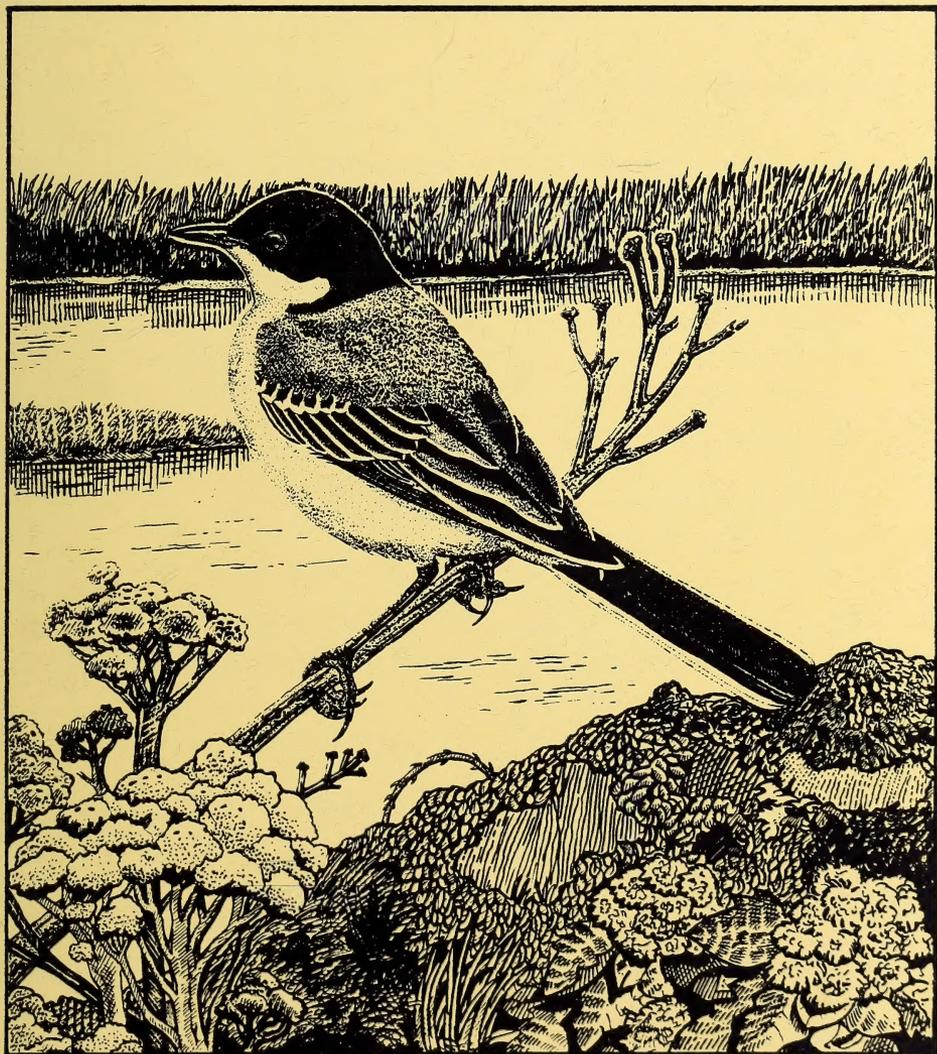


**ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY  
OF THE MIDDLE EAST**



**BULLETIN 28  
SPRING 1992**

# OSME Bulletin 28

Spring 1992

Editor: Mark Boyd

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

*Any articles, announcements or requests to do with birds in the Middle East are welcome, and may be published free of charge, subject to the discretion of the Editor. Accompanying photographs and line-drawings are welcome. Bird names generally follow those of Birds of the Middle East and North Africa.*

**Contributions to the next Bulletin should be received by 15 September 1992.**

They should preferably be double-spaced and typed. Articles on disk (3.5 or 5.25 inch only please ) are welcome. Please include both formatted and ASCII files *and a paper copy as well.*

## **Illustrations**

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

**SM Andrews:** black-headed Yellow Wagtail Cover and 47; Lesser Sand Plover 3; Rock Nuthatch 17; Bald Ibis 34; Brown Booby 54; Lesser Kestrel 56.

**Hilary Welch:** House Crow 4; Bee-eater 15.

We are grateful to the RSPB for the use of the following illustrations:

