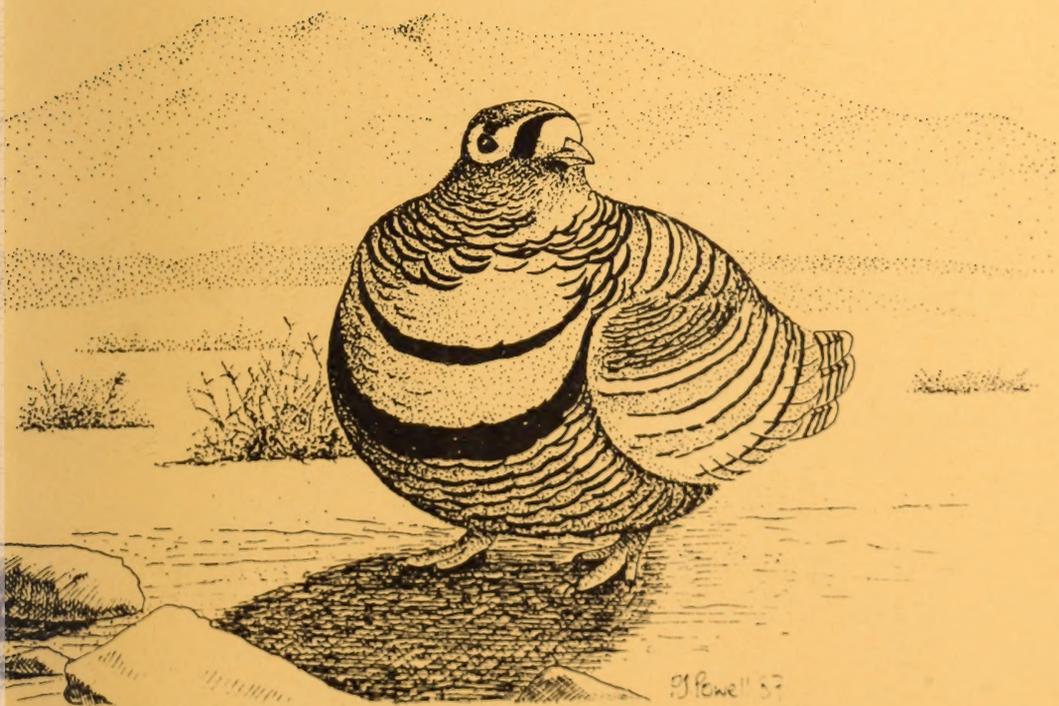


THE ORNITHOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY OF THE  
MIDDLE EAST



BULLETIN 21  
AUTUMN 1988

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 subject to the discretion of the Bulletin Editor. Contributions for the next bulletin should be sent to the Editor by 15 February 1989.

### Illustrations

We are grateful to the following artists for the illustrations used in this bulletin:

S. M. Andrews: Arabian Accentor (p.6), Golden-winged Grosbeak (p.8) and Houbara Bustard (p.42).

P. J. Powell: Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse (front cover).

APRIL BIRD OBSERVATIONS IN THE YEMEN ARAB REPUBLIC (NORTH YEMEN),  
1987

Rod Martins

This note documents selected observations of 50 species in the YAR made by myself and others, mainly during a natural history tour, from 3 to 22 April 1987. The status and distribution of birds in the YAR (and south-west Arabia in general) was, until recently, poorly known and documented. The subject has, however, now undergone exhaustive review (Brooks, Evans, Martins and Porter 1987) and most comments refer to the state of knowledge as presented there. Records detailed expand knowledge of breeding biology, the dates of trans-Arabian peninsula passage and provide additional records of species for which there are few published observations or where status and distribution is still inadequately understood. New information is included on several of south-west Arabia's poorly-known endemics.

Little Grebe Tachybaptus ruficollis

One on pools below Ma'rib new dam, 15th. The first record from the Interior desert.

Squacco Heron Ardeola ralloides

Up to three at Ta'izz lagoons, 7-8th. No previous observations in April of this passage migrant.

Abdim's Stork Ciconia abdimii

Six pairs with nests atop huts in a village 5km north-east of Al Midman (perhaps Al Mighlaf) and seven soaring over Zabid on 11th.

Glossy Ibis Plegadis falcinellus

Six at Ma'rib new dam, 15th, were clearly on passage. Apparently the first record from the Interior desert.

Bald Ibis Geronticus eremita

Brooks et al (1987) highlighted the need for further information to fully clarify the status of species in the YAR. A search of all short-turf grazing marshland areas (the areas of which have decreased by about 30% since the same time last year, as a result of deep-ploughing) in the immediate vicinity of Ta'izz, where the species has been seen in recent years, failed to locate any birds, as with a similar search in 1986 (Martins 1986). The view that records from the YAR relate to wintering birds, returning to their breeding grounds, (presumed to be Birecik in south-east Turkey) before April, is thus reinforced. It is suggested that the possibility that recent records from the YAR could arise from the

existence of a separate population resident in south-west Arabia should now be discarded.

Greater Flamingo Phoenicopterus ruber

One at Ta'izz sewage lagoons on 7th and one at Ma'rib dam on 14th. Both birds were sub-adults and had departed the following day. The bird at Ma'rib is the first record for the Interior desert.

Pintail Anas acuta

Five at Ta'izz sewage lagoons, 7th-8th; six at Ma'rib, 13th - the second record from the Interior desert. Apparently the first April records.

Garganey Anas querquedula

About 100 at Ta'izz sewage lagoons on 6th, 30 remaining on 7th; five at Ma'rib on 14th, six on 15th. The Ta'izz flock is the largest recorded and the Ma'rib records are the first for the Interior desert, extending the latest known spring passage date by three days.

Shoveler Anas clypeata

Two at Ta'izz sewage lagoons on 6th. Apparently the first April record.

Pochard Aythya ferina

Four at Ta'izz sewage lagoons, 6th-7th.

Tufted Duck Aythya fuligula

One at Ta'izz sewage lagoons, 7th; six (three pairs) at Ma'rib 15th - the second record from the Interior desert. Previously unrecorded in spring after February.

Montagu's Harrier Circus pygargus

Three on the Tihamah near Al Mukayminiyah on 11th were clearly birds on passage. Additionally, six distant slim ring-tailed harriers were almost certainly this species. These are the first records which clearly demonstrate spring passage (one previous record in February could conceivably have been a wintering bird).

Goshawk Accipiter gentilis

A migrant moving northward north of Qa'Bakil (near Ma'bar) on 6th is the first record for the YAR. The bird was seen very well and identified by RM and Gunter Groh on the following features: large size (significantly larger than a female Sparrowhawk), rather long

wings with distinct S-shape to trailing edge of wing formed by "bulging" secondaries, (hence 'arm' of wing rather broad), entire underside of wings appearing white at distance (but indistinct barring on all of underside of wings visible when directly overhead at close range) and distinct broad dark ear-covert patch.

Sparrowhawk Accipiter nisus

One arriving off the sea, Mocha, 9th.

Shikra Accipiter badius

A pair regularly calling with at least one individual collecting sticks and adding them to a partially constructed nest in woodland near Hajja, 13th. The first recorded nest in the YAR, though there are two previous firm indications that breeding occurs.

Tawny Eagle Aquila rapax

An active nest, with a bird incubating and its mate in close attendance, in a large tree in Wadi Sharas, near Hajja (per N.J. Redman) is only the second proven breeding record. Brooks et al. (1987) made no mention of its occurrence on the Tihamah though observations on its eastern fringe in spring are mentioned by Cornwallis and Porter (1982) and it has been recorded in the drier western section, both in spring - a pair observed by RM - and autumn (OSME Expedition data).

Lesser Kestrel Falco naumanni

A flock of seven between Az Zaydiyah and Al Qanawis, 12th; two at Ma'rib, 16th, (G. Groh, P. Rathbone).

Saker Falco cherrug

One at Ta'izz marsh, 7th. The first April record.

Philby's Rock Partridge Alectoris philbyi

Three (including a pair) near Qaratil (between Sana'a and Shibam) on 4th, five at the summit (3,666 metres) and 15 lower down (c.2,750 metres) on Jabal an Nabi Shu'ayb, 5th. Intermittent territorial calling noted between 0800 and 0815 hours at the first locality and between 1240 and 1310 hours at the second. Two different alarm calls (the second perhaps a normal flight call also) were noted when birds were flushed - a hysterical "cha-cha-cha-cha-...", very rapidly repeated 15-20 times and a loud squealing "wheee" with a strong emphasis on the last part of the note, lasting about a second, but followed by the same note repeated almost immediately. This call recalled the screaming of a falcon or a captured hare Lepus sp. Both calls were delivered in flight, the second continuously for the duration of a long downward flight.

Occasionally they were combined as in "whee-whee, cha-cha-cha-cha-cha-cha-". Territorial calls were as previously described, (Martins 1986) an alternative description being "cha-ku-ku-ku", sometimes with the latter "ku" notes speeded up to produce a sound reminiscent of the "gobbling" call of a domestic Turkey.

Arabian Red-legged Partridge Alectoris melanocephala

Seven at Kawkaban, 4th; two in mixed low bushes and Euphorbia scrub near Ta'izz sewage lagoons, 7th; five at Hajja and six near As Suq (east of Hajja) on 12th. A call uttered by foraging birds at Kawkaban was "qwick, qwick, qwick", sounding like a distant Rock Nuthatch, Sitta neumayer and an alarm call delivered in flight when flushed was "choouw, choouw...", repeated eight times.

