, Cerdet Pasa Cad 376/3, Benek -

Istanbul, Turkey. OSME is also interested in monitoring the situation and will pass on information to Turkey.

FLYING VISITS - WALLCHART on BIRD MIGRATION between EURASIA and AFRICA

This attractive wall map shows as "arteries" the bird migration routes between Eurasia and Africa. It also highlights some of the main dangers facing migrating birds. The poster (60x80cm) is being produced by ICBP and Commpact. It is intended to translate the poster into many languages and to produce as many copies as necessary. If any organisation or person is interested in acquiring posters for their country or organisation they should contact Wim Verheugt, ICBP, 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL, England. (Tel: 0223-277318).

RESEARCH PROJECT: THREATS TO THE WHITE STORK ON MIGRATION

In January 1986, WWF-Germany and ICBP started a joint project to investigate the threats to the White Stork Ciconia ciconia on its migration routes and in its wintering areas. Major aims of the project will be:

- to analyse factors threatening the White Stork directly and indirectly in the different countries on its migration route.
- to analyse the extent of application of biocides and their direct and indirect effects on migrating White Storks.
- to draw together a list of areas which are of major importance for migrating White Stork.

- to produce comprehensive documentation, containing results of the project and suggestions for an international conservation strategy for the White Stork.

Collaborators are needed who can submit information and observations from Southern Europe, the Middle East, Arabia and Africa. People interested in co-operating should contact the project leader as soon as possible for further details:

Dr Holger Schulz, WWF-Germany/ICBP White Stork Project, Am Lindenberg 1, D-3331 LELM, Federal Republic of Germany. Tel: 05353/8005.

ICBP EUROPEAN CONTINENTAL SECTION - IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS IN EUROPE

Since 1980 ICBP has gathered data on important sites for birds in Europe. The information so far collected has led to the identification of over 1500 sites in need of special conservation measures, and revealed that a large number were under threat and required conservation action. The earlier site inventories covered ten European countries in detail, and a further twelve on the basis of limited data only. The information collected so far has frequently been used to defend important sites under threat and has assisted governments, planners and conservationists protect the European environment.

Over the next two years, ICBP will expand on the work already carried out. All of Europe will be covered, including Central and Eastern Europe, Greenland, Turkey and the Atlantic islands of Spain and Portugal. The main objectives of the project are:

- To examine the importance of European bird populations and their habitats, and using established criteria, to expand the existing list of important sites for birds in Europe. The report will build

on the information previously gathered by the European Continental Section, information from the files of international organisations, and the provision of further data by ICBP national sections, member organisations and individual members. Specific studies will be encouraged for certain areas or species where data is lacking or requires updating.

- To encourage the development of a European-wide network of nature reserves for birds, based on the Important Birds Areas identified. The work will provide an authoritative ornithological database that will aid the implementation of the EEC Birds Directive, Ramsar, Berne, Bonn and World Heritage Conventions, and national conservation strategies.
- To prepare an operational framework for a 'mutual defence pact' between members of the European Continental Section to promote the conservation of the Important Bird Areas identified, and counter any future threats.

Information will be stored in database format on a computer, to facilitate cross-referencing and retrieval. A draft report will be presented at the European Continental Section meeting in Hungary in May 1987, where the report will be reviewed, gaps identified and additional data solicited, with a final report to be completed in December 1987.

OSME fully supports this project which overlaps with the OSME Sites Register Scheme particularly in regard to Turkey. We will be co-operating fully with ICBP and will provide them with all the relevant information in our files.

CAR STICKERS TO AID NATURE CONSERVATION IN TURKEY

During the course of a birding visit in Turkey in May 1985 Mike Densley met a Turkish operator who expressed a great interest in furthering the cause of nature conservation in Turkey and especially in helping the Bald Ibis at Birecik.

He offered to sponsor the cost of producing some very attractive and rather unique car stickers (illustrated here) profits from the sale of which would be given to various conservation bodies in Turkey. The stickers are in three colours printed on white and are obtainable, price £1 (plus SAE please), from Mike Densley, 60 Saffron Crescent, Tickhill, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN11 9RU.