**John Busby:** Nightjar 20; Goldcrest 23; Long-tailed Skua 58.

**Darren Rees:** Osprey 41; Red Kite 53; Stone-curlew 57.

# Suez: not only raptors

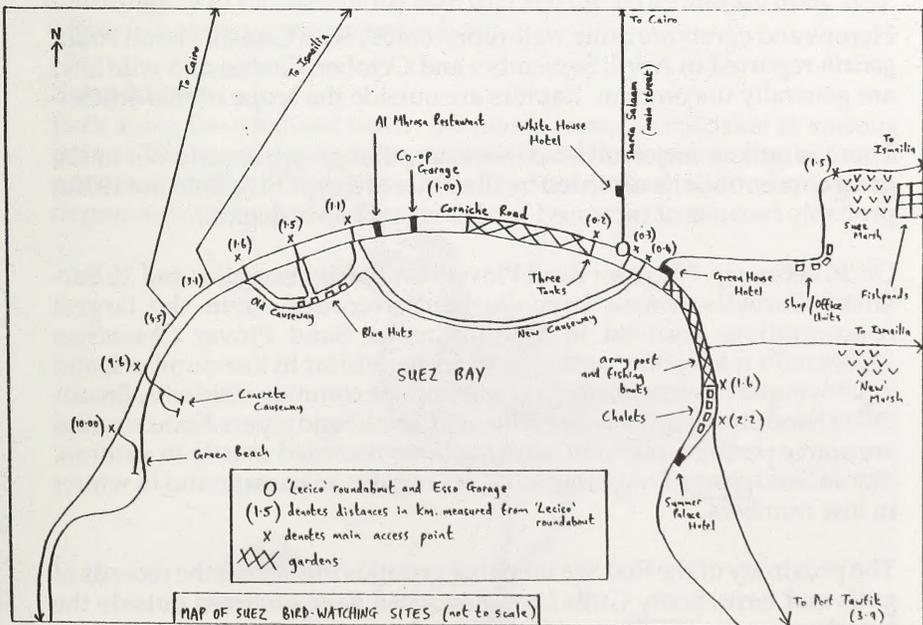
Derek J Evans

Much has been written about the spectacular raptor migrations at Suez, Egypt, but almost nothing on the other birdwatching opportunities offered by this area.

The sites described here can be explored in a daytrip from Cairo by bus or taxi, but a private or hire car is preferable, especially around Suez itself.

Suez is approximately two-hours' drive from Cairo, and Brown-necked Raven *Corvus ruficollis* and Hoopoe Lark *Alaemon alaudipes* are regularly seen along the way; Spotted Sandgrouse *Pterocles senegallus* is seen less frequently.

The White House Hotel is the best place to stay (approximately £4 per night in March 1991); the Green House Hotel is more luxurious, but twice as expensive.



## Suez Bay

Exploration of both Suez Bay and the marshes is quite straightforward by car. The Bay is bordered by a 'corniche' road, and other roads run directly past the marshes. Parking on the hard shoulder or in the little entries and access points shown on the map will allow good views over the water; but a telescope is useful.

Short walks into garden areas around the Blue Huts and along the Old and New Causeways may reveal migrant passerines such as Red-throated Pipits *Anthus cervinus*, Isabelline Wheatears *Oenanthe isabellina* and Masked Shrikes *Lanius nubicus*.

At some times of the day, glare from the sun can be considerable at this site. The tidal range of the Bay is 2.1 m. High tides concentrate birds into less accessible areas which may change according to disturbance, so visits on a rising or falling tide are best.

The army has a considerable presence in this area, but their reaction to birdwatchers is usually friendly. It is, however, best not to watch the bay at dusk, since the army seems particularly vigilant then. Landmines are not a danger in the area shown, but are farther south along the road to Ain Sukhna. In that area, do not stray from the road except along obviously well-used tracks.

Hérons and egrets are quite well-represented, with Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath* reported in April, September and October. Grebes and wildfowl are generally uncommon. Raptors are outside the scope of this article.

There is quite a variety of wader species, though apparently not in the great concentrations recorded by the Birds of Egypt Project in the 1970s, probably because of increased landclaim and disturbance.

On 26 February, 27 Lesser Sand Plovers *Charadrius mongolus* and 20 Bar-tailed Godwits *Limosa lapponica* were recorded, both the largest concentrations counted in Egypt. Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* is a regular passage and winter visitor in low numbers, and Spur-winged Plovers *Hoplopterus spinosus* are common residents. Broad-billed Sandpipers *Limicola falcinellus* and Terek Sandpipers *Xenus cinereus* are scarce passage migrants, with the latter recorded mostly in autumn. Marsh Sandpipers *Tringa stagnatilis* are regular on passage and in winter in low numbers.

The proximity of the Red Sea breeding grounds influences the records of gulls and terns. Sooty Gulls *Larus hemprichii* have occurred outside the breeding season; White-eyed Gulls *Larus leucoptthalmus* are regular in low numbers in spring and summer; Great Black-headed Gulls *Larus*

*ichthyaetus* are regular in winter and on passage from mid-February to late March, and again in November. Mike Everett's records (OSME Bull. 20:3-5) and my own recent observations suggest that there is considerable and previously unrecorded northward passage in spring in this area. Slender-billed Gulls *Larus genei* are common passage and winter visitors.