Little Button Quail Turnix sylvatica

Two in crops on the Tihamah about 10km south-east of Al Qanawis, 12th - the second record for the YAR. The small size, rather uniform pale brown upperparts, extremely short rounded wings, short tail, whitish underparts with broad orange patch on flanks (observed on one bird only), yellow iris and rapidly "whirring" flight were noted.

Water Rail

One heard at Ta'izz marsh on 8th. One previous spring (April) record from the same locality.

Little Crake Porzana parva

One at Ma'rib on 14th and at least eight on 15th, though these could have been present on 14th also. The second (mid) April record and the first for the Interior desert.

Coot Fulica atra

Four at Ma'rib on 14th, one remaining on 15th, indicating active passage on these dates. The first record for the Interior desert.

Avocet Recurvirostra avocetta

Eighteen at Ta'izz sewage lagoons on 7th and 8th; two at Ma'rib on 14th and three on 15th - the first record for the Interior desert.

Spotted Thick-knee Burhinus capensis

One in poor croplands and degraded Euphorbia scrub near Ta'izz marsh, 7th; a pair in a small patch of Acacia tortilis woodland 15km east of Al Qutay, 10th and a pair in climax Acacia/Euphorbia woodland 5km north-east of Al Midman, 11th. They must surely breed, though proof is still awaited.

Snipe Gallinago gallinago

One at Ma'rib on 15th, the first record for the Interior desert, extending the dates of spring passage by two days.

Redshank Tringa totanus

One at Ma'rib on 15th, the first record for the Interior desert.

Slender-billed Gull Larus genei

Two at Ma'rib on 15th - the first record from the Interior desert (all previous records are from the Red Sea coast).

African Scops Owl Otus senegalensis

A pair calling, occasionally dueting, in mixed groves of Walnut, Apricot and Almond trees at Hadda between 1845 and 2000 hours on the nights of 18th and 19th. From the location of the calls it appeared that the birds normally kept 50-100 metres apart, though a bird was joined by its mate on the same branch for about 30 seconds, on one occasion. The first definite record from the Highland plateau. (There is one probable spring record from Wadi Dahr.)

Nubian Nightjar Caprimulgus nubicus

One seen well and heard singing plus another, heard only, in climax Acacia/Euphorbia woodland c.5km north-east of Al Midman, 11th. Song a loud emphatic two-note "whow-whow" with most emphasis on the "-ho-" part of the note. This song was sometimes followed by a lower pitched four-note "whow-whow-whow-whow-" and a low note like a broody domestic chicken "bruur-bruuur-bruuur-bruuur-", typically repeated about eight times.

Bee-eater Merops apiaster

Twenty-nine at Ta'izz sewage lagoons 7th; 46 near Al Midman on 11th. Both flocks were at high altitude, on an easterly heading and were clearly migrating. Perhaps not as uncommon on spring passage as previously thought.

Wryneck Jynx torquilla

One at Kawkaban, 4th, (D. Coutts, P. Rathbone); one at Walah, Highland plateau, (D. Hosking), 6th.

Arabian Woodpecker Dendrocopus dora

Seven in riparian woodland, (mainly dominant species Cordia abyssinica) 2km north of Hajja, 10th-11th, including a pair repeatedly bringing food items to a nesting hole at about 25 metres height in a large, dead tree-trunk, (ten visits in 30 minutes -

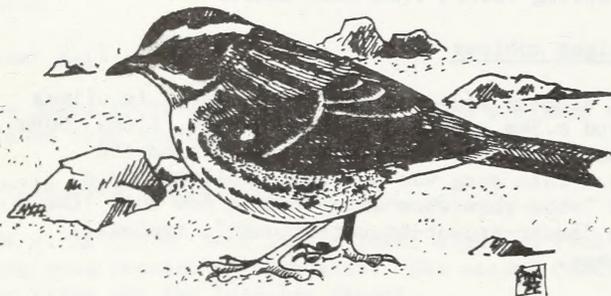
G. Groh). It is presumed that the nest contained unfledged young and this is the first recorded breeding in spring. Birds were seen to feed by gleaning from the uppermost twigs in the canopy of figs as well as foraging in the usual way. The species is clearly less closely associated with Acacia than the literature suggests.

Black-crowned Finch Lark Eremopterix nigriceps

Remarkably scarce on the Tihama compared to autumn (c.f. OSME Expedition data) and spring 1986, (Martins 1986) thus movements must occur and breeding may be irregular, opportunistic and non-annual. An apparently tired individual, presumably forced to ground by an intense rain storm at Ta'izz sewage lagoons (P. Rathbone) where the species is normally absent, is further evidence of movements.

Hoopoe Lark Alaemon alaudipes

Two in song and displaying (song-flights) near Ma'rib on 16th indicate breeding in the Interior desert. Previously thought to occur on the western Tihama only.



Arabian Accentor Prunella fagani

A nest with two eggs at Kawkaban, 4th, is the second observed. Further details will appear elsewhere (Martins and Groh in prep.). The first recorded nest, at the same site and probably built by the same pair, contained three pulli on 9th April 1986 (Martins 1986).

Black Bush Robin Cercotrichas podobe

Pairs and singing birds at Ma'rib, 15th, indicate breeding in the Interior desert.

Whinchat Saxicola rubetra

One at Ta'izz sewage lagoons, 7th.

Isabelline Wheatear Oenanthe isabellina

None seen, confirming the apparent scarcity of this species in spring/April. (A common autumn passage migrant.)

Hooded Wheatear Oenanthe monacha

A male on a lava flow 5km north-west of Ma'rib on 14th appeared to be holding territory (two conflicts with a Desert Lark Ammomanes deserti observed). The seventh record, the second in spring (previously March). There is one other post-1936 record and the status of this poorly known species remains unclear. It has perhaps been overlooked as, with one exception, all previous records are from the seldom-visited eastern regions.

Yemen Thrush Turdus menachensis

Two at Kawkaban, 4th; six at Wadi Maytam south of Ibb, 8th; four 2km north of Hajja, 13th. A three-note song heard at Kawkaban (1130-1230) and Wadi Maytam (0930), where a pair were clearly occupying a territory comprising an area of scattered Acacia over agricultural fields. Song was usually a simple "bu, preek-boo", the first note sometimes omitted, sometimes followed by "prrruck", recalling Yellow-vented Bulbul Pycnonotus xanthropygos, though less liquid.

Yemen Warbler Parisoma buryi

One at Kawkaban, 4th; seven in Wadi Maytam, south of Ibb, where, apparently, the second recorded nest containing three pulli, was found. Further details will appear elsewhere (Martins and Groh in prep.).

Barred Warbler Sylvia nisoria

Recorded 4th-16th; one at Kawkaban, 4th, is the second record from highland regions; remarkably abundant at Wadi Siham near Jabal Bura where 150 on 10th and near Al Midman, where 500 on 11th, corresponding closely to April observations in 1986 (Martins 1986) and demonstrating that this must be one of the commonest spring passage migrants in lowland regions.

Spotted Flycatcher Muscicapa striata

One in Wadi Siham near Jabal Bura, 10th.

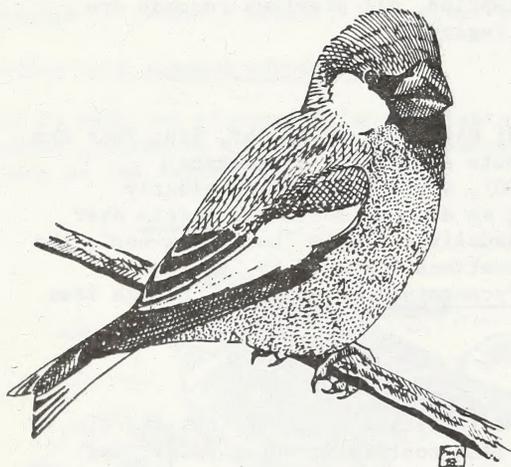
Gambaga Dusky Flycatcher Muscicapa gambagae

One singing 16.4km by road south-west of Ma'bar, 6th; one near Ta'izz sewage lagoons, 7th; five (including two pairs) in Wadi Maytam, south of Ibb, 8th; up to five, including a pair, at Hadda

(2,500 metres) 17th-18th. The last locality is on the Highland plateau, where the species has been recorded from few localities.

Shining Sunbird Nectarinia habessinica

Absent from climax Acacia/Euphorbia woodland 5km south-east of Al Midman, where common in pairs in autumn (OSME Expedition data). Clearly, seasonal movements associated with breeding occur.



Golden-winged Grosbeak Rhynchostruthus socotranus

Eleven, including seven juveniles in agricultural fields near Ta'izz sewage lagoons, 7th.

Trumpeter Finch Bucanetes githagineus

Up to 15 in the Ma'rib area, 14th-15th. Pairs and display flight noted. The fifth record - status previously considered unclear, though it now appears likely that the species does breed in the Interior desert.

House Bunting Emberiza striolata

One near Naqil Bin Ghaylan, 14th; up to 15 (including pairs) at several localities around Ma'rib, 14th-15th. Though very local elsewhere in the YAR, it is now clear that this species is not uncommon in the Interior desert.

### Ortolan Bunting Emberiza hortulana

One at Shibam, 4th; two in Wadi Maytam, south of Ibb, seemed extremely tired and are presumed to be birds on active passage grounded by torrential rain.

### References

Brooks, D. J., M. I. Evans, R. P. Martins & R. F. Porter (1987). The Status of Birds in North Yemen and the Records of the OSME Expedition in Autumn 1985. Sandgrouse 9: 4-66.