For all committed 'Turkophiles', the many hundreds of birders who have enjoyed the wonderful wildlife of the country, and others who simply want to help, this is a convenient way of helping Turkey's conservation groups. By sporting the sticker in your car you will, of course, publicise this very worthwhile cause even more widely.



SEVENTH PAN-AFRICAN ORNITHOLOGICAL CONGRESS

The 7th Pan-African Ornithological Congress will be held in Nairobi, Kenya from 28th August - 5th September 1988. There will be symposia, contributed papers, poster sessions, workshops and excursions including several tied in with symposia on avifaunas of threatened forests of Kenya. One theme will be threatened Afrotropical forest

avifaunas and ICBP will participate in a full day's programme. Funding and suggestions for funding travel to the meeting and participation of indigenous African ornithologists in it are solicited.

For further information please contact:-

- D A Turner, P O Box 48019, Nairobi, Kenya.
- Dr L Short, American Museum of Natural History, New York City, New York 10024-5192, USA.

Avian physiologist Prof Geoffrey Maloiy of the University of Nairobi is the Congress Chairman. For those wishing to contribute papers or propose symposia, the Scientific Programme Chairman is Dr David Pearson, Department of Biochemistry, University of Nairobi, P O Box 30197 Nairobi, Kenya.

DUBAI NATURAL HISTORY GROUP

News has reached us from the United Arab Emirates of the formation of the Dubai Natural History Group last year. This is working in conjunction with the Dubai Wildlife Research Centre for the study of Dubai's ecology. The Centre, in turn, is a creation of H H Shaikh Mohammed bin Rashid. Further information is available from Joseph B Platt, Ph D, Dubai Wildlife Research Centre, P O Box 11626, Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The bird recorder is Colin Richardson, P O Box 2828, Dubai.

DUBAI SHOREBIRD PROJECT

Kor Dubai (Dubai Creek) is a tidal inlet within Dubai City, UAE containing mudflats covering approximately one square kilometre.

There has been an apparent dramatic increase in the number of shorebirds using the area in the last few years. Recent information indicates that up to 20,000 birds may be present, thus making Kor Dubai a new area of international importance for wetland birds. Within a regional context it is undoubtedly a site of major importance.

We plan to visit Dubai for ten weeks between September and November 1986, with several aims:-

- 1) To identify those species of shorebirds present and establish to which breeding population they belong.
- 2) By marking a sample of birds, to measure population turnover and obtain an estimate of the total numbers of birds using the creek during the study period.
- 3) To describe the macrobenthic fauna of the mudflats in terms of species present, biomass and productivity, in order to establish how such high densities of shorebirds can use this site.
- 4) To investigate foraging patterns and diet of shorebirds and flamingoes, in conjunction with aim 3, to determine the carrying capacity of the creek.

The project is being run in conjunction with the Dubai Wildlife Research Centre and we are now attempting to raise the necessary funding. We would be interested to hear from anyone who has any knowledge of Kor Dubai and has any information that may be of use to us.

Tony Cross, Mick Green, Chris Thomas, John Uttley.

Dubai Shorebird Project, University of Durham, Science Laboratories,
South Road, Durham, DH1 3LE, England.

TURKISH BIRD REPORT: REQUEST FOR RECORDS

The Turkish Bird Report for 1976-1981 has now been submitted to the Editorial Committee and will be published as soon as possible in a forthcoming issue of Sandgrouse. The next report will cover the five years 1982-1986 and the Society is now actively seeking records for this period which has witnessed a remarkable upsurge in the numbers of birdwatchers visiting Turkey. Another welcome recent trend is that of greater exploration within the poorly known regions of this diverse and fascinating country - the mountains of the north-east and south-east and the marshes of the east, for example. New discoveries continue to be made and although the general distribution of most Turkish birds is now known many significant gaps remain in our knowledge.

With Turkey seeking to enter the EEC the possibility of exacerbation of the far reaching changes in agricultural systems which have taken place in recent years cannot be ignored. Please help OSME plan for this by submitting your observations as soon as possible - the deadline for the period in question is the end of March 1987. Previously unsubmitted records for early years are equally welcome. Please send records to Turkish Bird Report Editorial Committee, OSME, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, England.