Martins, R. (1986). Spring observations on the birds of North Yemen. OSME Bull. 17: 2-13.

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### SELECTED BIRD OBSERVATIONS FROM THE FARASAN ISLANDS Tony Juniper

The Farasan Islands lie at the southern end of the Red Sea in Saudi Arabian waters. The main archipelago is situated in the southern portion of the Farasan bank between 16°20'N and 17°10'N and 41°30'E and 42°30'E. There are about 40 named islands the largest of which is Farasan Kebir.

During March and April 1988 a team from the Saudi Arabian National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development (NCWCD) and the Ecology and Conservation Unit of University College London undertook fieldwork to collect information for conservation management plans. Three sites were visited one of which was the Farasan Islands. Apart from holding an important population of Arabian Gazelle Gazella gazella the main features of conservation interest are related to the marine and littoral environments. Coral ecosystems, Rhizophora mangrove stands, populations of marine reptiles and mammals and colonies of breeding seabirds are important in either a national or international context. Most of the seabirds nest outside the time of our visit and it is not possible to comment on these; however, Jennings (1988) has dealt with the status of these species and there is little to add. Another ornithological feature which may be of importance in conservation terms are numbers of visiting shorebirds and terrestrial migrants but at this stage it is impossible to estimate their numbers or to assign significance.

Although little systematic ornithological work took place our observations revealed five "new" species of terrestrial bird which are possibly breeding. Breeding of the Kentish Plover Charadrius alexandrinus was also proved. The five "new" possible breeders are as follows:

**Black Kite** Milvus migrans A pair (not of the arabs race) were observed carrying nest material into a palm on Segid which is the second largest island.

**Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis* Several individuals, including at least one pair, were observed around the date palm plantation in a settled part of Segid. This species is currently showing range expansion and suitable habitat conditions exist for breeding.

**White-browed Coucal** *Centropus superciliosus* A pair were seen in the Acacia/Commiphora/Salvadora scrub in the north-eastern portion of Farasan Kebir. They are known to occupy similar habitat and breed on the nearby mainland, however there is little freshwater here and this is thought to be a preferred habitat feature (Hollom et al. 1988).

**Little Owl** *Athene noctua* One individual was seen emerging from a hole in a tree on Farasan Kebir.

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus* A female was seen in the port area of Farasan Kebir and a male in a village some distance away. When this species is present breeding is thought likely to occur.

Jennings lists only 11 other land birds breeding here and remarks that he considers this a low number. The fact that a further possible five were added through our observations emphasises the paucity of data which exist concerning this area.

Several of the mainland birds which have a predominantly Afrotropical distribution have been observed on the islands. As well as White-browed Coucal we noted Bruce's Green Pigeon *Treron waalia*, and Abyssinian Roller *Coracias abyssinica* has been noted previously (Jennings 1988). This might suggest that such species are still in contact with "parent" populations. Bruce's Green Pigeons are absent from Arabian breeding areas during the winter and observations from the Farasans (especially in spring) would indicate a migration to Africa. There is also the possibility that breeding may occur.

Recommendations for the management of a national park or nature reserve of some kind will include the initiation of detailed research which will help to quantify the importance of the islands. On the island of Qumma a large scale bird trapping operation was found to be in progress. This activity provides an example of how research may be dovetailed with conservation in a proposal for management. The island lacks any tall or dense vegetation, all of the trees having been incorporated in bird traps. Piles of sticks and branches are covered with old fishing nets to form something similar to a Heligoland trap. Some are substantial constructions and measure ten metres in length and four metres in height. The island is permanently settled and a large portion of the subsistence economy is based upon wild animals; fish, supplemented with turtle and bird eggs, forms a large part of the diet. The only source of animal fat for cooking is derived from migrant passerines. Shrikes *Lanius* sp., because of their large size, are the most popular and the most frequently caught birds but the islanders estimated that

they take between 50 and 60 different kinds. It became apparent that trapping during the spring forms an integral part of the cultural life of the island and to totally ban this activity may be counter-productive in terms of the good will lost. Some mutilation of birds was observed, mostly by removing flight feathers to provide playthings for children, but otherwise birds were seen to be expertly handled. It has been suggested by Peter Symens of the Saudi Arabian Taif Wildlife Research Centre that ringing be established during passage periods. Locals could be paid a small bounty for each bird presented for ringing. The islanders were found to have a deep knowledge and appreciation of birds and it is felt that this would be a viable proposition. Such a scheme would contribute to research and conservation whilst minimising cultural interference, this is a particularly important consideration in the management of wildlife which forms part of the economic welfare of local people.

This work was undertaken as part of a contract commissioned by the NCWCD whose authorisation and financial assistance we gratefully acknowledge.

### References

Jennings, M. C. (1988). A Note on the Birds of the Farasan Islands, Red Sea, Saudi Arabia. Fauna of Saudi Arabia 9: 457-467.

Hollom, P. A. D., Porter, R. F., Christensen, S., Willis, I. (1988). The Birds of the Middle East and North Africa. Calton.

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### A NEST OF THE YEMEN WARBLER

Christian Bräuning

On 29 March 1988 during a birdwatching trip in the Yemen Arab Republic I visited Wadi Maytam about one kilometre south of Ibb in the hope of finding the Yemen Warbler Parisoma buryi. There, in a plantation with some rows of large trunked trees, I saw one Yemen Warbler fly into an acacia and perch on a branch. The bill of the bird was full of food. After a short period, it flew into a blackberry bush growing at the foot of the tree. When I approached the bush, the male and the female were flitting through the dense branches of the tree giving a loud warning call. The male even began to sing. I carefully inspected the bush and found a nest positioned about one metre above the ground. It held three nestlings about three or four days old. According to the paper by D. J. Brooks (Sandgrouse 9: 90-93), this is the first nest of the Yemen Warbler to be found in the Yemen Arab Republic.

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OSME SITES REGISTER SCHEME

Mike Evans

Progress Report N° 3

The Sites Register Scheme was launched by OSME in 1983 as a way in which members could document important sites for birds in the Middle East. For further details about how the scheme operates readers should refer to Bulletin 10: 1-3 or write to the Honorary Secretary for details.

In the three years since the last progress report (Collar 1986), 57 'new' site forms have been sent in by 14 contributors, taking the total number of site forms held by the scheme to 172. The new forms cover seven countries (number of new forms in brackets): Egypt (11), Jordan (1), Lebanon (1), Qatar (4), Saudi Arabia (4), Turkey (26) and United Arab Emirates (10). As in the previous progress report, the scheme has still not received any site forms for the following countries: Bahrain, Iran, Kuwait, Libya, Oman and South Yemen. The individual sites are listed below country by country, arranged from south to north with latitude/longitude co-ordinates where these were given, and with the form compiler's name(s).

Egypt

Umm Agawish el-Kebir	27°10'N 33°53'E	D.Parr
Giftun el-Saghir	27°12'N 33°58'E	D.Parr
Abu Minqar	27°13'N 33°52'E	D.Parr
Giftun Kebir	27°14'N 33°55'E	D.Parr
Shadwan	27°30'N 34°00'E	D.Parr
Tawila	27°35'N 33°46'E	D.Parr
Umm el-Heimat Saghira	27°38'N 33°40'E	D.Parr
Umm el-Heimat	27°40'N 33°38'E	D.Parr
South Qeisum	27°41'N 33°43'E	D.Parr
North Qeisum	27°42'N 33°41'E	D.Parr
Ashrafi Islands	27°47'N 33°41'E	D.Parr

Jordan

Petra and surroundings	30°20'N 35°27'E	J.Wittenberg
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Lebanon

Nahr el Hasbani	-	B.Meling
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Qatar

Sand Plant Pools	25°04'N 51°13'E	R.L. & I.A.G.Gardner
Abu Nakhala New Ponds	25°10'N 51°23'E	R.L. & I.A.G.Gardner
Wadi as Sameer Old Ponds	25°14'N 51°30'E	R.L. & I.A.G.Gardner
Bir Al Husayn Oasis	25°32'N 50°57'E	R.L. & I.A.G.Gardner

Saudi Arabia

Khaybar Salt Marsh	25°42'N 39°59'E	M.C.Jennings
Harrat al Harrah Reserve	31°00'N 38°50'E	M.C.Jennings
Jebels Aja and Selma	-	M.C.Jennings
Wabbah Crater	-	M.C.Jennings

Turkey

15km W. of Finike	36°15'N 30°02'E	Major D.J.R.Counsell
Göksu Delta	36°20'N 34°00'E	D.J.Wood
Göksu Delta	-	R.J.Safford
Metruk Tuzla	37°10'N 27°36'E	Major D.J.R.Counsell
Bafa Gölü	37°30'N 27°25'E	D.J.Wood
Bafa Gölü	-	J.K.R.Melrose
Salda Gölü	37°35'N 29°40'E	D.J.Wood
Beysehir Gölü	37°40'N 31°40'E	D.J.Wood
Acigöl	37°50'N 29°50'E	D.J.Wood
Acigöl	-	J.K.R.Melrose
Egridir Gölü	38°00'N 30°50'E	D.J.Wood
Aksehir Gölü	38°30'N 31°25'E	D.J.Wood
Marmara Gölü	38°35'N 28°00'E	D.J.Wood
Erçek Gölü	38°40'N 43°35'E	D.J.Wood
Nemrut Dag (incl. Gölü)	-	P.S.A.Allday
Apolyont Gölü	-	J.K.R.Melrose
Erdek	-	J.K.R.Melrose
Unnamed Gölü	-	R.J.Safford
Sazlipinar Marsh	-	R.J.Safford
Demirkazik	-	R.J.Safford
Hills W. of Gaziantep	-	R.J.Safford
Eregli Marshes	-	R.J.Safford
Akkaya	-	R.J.Safford
Birecik	-	R.J.Safford
Kulu Gölü	-	R.J.Safford
Central Plateau (four small sites)	-	R.J.Safford

United Arab Emirates

Jebel Ali Hotel Grounds	24°59'N 55°01'E	C.Richardson
Settlement Ponds/Fish Farm	25°12'N 55°18'E	C.Richardson
Dubai Creek Mudflats (Khor Dubai)	25°13'N 55°20'E	C.Richardson
Mina Khalid (Sharjah Main Port)	25°22'N 55°23'E	Captain D.M.Simpson
Siniya (Siniyyah) Island	25°39'N 55°39'E	C.Richardson
Digdaga Agricultural Research Station	-	S.J.Tyler
Dhayah Creek and nearby Sandspit	-	S.J.Tyler
Ras al Khaimah Gravel Plain and Mountains	-	S.J.Tyler

Khawr Khalba	-	S.J.Tyler
Marid, Ras al Khaimah	-	S.J.Tyler

The large number of forms for Turkey is particularly pleasing; the scheme also received from I. Green details on a further 11 Turkish sites in the form of ICBP 'Important Bird Areas in Europe' forms, plus annotated maps for two further sites. The latter information has been transferred to Site Register forms.

I would like to thank all the people who have contributed to the scheme over the past three years. Their hard work is much appreciated; many little-known areas have been documented, often in great detail. An analysis of the site information held by the scheme is now in progress, to appear in the next bulletin, and in view of this I would like to encourage all members who are thinking of contributing to do so before the end of the year. The Sites Register Scheme is an excellent way of turning your local or holiday birdwatching into something of great use for conservation.

### Reference

Collar, N. J. (1986). OSME Sites Register Scheme. Progress Report N° 2. OSME Bull. 16: 8-11.

### LIBRARY REPORT

Geoff and Hilary Welch

The following items were amongst the literature received in the OSME Library during the last few months and may be of interest to members.

The Cyprus Ornithological Society (1970) Fourteenth Bird Report covering 1983 edited by C. Charalambides, M. Charalambides and P. Neophytou. This contains a systematic list detailing the 245 species recorded during the year; a Ringing Report; an account of the Royal Air Force Lyneham Ornithological Group Expedition of 1983; and a summary of the year's weather. The Society can be contacted via the Honorary Secretary P. Neophytou, 4 Kanaris Street, Strovolos 154, Cyprus.

Summary Report of an Ornithological Survey to Northern Saudi Arabia - 27 February to 26 March 1988 by M. C. Jennings. A privately published report giving brief details of a visit made to the northern border area with Kuwait, Iraq and Jordan; the Harrat al Harrah reserve; and the west and southern areas of the Nafud Desert. This trip, sponsored by the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development, was part of the ongoing Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Arabia project (ABBA) of which Mike Jennings is the Co-ordinator. A more detailed report on the birds of the Harrat al Harrah reserve is in preparation. More details of the ABBA project are available from Mike - 1 Eastcourt, Burbage, Wiltshire SN8 3AG, Great Britain.

OSME would also like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. J. R. Neighbour for his generous donation to the Library of copies of the Cyprus Ornithological Society (1957) Annual Reports covering the period 1969-1985 and 'A Guide to the Birds of Bahrain' by M. J. Strickland and M. D. Gallagher (1969).

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Bahrain Natural History Society Newsletter. Short bird notes in some monthly issues. (BNHS, P. O. Box 20336, Manama, Bahrain.)

Cyprus Ornithological Society (1957) Newsletter. Issued monthly. (COS (1957), P. O. Box 4319, Nicosia, Cyprus.)

Emirates Natural History Group (Abu Dhabi) Newsletter. Bird notes in most issues. (ENHG, P. O. Box 303, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.)

Gazelle - Dubai Natural History Group Newsletter. Bird notes in most monthly issues. (DNHG, P. O. Box 9292, Dubai, United Arab Emirates.)

Oman Bird News. (Oman Bird Records Committee, c/o P. O. Box 246, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman.)

Nature & Ornithological Society of North Yemen Newsletter.

Contains bird notes. (NOSY, c/o Mrs. Margaret Higgins, c/o British Veterinary Project (Sana'a, Y. A. R.), F. C. O. Bagroom Sana'a, 14 King Charles Street, London SW1A 2AR.)

Phoenix. (A newsletter compiled and distributed by M. C. Jennings for contributors to the Atlas of the breeding birds of Arabia in prep.). (M. C. Jennings, Moonraker Cottage, 1 Eastcourt, Burbage, Marlborough, Wilts.)

## LETTERS

Dear Sir

As one of the most remote and out-of-touch members, I can only sit back and wholeheartedly applaud the splendid and exciting contributions that others are making to the ornithology of the Middle East, at the same time envying them their opportunities of visiting and living in that enchanting part of the world.

However, not all records are as original as claimed. For instance, in OSME Bulletin 20: 42 the first record of the Fieldfare Turdus pilaris is given for Iraq, admittedly at second-hand. In fact, the species is quite well known for that country and there ought to be a specimen in the Iraqi Natural History Museum. References are in the Bulletins of the INHM Vol. 1(49) and Vol. 2(1 & 3) and in Ardea 51: 237-43. A similar over-optimistic claim for the occurrence of the Citrine Wagtail Motacilla citreola in Iraq was made in Sandgrouse 4: 66, overlooking records published in Bull. INHM 1(4): 34. Likewise, there has been an omission regarding the occurrence of the Shore Lark Eremophila alpestris in the southern Iraqi deserts (see Bull. INHM 1(4): 27).

One might go even a little further and suggest that the discovery of the spectacular migration of raptors at Eilat and along the Gulf of Aqaba was foreshadowed in Ibis 14(5): 277-8 for 1941 by observations near Hurghada in Egypt, almost opposite the entrance to the Gulf.

S. Marchant, Box 123, Moruya, NSW 2587, Australia.

## REVIEWS

A New List of the Birds of Masirah Island, Sultanate of Oman by T. D. Rogers. 1988. 48 pages. The Oman Bird Records Committee, P. O. Box 246, Sultanate of Oman.

Although long recognised for its importance to breeding seabirds and as a migration stop-over for many waders and passerines - the island

boasts a list of over 260 species - Masirah has been a difficult place on which to obtain detailed information. However, this has now been remedied in this very well compiled and presented booklet which provides all of the necessary information required by anyone birdwatching on the island. Besides the comprehensive systematic list, covering records up to November 1987, there are short sections on Masirah's climate and vegetation; a birdwatcher's calendar of ornithological events; a useful list of sites to visit with recommendations for timing; breeding birds; and five Appendices covering Species Not at Present Accepted, List of Observers, Wader Counts, Rainfall and Temperature (1966-75) and a Bibliography. There is also an Addendum with details of a further four species added to the island's list since the main text was compiled. This is a valuable addition to the literature of this region and thoroughly recommended - at £2.00 plus postage it is excellent value for money.

Geoff Welch

Birds of Turkey 7, Acigol by Lieuwe J. Dijkzen and Max Kasperek.  
1988. Price £2.00 including postage from OSME Sales.

Acigol is a saline lake adjacent to the E24 road from Izmir to Afyon in south-west Anatolia (the publication states E25 but on my map the road is labelled E24). The lake is the most westerly of a group of large lakes of which the best known is perhaps Burdur Gölü, which will be covered in the next number in the Birds of Turkey series. Birds of Turkey 7 also includes Calti Gölü, a small lake to the south-west of Acigol.

The booklet follows the now familiar layout of a general description of the lake and its surrounding area followed by its ornithological importance, other fauna, human activity and nature conservation, birdwatching and hints for birdwatchers. The bulk of the booklet (21 pages) gives the status of the 203 bird species recorded in the area. There is a Turkish summary and reference list at the end.

Most birdwatching activity has been in the spring (April/May) but only 22 species have been confirmed as breeding. The most important of these are Common Crane Grus grus, whose population appears to have been stable at about 12 pairs since the last century, and Great Bustard Otis tarda which appears to be declining markedly. The area is also important for breeding White Stork Ciconia ciconia, Ruddy Shelduck Tadorna ferruginea, Shelduck T. tadorna, Egyptian Vulture Neophron percnopterus, Marsh Harrier Circus aeruginosus, Black-winged Stilt Himantopus himantopus, Avocet Recurvirostra avosetta and Kentish Plover Charadrius alexandrinus but there is still much to clarify and discover. Greater Flamingos Phoenicopterus ruber might breed and confirmation is needed for Eagle Owl Bubo bubo, White-throated Robin Irania gutturalis and Fan-tailed Warbler Cisticola juncidis. The status of Lammergeier Gypaetus barbatus and Griffon Gyps Gyps fulvus and Black Aegyptius

monachus Vultures in the surrounding mountains, which apparently have never been visited by birdwatchers, needs checking. Evidence suggests a marked decline in recent decades.

The area is also important in the post breeding period for waders, gulls and terns and systematic counts between July and September would add greatly to our knowledge of the importance of the site.