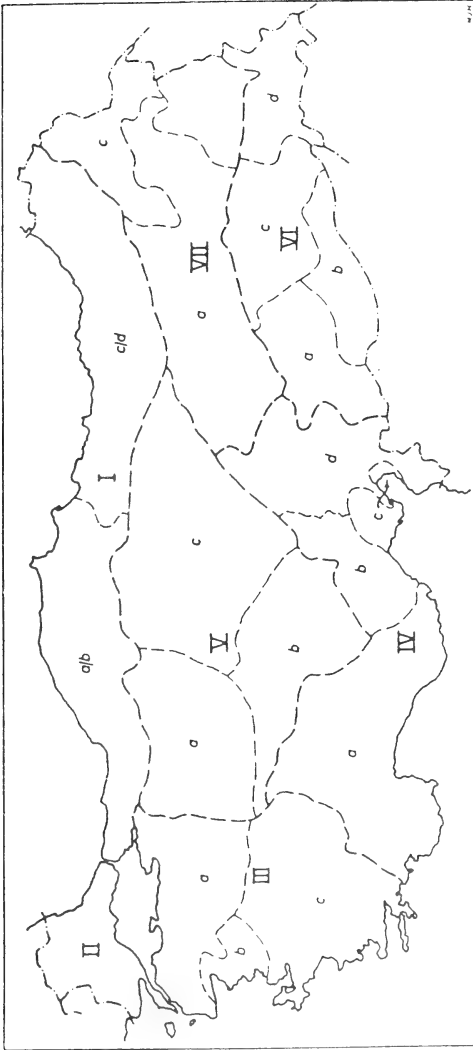
Observers are strongly requested to submit records in systematic order with full details of names of observers concerned including the name and address of one observer to whom any correspondence arising may be directed. If at all possible, records should be detailed on one side only of each sheet of paper. 'Unusual' records and those of rarities should be accompanied by further details, including a description.

Submission of records in unsystematic semi-anecdotal form (eg photocopies of notebooks) should be avoided.

In the past, smooth editorial progress and efficient record collation has been bedevilled by confusion over place-names. Two or more widely separated localities may have the same name; a single locality may have alternative names on different maps; road-signs designating settlement names may differ from those given on maps or a settlement - if marked at all - may be present on one map but absent from another. These difficulties can lead to erroneous deliniation of distribution patterns and observers are requested to guard against this danger, especially where records from localities away from the normal 'tourist circuit' are concerned - in such cases distance and direction away from the nearest major settlement and/or grid references should be included.

Three simple and convenient methods of minimizing ambiguity are to include:

- 1) details of itinerary
- 2) specifications of map from which any site-names are taken
- 3) indexing of records with regard to the relevant biogeographical subdivisions of Turkey (in accordance with the treatment of records adopted in previous reports). Without knowledge of these a meaningful understanding of the distribution of Turkish birds is impossible - SEE MAP OPPOSITE.



REGIONS AND SUB-REGIONS

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| <p>I. Black Sea Coastlands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Western Coastal (b) Western Inland (c) Eastern Coastal (d) Eastern Inland | <p>II. Thrace</p> <p>III. Western Anatolia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Marmara (b) Bergama (c) Izmir | <p>IV. Southern Coastlands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Western Taurus (b) Main Taurus (c) Seyhan Lowland (d) Anti-Taurus | <p>VI. South Eastern Turkey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Middle Euphrates (b) Mesopotamian Rise (c) Upper Tigris (d) Kurdish Alps |
| <p>V. Central Plateau</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Sakarya (b) Enclosed Basins (c) Kizilirmak | <p>VII. Eastern Turkey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Upper Euphrates (b) Van (c) Upper Aras | | |

Some Notes on the Field Characteristics of the Great Snipe
Gallinago media with Reference to the Common Snipe G. gallinago.

J S M Albrecht

While resident in Turkey from 1976 to 1978 I saw Great Snipe on at least five occasions including four in the spring of 1978. Since only three spring Great Snipe were recorded for the whole of Turkey from 1970 to 1975 inclusive (OST 1975, 1978) four in one spring appears unprecedented. However, this probably reflects, among other things, the problems of Great Snipe identification rather than their true spring status in Turkey.

Until Wallace's two papers (1976 and 1977) there was no clear guide on how to distinguish Great Snipe and Common Snipe. However I did not have these papers in Turkey and so had to rely on comparison with Common Snipe.

The purpose of these notes is to draw attention to a number of characters which aid field identification. It is hoped that these in turn will aid a clearer idea of the status of Great Snipe in the Middle East.

All the Great Snipe I saw were in flight and therefore seen for a relatively short time and never on the ground. Four of the five rose silently and the fifth gave a quiet call quite unlike that of the Common Snipe. On two occasions the Great Snipe was flushed with Common Snipe and the size difference was obvious. On the three other occasions the flight action was noted. In two it flew straight with no zig-zag flight. These birds were flushed from small wet areas and flew for at least 400 metres and were not seen again. The third got up at some distance so probably was not flushed, it hovered and then landed

again. Two Common Snipe were then flushed and about a minute later they flew away accompanied by a larger snipe, presumably the Great.

Concerning plumage characters: on only one occasion were the white outer tail feathers seen and then only at close range. However in all cases the birds appeared to have a white trailing edge to the wing which was very conspicuous compared to the white on the wing of a Common Snipe.

The white on the wing of the Great Snipe has caused much confusion in the identification literature because it is relatively conspicuous in flight but very inconspicuous in museum skins which are the probable source of much of the older identification literature. Indeed Wallace (1976) was unable to sort out the true wing pattern from his examination of the skins in the British Museum (Natural History). It required the photographs in his 1977 paper to establish the true pattern of dark and white on the upper wing of the Great Snipe. To quote from Wallace (1977) the pattern on the upper wing of the Great Snipe "consists of a chequered area, formed by the well-marked lesser coverts; a wide, very dark central panel with long and obvious white borders, formed by the tips of the median coverts and the visible parts of the greater; and a dull trailing area, on which the brown (not black) secondaries have pale but not white tips". The important thing to note is that the trailing area from the white border of the central panel is dull brown which is exactly the tone and colour of the ground whence the Great Snipe is often flushed. Thus a dull brown trailing edge of a wing that is flying away over a dull brown background is not easily seen and consequently the white coverts APPEAR to be a white trailing edge. To identify a bird it is of course important to know the true plumage pattern but it is equally important to know how these are likely to appear in field conditions and for what reasons.

As already mentioned, conventional museum skins with the wings folded are useless for discovering the true upper or lower wing pattern. However, I have been fortunate to be able to examine two Great and one Common Snipe skins with the wings spread in the Zoology Museum at Cambridge. In these specimens the upper wing pattern is clear and obvious. The Great Snipe has no white trailing edge but the white trailing edge of the Common Snipe is not conspicuous compared with the white covert tips of the Great Snipe. Thus in the field the Common Snipe can have thin white lines on the upper wings including the white trailing edge but this is completely different from the conspicuous white on the upper wing of the Great Snipe which, for reasons given above, can appear like a white trailing edge. This difference in the white on the upper wing seems to be glossed over in some recent literature. Thus Birds of the Western Palearctic Volume 3 page 423 states "Pale trailing edge alone useless in distinguishing G. media (Great) from G. gallinago (Common)...." without any explanation as to how the differences appear in the field.

In conclusion the white covert tips in the Great Snipe can appear like a white trailing edge which is much more conspicuous than that shown in any Common Snipe. This feature is a useful pointer to the bird's identity. For a fuller exposition the reader is referred to Wallace's two papers reprinted in Sharrock (1980).

Finally a plea to those who prepare bird skins in museums. It would aid work on identification, particularly of difficult species, if some specimens were set with their wings fully open so that the flight pattern of the upper and lower wing could be clearly seen. One or two specimens would be better than the usual none.

Acknowledgement

I am grateful to Mrs Hilary Potter for access to the skins in the Zoology Museum at Cambridge.

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 Sharrock, J.T.R. 1980. Frontiers of Bird Identification. Macmillan.
 Wallace, D. I. M. 1976. Distinguishing Great Snipe from Snipe. Brit. Birds. 69: 377-383.
 Wallace, D.I.M. 1977. Further definition of Great Snipe characters. Brit. Birds 70: 283-289.