Threats to the area appear to have been mainly from drainage with Calti Gölü drained from some hundreds of hectares to a mere 35 hectares in 1981. The lake held up to 3,230 Red-crested Pochard Netta rufina, 70,000 Pochard Aythya ferina and 40,000 Coot Fulica atra in winter so the drainage has been particularly detrimental for these species.

A NATO airbase is currently under construction and planes will fly low over Acigol at take-off and landing. The current hunting practices are unknown although a Common Crane was reported trapped some 20 years ago.

Many of the previous sites in the Birds of Turkey series have been away from the main tourist areas of Turkey. Acigol, however, is in easy reach of tourist centres. It is hoped that this publication will stimulate visits to Acigol and establish its importance particularly in the post-breeding summer period.

Simon Albrecht

Der Bafasee: Natur und Geschichte in der türkischen Ägäis by Max Kasperek. 1988. Heidelberg: Max Kasperek Verlag. 174pp, paperback, DM 34-50 (obtainable from the author, Bleich Str. 1, 6900 Heidelberg, West Germany).

This is a study of both history and natural history at Bafa Gölü in south-west Turkey. It is a somewhat curious combination, but clearly a powerful one for the tourist. Bafa Gölü has an enormously rich cultural heritage, and Kasperek's photographs, plans and sketches of ancient buildings and their features flesh out over 40 pages of text devoted to the long history of the area. Another 27 pages go on plants (24 of them being a mere list of species), five on mammals, 32 on birds and 12 on other animals.

The bird list records 256 species for the lake and its shores, with an average of around three lines of annotation per species; much the longest entries are for the waterbirds. It is very largely these "waterbirds" that make Bafa Gölü of major international importance for conservation (the numbers in brackets indicate estimated pairs): Pygmy Cormorant Phalacrocorax pygmeus (10), Little Bittern Ixobrychus minutus (10), Night Heron Nycticorax nycticorax (10-20), Squacco Heron Ardeola ralloides (5-10), Little Egret Egretta garzetta (100), Purple Heron Ardea purpurea (5-10), White Stork Ciconia ciconia (<25), Ruddy Shelduck Tadorna ferruginea (20-30),

White-tailed Eagle Haliaeetus albicilla (2-3), Short-toed Eagle Circaetus gallicus (>5), Marsh Harrier Circus aeruginosus (1-2), Long-legged Buzzard Buteo rufinus (<5), Lesser Kestrel Falco naumanni (<25), Black-winged Stilt Himantopus himantopus (>10), White-breasted Halcyon smyrnenensis (1-2) and Pied Kingfishers Ceryle rudis (1-2). Great concentrations of wintering waterfowl occur with an astonishing 400,000 Coot Fulica atra recorded in December 1986.

The natural history in this book is a labour of accumulation rather than of synthesis. More emphasis on describing and mapping habitats, and integrating animal species distributions accordingly, would have made a more user-friendly guide. Nevertheless, it remains an indispensable companion to the area, and a powerful stimulus to its conservation.

N. J. Collar

Report on an Ornithological Survey of the Asir National Park, Saudi Arabia, 29 June to 18 July 1987 by M. C. Jennings, M. I. al Salama and H. M. Felemban. 76pp. Technical Report N° 4, National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development, Riyadh.

The last three years have been a period of remarkable progress for wildlife conservation in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Hitherto, only Oman had any track record of note in this field, but the creation of the NCWCD in 1986 by Royal Decree has quickly established a leading role for the Kingdom in the conservation of the peninsula's flora and fauna. This report is one of a rapidly growing series of policy documents, research papers and survey reports resulting from work being sponsored by NCWCD. A particularly welcome aspect is the emphasis given to participation by Saudi biologists so they can receive training in field skills.

Asir National Park and its environs constitute one of the most spectacular and important areas for wildlife in the Kingdom. Just high enough to condense water from clouds and to catch the tip of the south-west monsoon to grow juniper forest and plunging down the Asir scarp to the torrid heat of the coastal desert in the Tihama plain, the area is a microcosm of the peninsula's habitats. The authors, who worked principally around Jebel Sooda, found 41 bird species definitely breeding here, with a total of 83 species possibly breeding, including all of the nine truly endemic landbirds of the region. The report includes much useful information on the geomorphology, climate and ecology of the Park, and appendices provide a systematic list of all birds observed, biometric and moult data on birds caught and a summary of the breeding status of the birds present. One chapter deals with the environmental problems of Jebel Sooda which, unusually for Arabia, include pressure from tourist development. The report also sets out some helpful recommendations for further survey and conservation measures.

Paul Goriup

A Check-list of the Birds of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan: an Ecological Outlook by A. M. Disl and A. H. Bouran. 1987. 152 pages. Paperback. Department of Biological Sciences, University of Jordan, Amman. No price given.

This is the first annotated list of the birds of Jordan that has ever been published. Distribution, habitats, feeding and breeding details are given for each species. However, only the data on distribution refers specifically to Jordan. Although published in an Arabian country, this check-list is in English. This may account for a number of misprints, but not for a certain lack of up-to-date information. For example, data from the very important contributions by Wallace (Sandgrouse 4: 77-99 and 5: 1-18) are not incorporated.

Unfortunately, a considerable number of factual errors diminish the value of this check-list. The supposedly systematic sequence of species has been mixed up completely, Apodiformes, for instance, appear between Anseriformes and Charadriiformes. The Water Rail Rallus aquaticus is presented twice, as number 73 and number 173 with different texts! Several species mentioned in the literature for Jordan are missing; Ostrich Struthio camelus (extinct), Brown Booby Sula leucogaster (vagrant Aqaba), Marbled Duck Marmaronetta angustirostris (vagrant Azraq), Ring-necked Parakeet Psittacula krameri (introduced Aqaba, Amman) and House Crow Corvus splendens (introduced Aqaba). Other species, however, have been included only on the authority of the small distribution maps in Heinzel et al. (1972) or of vague citations from literature (e.g. Delacour), for instance Dotterel Charadrius morinellus (incorrectly "summer visitor"), Demoiselle Crane Anthropoides virgo and Lesser White-fronted Goose Anser erythropus (both wrongly "in all parts of Jordan") as well as Little Gull Larus minutus, Stock Dove Columba oenas and Ring Ouzel Turdus torquatus. Some of the species mentioned for the Jordan valley do in fact occur there but have been observed, it seems, only outside the boundaries of Jordan (including the Westbank), for example Brown Fish Owl Ketupa zeylonensis (and Black-headed Plover?). Two wheatear species Eastern Pied Wheatear Oenanthe picata and Black Wheatear Oenanthe leucura must also be excluded, since both observations are due to confusion with the almost black subspecies of the Mourning Wheatear Oenanthe lugens. Several species are by no means only migrants or even accidentals, but actually breeding, such as Bonelli's Eagle Hieraaetus fasciatus and - only recently - Pied Kingfisher Ceryle rudis, Cetti's Warbler Cettia cetti and Spanish Sparrow Passer hispaniolensis. On the other hand, a number of species are wrongly quoted from Benson (1970) for Azraq, although the source mentions them without a location, e.g. as breeding birds: Lammergeier Gypaetus barbatus, Black Francolin Francolinus francolinus and Tristram's Grackle Onychognathus tristramii. The range of the Palestine Sunbird Nectarinia osea is by no means restricted to the Rift Valley (also Petra, Wadi Rum etc.). Habitat characterisations, too, are frequently quite wrong, e.g. for the Pin-tailed Sandgrouse Pterocles

alchata "found in forests"! Some of the skins in national collections ought to be re-examined (e.g. Goliath Heron Ardea goliath).

The publications by Wallace have been justly recognised as important in the introduction, but for many species they were in fact disregarded. The valuable work by Hollom (1959) was also largely ignored, while other publications constantly quoted in the check-list (e.g. Alomia 1976) are missing from the list of references.

The present check-list is a 'Publication of the University of Jordan'. It seems strange that this exercise in diligence - apparently produced exclusively at the computer desk - should not have been submitted to the scrutiny of expert field ornithologists. So far, the latter seem to exist only in foreign countries, especially in Europe. Perhaps it was false national pride that led to a scientific publication containing so many avoidable errors. It is to be hoped that a thoroughly revised new edition will follow soon.

Jörg Wittenberg

Birds of the Middle East and North Africa. A companion guide by P. A. D. Hollom, R. F. Porter, S. Christensen & I. Willis, 1988. 280 pages. Forty colour plates and many line drawings. Poyser, Calton. £14.00.

"A much needed guide of unequalled excellence" is what the pre-publication blurb informs potential buyers. And although running the risk of preaching to the converted, I have to admit that Birds of the Middle East and North Africa definitely stands out in a positive way in the jungle of field guides currently available.

The book is a companion guide to field guides which cover Europe west of the Urals (notably A field guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe by Peterson, Mountford and Hollom). Most birdwatchers visiting areas from Morocco in the west to Turkey, Iran and the Arabian Peninsula in the east had to rely on The Birds of Britain and Europe with North Africa and the Middle East by Fitter, Heinzel and Parslow. The present field guide is very much better than any other available guide and Hollom, Porter, Christensen and Willis have produced a book which will become an essential component in the luggage of even the lightest travelling birder in the area.