REVIEWS

Kasperek M (1985) Die Sultanssümpfe. Naturgeschichte eines Vogelparadieses in Anatolien. [The Sultan Marshes: natural history of a bird paradise in Anatolia.] Heidelberg: Max Kasperek Verlag. 155 pp softback. 21 black and white photographs, 17 figures, 7 tables.

First with his "Birds of Turkey" pamphlet series and now with this beautifully produced volume, Max Kasperek is establishing himself as a luminary of modern Turkish ornithology. Die Sultanssümpfe resembles the pamphlets in its organisation of material: introductory sections on the Sultan Marshes' general and ornithological history, topography, geology, soils, climate and hydrology, followed by annotated faunal lists. The main differences are in the scale of the undertaking, the inclusion of flora and other fauna in the lists (but the bird list is

still much bigger than the rest put together), a discussion of conservation issues at the end, and the language throughout being German.

The Sultan Marshes are an area of wetlands and associated steppe, 100-200km², somewhat south of the middle of Turkey, on the Anatolian plateau. To date, 251 species of bird have been recorded there, over 60% of the total Turkish list; excluding vagrants, Kasperek anticipates a dozen additions in due course. Of the 251, 69 certainly breed, while 50 probably and 18 possibly do so; of the remaining 113, 67 are regular on migration or in winter and 46 are irregular or vagrant. Kasperek expresses the significance of the site by reference to the Council of Europe's (now badly dated) "Red List of European Birds". On this basis the marshes are an important breeding station for Pygmy Cormorant Phalacrocorax pygmaeus (200 pairs and increasing), White Pelican Pelecanus onocrotalus (probably regular), Glossy Ibis Plegadis falcinellus (tenfold decline in 10 years, 25-30 pairs remaining), Spoonbill Platalea leucorodia (10-15 pairs), Greater Flamingo Phoenicopterus ruber (once in 1970: 1,500-2,000 pairs), White-headed Duck Oxyura leucocephala (less than 20 pairs), Montagu's Harrier Circus pygargus (a few pairs), Common Crane Grus grus (50 pairs in 1970, 20 pairs now), Great Bustard Otis tarda (displaying birds seen, but declining through hunting), Spur-winged Plover Hoplopterus spinosus (20 pairs), Slender-billed Gull Larus genei (100 pairs, possibly more), Gull-billed Tern Gelochelidon nilotica (100 pairs) and Black-bellied Sandgrouse Pterocles orientalis (25-30 pairs). To this list the Council of Europe would now add the White Stork Ciconia ciconia, represented by roughly 30 pairs. Other breeding birds include Little Bittern Ixobrychus minutus (350 pairs), Night Heron Nycticorax nycticorax (50 pairs), Squacco Heron Ardeola ralloides (50 pairs), Little Egret Egretta garzetta (200 pairs), Black-winged Stilt Himantopus himantopus (200+ pairs), Avocet Recurvirostra avosetta (once 300 but in 1982 only 12 pairs), Collared

Pratincole Glareola pratincola (50 pairs) and Great Sand Plover Charadrius leschenaultii (15 pairs). Altogether, nine species of gulls and terns breed.

Impressive as these figures are, they are dwarfed by the winter waterfowl statistics: up to 600,000 water birds (40% of the total known for Turkey) occur there. On one occasion half a million Teal Anas crecca were estimated to be present. For other anatids, maximum figures recorded are: White-fronted Goose Anser albifrons 3,280, Greylag A anser 12,100, Ruddy Shelduck Tadorna ferruginea 11,000, Common Shelduck T tadorna 450, Wigeon Anas penelope 3,200, Gadwall A strepera 500, Mallard A platyrhynchos 8,100, Pintail A acuta 15,000, Garganey A querquedula 1,000, Shoveler A clypeata 9,000, Red-breasted Pochard Netta rufina 2,000 and Pochard Aythya ferina 10,000. As many as 1,050 Common Cranes and an estimated 80,000 Greater Flamingoes have been present.