The text for species which are excluded from or inadequately covered by PMH is lengthy, detailed, authoritative, up-to-date and surprisingly well-written. The typical esoteric birder's jargon is lacking, without having resulted in non-specific descriptions. The distribution maps are detailed and superior to the red- or blue-splashed minimaps in the average field guide. The text is sparsely enlivened with technical line drawings, of which those of

Steen Christensen are particularly illuminating (see for example the pelicans, Aquila eagles and gulls). The 40 colour plates are bound together in the middle of the book, and show all those species and subspecies which until now had to be searched for in a variety of handbooks, journals and obscure literature. It is indeed a pleasure to carry a book in which you cannot only find a detailed description of the Swift Tern, but also of Sind Pied Woodpecker, Small Skylark, Yemen Thrush, Upcher's Warbler, Streaked Weaver and Yemen Serin. Where appropriate, male, female and juvenile plumages are shown, as are subspecies typical for the area. This compilation of knowledge, hard-won over decades, will therefore be an indispensable source of reference to birdwatchers visiting the area.

But it is not all hail and praise. Firstly, the introductory chapter lasts only two and a half pages, only explaining the headings used for the species accounts. For an interesting area like North Africa and the Middle East lying at the junction of three continents and including many desert-dwelling species, this is a missed opportunity to give a short introduction to geographical distribution and ecological adaptations. Of course, these subjects have been dealt with in others books, but why not try to educate a monomaniacal public like birders?

Secondly, the colour plates are not fully satisfactory. Being well aware of the preponderance of desert-inhabiting species, and of their generally washed-out appearance, I still think that the palette of Ian Willis lacks the necessary gradations in brown, green and grey. Moreover, there are quite a few discrepancies between text and plates, particularly when dealing with the warblers (though I must admit to having checked only a few species). Warblers are extremely difficult to paint, which should have been an extra reason to delegate this task to a specialist. Minutiae like colouration of bill, legs, supercilium, wingbar and edgings of feathers, shape of the head and bill, extension and form of supercilium etc are all-important when dealing with nondescript warblers. Many of the aforementioned semi-trifles are wrongly depicted in for example Blyth's Reed Warbler, Clamorous Reed Warbler, Great Reed Warbler, Upcher's Warbler and Hume's Lesser Whitethroat (the latter is not even recognisable as such), just to mention a few. These problems are enhanced by the scale of reproduction (much too small). Whenever there is doubt whether to follow the text or the plate, it is preferable to rely on the text.

Whatever the criticisms, the publisher must be complimented on his modest use of superlatives in his advertisement; he must have been acquainted with the Dutch saying "excellent wine does not need a garland". The four authors/artists are to be congratulated with having set a landmark, which hopefully ends the over-production of mediocre field guides and heralds an era of quality.

Rob Bijlsma

The Birds of Africa Vol. III by C. H. Fry, S. Keith and E. K. Urban. 1988. pp. XVI + 611, 32 colour plates by Martin Woodcock, numerous line drawings by Ian Willis. London: Academic Press. £71.50.

Another masterpiece: this third volume of The Birds of Africa completes the non-passerines. It describes in detail, and illustrates beautifully Africa's parrots, turacos, cuckoos, owls, nightjars, swifts, colies, kingfishers and their allies, and woodpeckers and their allies. Although it may seem hard to believe Volume III is better than the previous two volumes. The layout has remained clear, attractive and easy to find one's way around and Martin Woodcock's plates are of a higher standard than those in Volumes I and II.

As in previous volumes each species account gives details of range and status, a description of field character, voice, general habits, food and breeding habits. Maps are used to convey not only distributions but also densities and migration routes. The simple, but often superb, black and white line drawings by Ian Willis are employed to show interesting or unusual postures and/or behaviour. Academic Press have once more excelled themselves in publishing a top quality book.

Altogether editors, authors, artists and publishers must be warmly congratulated on producing a real ornithologist's feast. I suggest we all tuck in.

Michael Rands

Check-list of the Birds of Israel by Haim Hovel. 1987. Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel, Tel-Aviv. 196 pages. A few line drawings and one map. £9.50.

Hot on the heels of Uzi Paz's The Birds of Israel (see Review OSME Bull. 18: 26-27), comes this second book on a country which was poorly documented prior to these two volumes. With Hadoram Shirihai currently at work on a third book we may soon have almost too many to choose from!

Following a four page introduction, the author has included a very useful gazetteer listing all the places mentioned in the text and giving their longitude and latitude. This is accompanied by a fold-out map of Israel showing the location of most of the important bird sites in Israel (though not all of them). The bulk of the book is taken up with a systematic list, followed by seven pages of references and both scientific and English indexes.

The systematic list is of course the main part of the book. All species recorded up to the end of 1984 are included and all of the subspecies occurring in Israel are listed and details given about them. For example the entry for Crested Lark Galerida cristata

lists four different subspecies and gives the world range for each and their status within Israel.

The status in Israel is perhaps the part of most interest to birdwatchers and this deserves examination in greater detail. The style in which this is presented is somewhat abbreviated, for example "Common passage and winter visitor near water, Israel and Sinai, July to May. Occurs in summer" for Common Sandpiper Actitis hypoleucos, but greater detail including a summary of individual records is given for most rarer species.

Unfortunately there is still a lack of really detailed information here and referring to Marsh Warbler Acrocephalus palustris I am told "Uncommon passage visitor, Israel and Sinai, September to October-November and March to May. Frequents reedbeds, low vegetation". This is certainly more useful than the very brief text in Paz's book but still doesn't really tell me how likely Marsh Warbler is in Elat in March, which is what I wanted to know. One advantage that Hovel's book has over that of Paz is that the names of the observers of all of the rarer records are given allowing a researcher to follow up and obtain more information from them if required. However, Hovel's accounts for the commoner species are much less detailed than those of Paz, Blackbird Turdus merula for example being covered in just eight lines as opposed to four fairly lengthy paragraphs.

The taxonomy and systematic order generally follows Voous with one or two changes due to more recent research. Cyprus Pied Wheatear Oenanthe cypriaca is given full status here, though I was puzzled by the absence of Pied Wheatear Oenanthe pleschanka from the list. The reader might conclude that any Pied Wheatear seen in Israel will be cypriaca, though this is certainly not the case.

The book is in paperback and is smaller than that of Paz, so it would be easier to carry around on a visit to Israel. If I had to choose between the two I would probably opt for this one, though I would undoubtedly want both books at home to refer to.

David Fisher

#### NEWS AND INFORMATION

(Compiled by Simon Albrecht)

The object of this section is to inform our readers about what is occurring in the OSME region. It is not intended as a definitive report or write-up of the projects concerned and consequently only those organisations directly involved are mentioned in the text. Most of the projects are sponsored by various agencies whose support is appreciated but this is generally not the place for them to be acknowledged by name.

### International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP) - New Home

After camping in Portakabins in a sheep field on the outskirts of Cambridge for several years the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP) has a new and permanent home. Their new accommodation in the centre of the village of Girton, a few miles from their old site, is far more in keeping with their increasingly important role in bird conservation. Whether the bird list gets as high on the new as on the old site remains to be seen. The new address is ICBP, 32 Cambridge Road, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0PJ, Great Britain. The telephone number remains the same: 0223-277318.

### Turkey - ICBP European Section Conference: 15-20 May 1989

The European Section of ICBP will hold its next conference in Adana from 15 to 20 May 1989. In addition to the usual business of the conference there will be a two-day workshop covering bird conservation in Turkey and migratory birds in Africa. Further details from DHKD, Pk 18, Bebek, Istanbul, Turkey or ICBP, 32 Cambridge Road, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0PJ, Great Britain.

### Second Mediterranean Seabird Symposium

The symposium will be held in Mallorca from 21 to 26 March 1989 and will deal with the status and conservation of seabirds. Speakers will be encouraged to concentrate on the population status of a single species rather than the birds of a particular location. It is hoped to broaden participation to include speakers from the Black Sea as well as the Mediterranean. Further details are available from Mediterranean Marine Bird Association, 20 rue St-Martin, 75004 Paris, France.

### Slender-billed Curlew - Conservation Programme

We have already reported on the plight of the Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* in the previous two bulletins. We are pleased to report that the ICBP have raised the money to support a project co-ordinator working three days per week for two years on its conservation. While a century ago it was the most abundant wader in Italy there may now be only 100 individuals left in the world and it is almost certainly the rarest migratory bird in the Western Palearctic.

The nesting area of the Slender-billed Curlew appears to be West Siberia, from Omsk to Novosibirsk in the marshy zone just south of the Taiga. It then migrates south-west through Turkey, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Romania, Greece, Austria and Italy to winter in Tunisia and Morocco. However, there have also been scattered records of the species wintering throughout the Middle East. In the last century the species wintered in Iran and Iraq and it is not impossible that some still winter there. The recent cease-fire offers the first opportunity for many years for birdwatchers (perhaps on

peace-keeping duties) to collect vital ornithological data from the outstanding wetlands bordering the two countries. Any information, both positive and negative, from anywhere in the Middle East would be much appreciated.

In 1987-1988 three individuals were located and studied in Morocco. The Slender-billed Curlew seems to be tamer than other waders allowing approach to within 30 metres. The implications for their vulnerability to hunting are clear. An account of this work has been written up and will be published in ICBP Study Report N° 29. A paper reviewing the status of the Slender-billed Curlew since 1900 is also in preparation and will be submitted to a scientific journal shortly.

If anyone is able to spend time surveying suitable wetlands for the species they should contact Adam Gretton (address below) and specify the country(ies) they are visiting and the time of year. Any confirmed sightings, preferably together with descriptions and information on habitat and behaviour, should also be sent to Adam. Please write to Adam Gretton, ICBP, 32 Cambridge Road, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0PJ, Great Britain. Tel: 0223-277318.

#### Turkey - Investigation into the Shooting and Catching of Birds

The report on Gernant Magnin's survey in 1987 is due to be published at the end of the year. We hope to give further details in the next bulletin.

#### Turkey - Important Bird Areas: Two Publications

In November 1988 ICBP is publishing its eagerly awaited book Important Bird Areas in Europe (ICBP Technical Publication N° 9, £19.50) which will provide data on the location, habitat, protection status and ornithological importance of some 2,200 sites from Greenland to Turkey. The study concentrated on globally threatened birds, species vulnerable and/or declining in Europe and migratory species that concentrate in large numbers on passage or in winter. It represents the first attempt to provide the basis for a planned and integrated network of sites for birds which will need to be protected if the avifauna is not to be irreversibly impoverished by the beginning of the 21st Century.

In May 1989, at the European Continental Section of ICBP in Adana on the Turkish Mediterranean coast, Important Bird Areas in Turkey will be published in Turkish to be distributed by Dogal Hayati Koruma Dernegi (DHKD - the Society for the Protection of Wildlife). The publication will be the result of a three-year project by ICBP and DHKD to identify the most important bird areas in Turkey. The project which has involved a team of field workers has identified some 80 sites covering over 1.5 million hectares. Not surprisingly, the majority of these sites are wetlands (over 60) and many of them are completely unprotected.

We look forward to reviewing these two publications in due course and in the meantime plan to publish a detailed review of the Turkish Important Bird Areas inventory in the next edition of the OSME Bulletin.

### Saudi Arabia - Conservation Planning (Contributed by Tony Juniper)

During March and April 1988 a team from the Ecology and Conservation Unit of University College London was engaged by the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development (NCWCD) to demonstrate conservation management planning.

NCWCD have recently undertaken a "conservation review" and short-listed around 30 sites of national or international importance. Fieldwork was undertaken in three sites and information collected upon which to base management plans. As well as producing finished plans it was important that NCWCD staff learn something about the format of management plans and the type of information required for their compilation.

Three areas in the south-west of the Kingdom were visited. The Raydah escarpment in the Asir mountains, a section of the Wadi Jizan system between the coastal plain and the Asir and the Farasan Islands in the southern portion of the Red Sea. Each site is important for different reasons but they share some or all of the following features. There are unique assemblages of animals and plants, an example is the wildlife of the Raydah Juniper forests. Here there is a high level of endemism, a relict Palearctic community and a nationally important selection of Afrotropical species. This is reflected in the bird community. Endemic species include Yemen Thrush Turdus menachensis and Yemen Linnet Carduelis yemenensis, relicts include the Asir Magpie Pica pica asirensis and among the Afrotropical birds are Dusky Turtle Dove Streptopelia lugens and Brown Woodland Warbler Phylloscopus umbrovirens.

Internationally important populations of certain species occur, this is true of certain marine species which occur around the Farasan Islands such as Dugong Dugong dugong and Green Turtle Chelonia mydas. All sites possess nationally important numbers of at least a few species. The waterfowl which visit the wetlands of the Wadi Jizan area constitute such a group of species.

Although NCWCD is a very young organisation and lacks many of the strengths conservationists have elsewhere (such as well developed voluntary sector) it has substantial resources and a growing sense of awareness towards the requirements for the conservation of the native flora and fauna. The Action Plan for Nature Conservation (NCWCD 1987) describes the intended conservation effort until 1990. It is detailed and comprehensive and includes plans for the establishment of a national biological records centre, a natural history museum, the initiation of conservation education and the recommendation that Saudi Arabia become involved with international conservation initiatives such as Ramsar. Many of the aims of conservation overlap with the interests of other Government

departments. Problems such as soil erosion are common to (for example) agriculturalists as well as conservationists and the action plan emphasises the importance of sharing a national wildlife resource database with other interested departments. It is hoped that this will avoid a duplication of effort and encourage better understanding.

The main challenge for conservation lies in marrying the interests of a largely subsistence (and often nomadic) population with maintaining areas which can support wildlife. This will involve influencing land-use in some way, examples are the encouragement of honey production in favour of grazing (perhaps by providing guaranteed prices) or reducing grazing pressure through some form of compensation.

It is hoped that the management plans produced as a result of the NCWCD/UCL expedition may point the way to resolving some of the conflicts of interest through demonstrating ways in which wildlife and economic well-being can coexist.

#### Bustards Added to Appendix II of CITES

At the sixth conference of the parties involved in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, which took place in Ottawa, Canada during the summer of 1987, all species of bustard Otididae sp. were added to Appendix II. This followed a recommendation by the Nature Conservancy Council, due to the threat to many species of bustard caused by the demand for birds for Middle-eastern falconry training. International trade in these species is now being monitored and controlled under licence by all CITES parties.



### The Israel Trust for Ornithology

This newly formed organisation, which will include the Rarities and Distribution Committees, has been set up to collect information on birds in Israel. They welcome any contributions which may be of interest, such as trip reports, descriptions of rarities etc. The Trust's address is P. O. Box 4168, Eilat 8810, Israel.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### 20th International Ornithological Congress 1990

The 20th International Ornithological Congress will take place in Christchurch, New Zealand, on 2-9 December 1990. The Congress programme will include six plenary lectures, 48 symposia, contributed papers (spoken and poster), workshops, discussion groups and films. There will be a mid-Congress excursion day. Longer excursions are planned to interesting ornithological sites in New Zealand before and after the Congress. In late 1990 New Zealand will also host the 20th World Conference of the International Council for Bird Preservation in Hamilton on 21-27 November 1990 and a Pacific Festival of Nature Films in Dunedin on 27 November-1 December 1990. Photographic and stamp exhibitions will be held in Christchurch in association with the International Ornithological Congress. Requests for the First Circular, which includes information on the above events, should be sent to: Dr. Ben D. Bell, Secretary-General, 20th International Ornithological Congress, Department of Zoology, Victoria University of Wellington, Private Bag, Wellington, New Zealand.



#### Help Needed in Israel

The International Birdwatching Centre in Eilat is looking for volunteers to help with a variety of projects from autumn to spring. Help is needed with the following:

**AUTUMN** (September-November): Passerine ringing, waterfowl survey, general migration survey.

**WINTER** (December-January): Passerine ringing, waterfowl survey.

**SPRING** (February-May): Passerine ringing, waterfowl survey, raptor migration survey, wardening, general migration survey.

Applicants should have experience in one of these fields and are requested to send details of their experience and relevant qualifications and recommendations from birders/organisations they

have worked for. Ringers are requested to send a copy of their valid ringing licence.

Conditions: Volunteers work six days a week and have one day free. Five days a week will be assigned to research and the remaining day to guiding or other duties. Lodging in a furnished flat is provided and volunteers staying for one month or more receive \$100 a month to cover food and other expenses. Transport to Eilat and back is at the volunteer's own expense.

Anyone interested should write as soon as possible, with their relevant details and preferred dates of stay to David Yekutieli and Merav Gellert, IBCE, P. O. Box 774, Eilat, Israel.

### REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

#### Swallows in the Middle East

I am at present engaged in writing a monograph on the Swallow Hirundo rustica, and would be grateful to receive information on any of the following topics (which are not well covered in the literature):

1. When do Swallows breed in the Middle East (savignii in Egypt or transitiva in Israel)? What are the clutch sizes? How many broods do they rear?
2. In Egypt, does savignii breed anywhere away from the Nile Valley (e.g. the Red Sea coastline)?
3. In Israel, is transitiva always a summer migrant? And is it easy to tell in the field from savignii?
4. Does anyone have measurements of samples of savignii or transitiva taken from live specimens? Or moult records, or weights?
5. Have Swallows colonised Saudi Arabia yet, and if so, which subspecies is involved?

Can anyone help? Please write to Cliff Davies, Department of Psychology, University of Manchester, Manchester M13 9PL, Great Britain.

### OSME NEWS

#### Tenth AGM

The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London was the venue for the tenth AGM on 9 July 1988 and there was a record turn-out of over

100 members and guests. The afternoon followed the usual sequence of three talks combined with official 'business' of the AGM proper.

Water is one of the most important elements influencing the distribution of birds in the Middle East and all of the talks reflected this. Arthur Stagg started proceedings with a fascinating account of the effects of rural and urban development on the avifauna of the Riyadh region. All too often the word development is synonymous with habitat loss but here the exact opposite has been the case. From 1970 onwards, using the country's oil wealth, the region's vast underground water resources have been tapped to irrigate large areas of open desert. The resultant areas of cultivation are now oases for passage and wintering birds, some of which have completely changed their behaviour to make the most of the new abundance of food. Steppe Eagles, for example, have taken to perching on the slowly rotating arms of the irrigators, swooping down when prey items are disturbed by the machinery, or shuffling along behind the plough feeding on invertebrates! Coupled with the rural development has been the growth of Riyadh city which has led to the inevitable increase in commercial and domestic effluent. After a degree of purification this waste is pumped into a wadi bed and then naturally drains away into the desert. The result has been the creation of a manmade river c.45km long. Many species of wader which were formerly scarce migrants are now either regularly recorded or, as in the case of Black-winged Stilt, have become breeding species. The tremendous importance of the new river has been recognised by the authorities and the area declared a reserve by the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development. Together these changes have led to an additional 201 bird species being recorded in the region - currently 286 compared with the pre-1970 figure of 85.