Hunting, fisheries, egg-collecting, frog and leech gathering, reed cutting, overgrazing, trampling by stock, disease, fertilisers and pesticides, water pollution and, most problematically, irrigation and drainage (responsible for many of the declines listed above through the conversion of the area's wet grasslands) all contribute or have contributed to the deterioration of the quality of the site. Kasperek recommends proper delimitation (and limitation!) of drainage areas, regulation of the water level at Yay Gölü (the lake at the centre of the marshes) to accord with natural seasonal levels, continuation and improved enforcement of the 1982 hunting ban, restriction of reed cutting to the non-breeding period, and an ultimate solution to the overgrazing problem. Whilst hope of seeing the area developed as a national park seems slim, and listing of the site under Project MAR did not bring the year-round protection it should have, Kasperek sees inclusion under the Ramsar Convention as the best means of generating the true conservation of this remarkable area, though it could also be

nominated as a Biosphere Reserve under United Nations auspices. Max Kasperek's book, whose only faults are a certain laxity in the accuracy of scientific names and, perhaps, a failure to treat its subject in terms of habitat-types and descriptions, is an enormous contribution to the case for protecting the Sultan Marshes, and all of us concerned with conservation in the Western Palearctic are greatly in his debt.

N J Collar

Gebel Elba Conservation Area. Egypt/Sudan October 1985

Steve Goodman (University of Michigan, USA, 48109) has compiled and edited a report with recommendations on a project under the auspices of the World Wildlife Fund and IUCN (project 3612) to establish a conservation area around the Gebel Elba group of mountains on the Egyptian Sudanese border. The area would cover approx 4,800km² and include in the east of the Red Sea coast with attendant islands and mangrove swamps and to the west the wadi systems of the group of mountains centred on the Gebel Elba (1,435m). This area is in the transitional zone between the Afrotropical and Palearctic biogeographical realms and although largely arid it does receive significant moisture forming an exceptionally rich and diverse ecosystem. It is inhabited by a local Bedouin tribe (the Bischarin) who have lived there for several thousand years. The area was surveyed in 1985 and the report includes summaries of its faunal riches. A total of 36 species of birds are known to breed in the area, many representing the northern limit in Africa of Afrotropical species (including Ostrich, Bateleur, Pink-headed Dove, Arabian Warbler, Fulvous Babbler, Shining Sunbird, Rosy-patched Shrike, Golden Sparrow and Silverbill). The conservation area falls within an area under the administration of the Sudanese Government but Egypt has not renounced claims to it and the co-operation of the two governments has

been promised and is essential to the successful establishment of the reserve. With a metalled road linking Cairo to Port Sudan now being constructed, the whole area is under threat particularly from visiting hunters, charcoal burning etc. Swift and effective action on an international scale is clearly called for. This report is an important and commendable step in that direction.

Donald Parr

Birds of Turkey 3: Kizilcahamam. Sancar Baris, Resit Akçakaya and Can Bilgin (1984). Price £1.50 including postage and packing from OSME Sales.

The third booklet in the 'Birds of Turkey' series covers the area around the town of Kizilcahamam which includes the Soğuksu National Park. The records included span the period from 1945 to 1984 and are attributed to over forty different observers.

The twelve page introduction includes useful sections covering position, climate, vegetation, ornithological importance, nature conservation and hints for birdwatchers. There then follows a nineteen page systematic list summarising all the records, a three page Turkish summary and two pages of references.

Kizilcahamam is located in a deep valley lying some 86km to the north of Ankara. The surrounding countryside is essentially mountainous containing very little in the way of aquatic habitat. The species list, which is comprised of 160 species, reflects this, containing only two ducks and four waders! Raptors are well represented however with twenty-nine species recorded, sixteen of which may well breed in the area. As one might expect in well forested country woodland species are well represented with, for example, six species of woodpecker, five tits and three nuthatches.

Interestingly, the human population of the area has dropped considerably over the last fifty years and it is suggested that this has been beneficial for the area's wildlife. The booklet makes fascinating reading and is recommended to anyone with an interest in Turkey and its birds.

David Fisher

Birds of Turkey 4: Kizilirmak Delta. Lieuwe Dijkzen and Max Kasperek (1985). Price: £1.50 including postage and packing from OSME Sales

This is the fourth in a series of booklets covering important ornithological sites in Turkey. The type-setting and appearance of the booklet is a great improvement over previous issues. However, the text would have been improved by more careful editing by a native English speaker and there are one or two spelling or printing mistakes. In spite of this the booklet is a valuable addition to the series.