The afternoon continued with a 'whistle-stop' tour of Egypt by David Merrie looking at the influence on birds of the country's five watery habitats - sea, precipitation, rivers, springs and effluent. Other than the internationally important populations of Little Tern and Kentish Plover, much of the 'news' from coastal areas is depressing with hunting widespread, and oil pollution along much of the Red Sea coast and offshore islands. Rainfall is limited but, because of the prevailing winds, on Jebel Elba a lush mist oasis has been formed which allows many elements of the Ethiopian avifauna to extend northwards into Egypt. The Nile is well known for the large numbers of herons and wintering wildfowl it supports and the migration flyway it provides for birds of all types. Although often dry, wadis tend to have a more prolific growth of vegetation and provide habitat for many species of resident, wintering and passage passerines. The same can be said of Cairo, where the profusion of gardens and parks are of great importance to small birds. No visit to a country is complete without going to the local sewage farm and the development at Jebel Asfew, perhaps the largest in Egypt, is recommended. Here the settling ponds provide ideal feeding and breeding areas for many species of resident and passage waders and,

like the Riyadh region, it is to be hoped that increased developments will provide more suitable habitats for the birds of this vast country.

The final talk was given by Dr. W. R. P. Bourne about seabird movements in and around the Persian Gulf. The prevailing factors influencing birds in the area are the two monsoons - with south-westerly winds in summer and north-easterlies in winter. Associated with these winds are the cold water upwellings off the coast of south-west Arabia which attract large concentrations of seabirds; the movements of these birds are still far from understood. Perhaps the one good thing to come out of the hostilities between Iran and Iraq has been the opportunity it has provided for ornithologists like Dr. Bourne to visit the area, even if under far from ideal birdwatching conditions!

The business side of the AGM was swiftly and efficiently dealt with by the Chairman, Mike Rands, who reported that the Society was in a healthy financial position and that membership had grown significantly over the last year. Mike stressed that everyone should be proud of the development and achievements of OSME during its first 10 years. However, there is still a tremendous amount of work to be done to document and conserve the bird life of the Middle East and the Society should look towards a more active role during the coming 10 years. Two members of the existing Council retired by rotation - Nigel Redman, who was Treasurer and had been involved actively with the Society for the last eight years, and Effie Warr, who was Secretary and Membership Secretary. Mike paid tribute to the hard work put in by both. As a small token of appreciation of Effie's tremendous devotion to duty, she was presented with a large bouquet of flowers by past Chairman, Richard Porter, on behalf of OSME. Although deserving a good rest, Effie has agreed/volunteered to remain as Membership Secretary at least for the coming year. Four new members of Council were elected - Mark Andrews (currently working in the Conservation Education Department at Twycross Zoo); Chris Bowden (a contract research worker with the RSPB and a member of the 1985 Yemen Expedition); Mike Evans (another member of the Yemen Expedition team) and Hilary Welch (of Djibouti fame, who has been a co-opted member of Council for the last two years).

### Eleventh Annual General Meeting

Make a note in your diaries that the 11th AGM will be held on Saturday 15 July 1989; venue and details will be announced in the spring Bulletin.

### Society Officers 1988/89

#### **Vice Presidents**

Sir Derek Barber, UK  
 Prof. Dr. W. Büttiker, Switzerland  
 Major M. D. Gallagher, Oman

P. A. D. Hollom, UK  
 Dr. H. Kumerloeve, West Germany  
 Prof. H. Mendelssohn, Israel  
 Dr. G. Thomé, Lebanon  
 W. H. N. Wilkinson, UK  
 Mrs. N. Yazgan, Turkey

#### **Council Members**

J. S. M. Albrecht - Sales Officer  
 S. M. Andrews - Publicity Officer  
 C. G. R. Bowden  
 D. J. Brooks - Sandgrouse Editor  
 Major D. J. R. Counsell - Treasurer  
 M. I. Evans  
 D. J. Fisher - Bulletin Editor  
 M. C. Jennings  
 R. P. Martins - Turkish Bird Report Editor  
 W. E. Oddie  
 D. Parr - Sandgrouse Senior Editor  
 Dr. M. R. W. Rands - Chairman  
 G. R. Welch - Library and Secretary  
 Mrs. H. J. Welch - Secretary and Library

#### **Thanks to Effie Warr**

After five years in office, the 10th AGM saw the retirement by rotation of Effie Warr from the post of Secretary. Effie will be a hard act to follow. Her efficiency as a Secretary is evident in the paperwork she leaves behind - up-to-date and with friendly, helpful notes attached to anything which might require an explanation. Her attention to detail should be familiar to those who have attended AGMs - events largely organised and run by Effie with unobtrusive but invaluable support from her husband, John. Who else would ensure that entrance tickets were available at reception for those members who usually attended but who had not got round to writing this year? Who else, in the days of regular attendance by the chain-smoking Stanley Cramp, would remember to ensure that the room booked for a Council meeting allowed smoking? Who else would think to bring squash and buns to Council meetings for those members who had not had time to eat tea?

Effie was meticulous as Secretary, but what has set her apart has been her caring attitude to every single member of OSME. If a membership lapses or a member dies Effie feels she has lost a friend. If the Bulletin is delayed or a sales item temporarily out of stock Effie feels personally responsible and does her utmost to speed things along.

Effie has done a tremendous amount for OSME, much of it over and above the call of duty, for which she deserves the heartfelt thanks of all of us. Between the two of us we hope we shall be able to continue half of Effie's role as Secretary, but we are delighted

that she has agreed to remain as Membership Secretary for another year until a replacement can be found. Whoever takes over can be assured of inheriting a system which runs like clockwork and paperwork in apple-pie order. Any offers?

Hilary and Geoff Welch

### Forthcoming Events

A reminder about the 10th Anniversary Celebration to be held at the Friends' House, Euston Road, London on Saturday 26 November 1988 from 13.00-17.00 hours.

The final programme of talks is still to be finalised but other entertainments will be an Exhibition and Sale of Paintings of birds of the Middle East (artists contributing work include Lars Jonsson, John Busby, Killian Mullarney, John Reaney, Michael Warren, Martin Woodcock, Ian Willis...); a selection of trade stands from publishing, optical and tour firms; a Middle Eastern Quiz set by Chris Harbard; raffle; and refreshments in the form of a Cream Tea. Phil Hollom and Richard Porter will be signing copies of the new Birds of the Middle East and North Africa. Tickets are a minimum of £5.00 each with all proceeds from the afternoon going to OSME's Conservation Research Fund to finance future work in the Middle East. Please buy your tickets (available from the Secretary) early so that numbers for catering can be arranged.

STOP PRESS - We are also planning an ornithological entertainment 'first' for which binoculars will be required! Intrigued? Then come along and find out what it's all about. Bring a friend, non-members welcome.

### Joint British Ornithologists' Club/OSME Meeting

At the invitation of the BOC, there will be a joint meeting held at 18.15 for 19.00 hours in the Senior Common Room, Sherfield Building, Imperial College, London SW7 on Tuesday 6 December 1988. Following the traditional buffet supper, Mike Rands, Chairman of OSME, will show the Yemen Expedition film and talk about the exciting conservation follow-up to the expedition. The cost of the evening will be £5.00 (which includes the supper), payment and names please to Hilary Welch, our new Secretary.

### Members' Publications

All members who paid a subscription of £7.00 (£10.00 airmail) for 1987 should have received Sandgrouse 9 and Bulletins 18 and 19. Members who joined this year can order these and other previous publications from the Sales Officer (see Sales List). Those who have paid a subscription for 1988 should have received Bulletins 20 and 21 and will receive Sandgrouse 10 which at present is planned for publication before the end of the year.

New Sales Officer

After 10 years' sterling work as Sales Officer, Simon Albrecht will be retiring from the post at the end of this year. Therefore OSME is seeking a replacement to handle the sales side of the Society's activities. If you are interested in filling this role or would like more information on what the job involves before deciding, please contact Simon.

Announcement/News and Comment

After a long period of silence, we are pleased to hear that the Ornithological Society of Egypt is reforming and that plans for the production of Courser 2 are well in hand. Anyone requiring more information about the Society should contact Mindy Rosenweig, Egyptian Wildlife Service, Giza Zoo, Cairo, Egypt. We wish OSE every success for the future.

Notes from the Sales Officer

Sales have remained very heavy throughout the summer which has again resulted in some delays for which we apologise. It has also meant that our stocks of certain items have been exhausted and we have experienced considerable delays (usually beyond our control) in restocking. Again your patience is requested.

Sandgrouse 1

Sandgrouse 1 is out of print but will continue to appear on our sales list. If there is sufficient demand for it Council may consider reprinting it. Requests for availability will be treated sympathetically but no guarantee can be given even of a photocopy. Money should not be sent until availability has been confirmed.

OSME Ties

We have a new supply of OSME ties with the Sandgrouse motif in black and gold. The colours differ in part from the previous choice and are cardinal red, maroon, royal blue, navy blue and beige. The price is £5.50 surface postage and £6.50 airmail.

Birds of Turkey

We are pleased to announce that Birds of Turkey 7 (Acigol) has now been published and is available from OSME sales price £2.00 surface postage and £2.50 airmail. We regret that at the time of writing we are still awaiting stock of Birds of Turkey 1 to 4.

Wildlife in Bahrain: Fourth Report 1982-1984

We are pleased to report that we have received further copies of this report which is returned to our sales list.

# 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.



For further details and current subscription rates, write to:  
The Secretary, OSME, c/o The Lodge,  
Sandy, Beds SG19 2DL, Great Britain

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