The Kizilirmak, which is the longest river in Anatolia, flows into the Black Sea at about the mid-point of Turkey's northern coast. The 47 page booklet summarises the observations of the last 18 years with notes on 257 bird species reported from the delta. Of these seven are not accepted.

The bird list is preceded by a thorough description of the area including an account of how the delta built up, its original habitats and the present state of the delta. There are important sections on the ornithological importance of and nature conservation in the area. A useful feature of this series is a section on hints for birdwatchers which explains the best way to approach the various lakes in the delta.

This is clearly an important site for the visiting birder and would doubtless repay more frequent visits especially in the spring, when

migrants include birds that have overshot their breeding ranges to the south, and in autumn when the wader passage included Turkey's first Wilson's Phalarope in 1983. It is of concern that what would be regarded as three of the specialities of the area - Dalmation Pelican, White-tailed Eagle and Osprey - have apparently ceased to breed in recent years. This points to a potentially serious problem in the delta. Much of the area is used for arable farming and, as the authors say, the pesticides reaching the lakes must be considerable. Unfortunately, it would be of little surprise if pesticides were found to be involved in the decline of these birds. The situation clearly needs careful study. Nevertheless, the Kizilirmak Delta has much to interest the birder and much has still to be learnt about its birds and other wildlife.

This is clearly an important booklet not only for birdwatchers but also for those interested in conservation and is thoroughly recommended.

Simon Albrecht

JOINT OSME/ffPS MEETING: A MIDDLE EASTERN EVENING

On Wednesday 14th May 1986 at 6.30pm OSME will join forces with the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society for three illustrated talks on wildlife conservation in the Middle East.

The speakers will be: Dr Linden Cornwallis talking about bird conservation in Iran, Dr Paul Minton describing his work on mammalian predators and their prey in the Wahiba Sands of Oman and Dr Michael Rands who will discuss bird conservation in North Yemen and show the OSME Yemen Expedition's film.

The meeting will be held at the Meeting Rooms of the Zoological Society of London (Regents Park, London) and will include a wine and

cheese buffet supper. Tickets (price £4.00) are available from the ffPS, 8-12 Camden High Street, London NW1 0JH. Please enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for the tickets.

REDUCED SUBSCRIPTION TO BRITISH BIRDS FOR OSME MEMBERS

OSME members can now subscribe to the monthly magazine British Birds at 75% of the normal cost. For members living in Britain and Europe or by service mail elsewhere the reduced subscription is £17.25 instead of £23.00. The reduced airmail subscription is £28.88 or US \$42.41. The magazine includes papers and articles on a wealth of subjects of interest to birdwatchers all over the world and is thoroughly recommended.

For further details see the enclosed leaflet or contact Mrs Erika Sharrock, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ.

1986 SUBSCRIPTIONS

1986 subscriptions (£7.00) are now due. A renewal form is enclosed with this Bulletin unless you are one of those members who has already paid. Those living outside Europe may receive publications by airmail for an additional contribution of £3.00. Family membership costs £10.00 (£13.00 airmail). Life membership is £150.00 or £75.00 if 60 years or over.

SANDGROUSE SEVEN

We regret the delay in the production of Volume 7 of Sandgrouse. It will be ready shortly and will be sent to all members who have paid their £7.00 subscription for 1985 (£10.00 airmail). If you are one of the few in arrears please send your remittance without further delay so that Sandgrouse 7 can be mailed to you.

ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF THE MIDDLE EAST

c/o THE LODGE, SANDY, BEDFORDSHIRE, ENGLAND.

The Ornithological Society of the Middle East was formed in April 1978 and is a successor to the Ornithological Society of Turkey.

Aims

1. To collect, collate and publish ornithological data on the birds of the Middle East.
2. To encourage an interest in and conservation of the birds of the Middle East.
3. To develop a mutually beneficial working relationship with all environmental and conservation bodies and natural history societies in and concerned with the Middle East.

Membership is open to all and spans over 40 countries.

Publications Sandgrouse is the annual journal of the Society and contains scientific papers on all aspects of the ornithology of the Middle East. A bulletin is also issued bi-annually to all members.



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