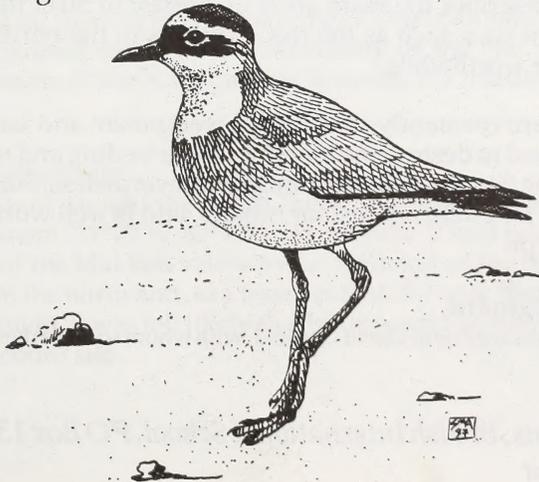
Caspian Terns *Sterna caspia* are regular and probably present throughout the year with a maximum count of 25 in the autumn. Swift Terns *Sterna bergii* are scarce, but have been recorded here and at Ain Sukhna in September. Lesser Crested Terns *Sterna bengalensis* are regular in small numbers, probably throughout the year, but White-cheeked Terns *Sterna repressa* are rare visitors, recorded only in April.

A Brown-throated Sand Martin *Riparia paludicola* was recorded in May 1990; African Rock Martins *Ptyonoprogne fuligula* have been recorded irregularly from September to December, but are more frequent farther south towards Ain Sukhna.

The Concrete Causeway gives good views over the Bay. Access is through a gate in a wire fence; curve to the right and follow the causeway. There is some army presence here. Green Beach is an erstwhile tourist area, but is now badly oiled. The offshore islets still hold roosting birds. This site is clearly signposted on a frame over a track, but use the track immediately to the west of the sign to reach the shore and shrubby area. There is a strong army presence here.

### Suez Marsh

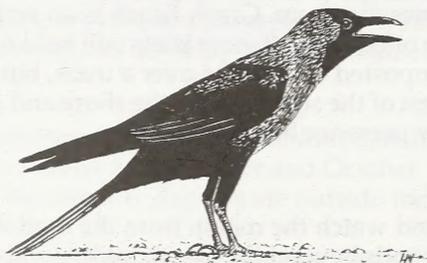
Park along the road and watch the marsh from the roadside at various points. The new fish ponds beyond the Marsh look promising, but are a restricted 'military' zone at present. The 'new' marsh is developing in a depression along the road.



Many of the species described for Suez Bay use this area, too. Purple Gallinules *Porphyrio porphyrio* are resident and best seen in the early morning and late afternoon. Painted Snipes *Rostratula benghalensis* have been recorded here, but they are scarce. Marsh terns *Chlidonias* are best seen here. Clamorous Reed Warblers *Acrocephalus stentoreus* are resident, and Avadavats *Amandava amandava* have been seen in the reedbed, where they probably breed.

### Port Tawfik

This area is a peninsula suburb of housing and docklands to the south of Suez town (see map). Follow signs to Canal Authorities, but not to Suez Port. Park at the southernmost point, where views of the Bay and, especially, the canal can be obtained. Gulls and terns, particularly White-eyed and Great-Black-headed Gulls, are often seen from here at the right time of year. Ring-necked Parakeets *Psittacula krameri* are rather elusive residents here and elsewhere in the Suez area, and the lawns and gardens should be explored for migrant birds. House Crows *Corvus splendens* are common throughout the area, but are particularly abundant and approachable here, where a roost of 1,049 was counted on 28 October 1988.



This article describes the main areas of interest in Suez though further exploration of sites such as the reedy ditches to the north of the town should prove worthwhile.

All the sites are constantly changing: development and landclaim have long threatened to destroy the Marsh; and the feeding and roosting areas for birds in the Bay are reduced annually. Nevertheless, Suez remains an exciting area for birds, not just for raptors, and is well worth visiting on a tour of Egypt.

### Acknowledgment

Particular thanks are due to David Corfield, with whom some of these observations were made.

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# Preliminary observations of raptor migration along the Al Hada escarpment near Taif, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

*Geoff and Hilary Welch*

## **Introduction**

Each autumn, large numbers of birds of prey migrate from their breeding grounds in eastern Europe and Russia to wintering areas in Arabia and eastern and southern Africa. As a result of their migration strategy, the broad-winged species - eagles, buzzards and vultures - tend to cross the Red Sea at its narrowest points, at Suez in the north and the Bab-el-Mandeb straits in the south. What is not known at present are the routes used by these birds to reach these concentration points. For birds crossing at Bab-el-Mandeb, there are three possible strategies, and there is evidence that all are employed:

- a broadfront movement throughout the Arabian peninsula
- a more concentrated movement following the Asir mountains
- by following the Hadraumat in Oman and southern Yemen having entered Arabia via the Strait of Hormuz.

Non-systematic observations made by the staff of the National Wildlife Research Center at Taif in 1988 and 1990 (P Symens and X Eichacker in litt) suggested that there was a significant passage of raptors along the Asir mountains and that the Al Hada escarpment might be a suitable vantage point for monitoring the movement. Our preliminary study was therefore organised to assess the suitability of the site and to make systematic counts of the birds passing to assess the relative importance of the area.

## **The observation site**

The chosen count site was the NWRC house at the northern end of the Al Hada escarpment (21°22'N, 40°15'E). From here, it was possible to have a clear view of the Makkah valley to the west and of the foothills of the escarpment to the north and, to a lesser extent, the east. Being at the start of the escarpment, it was felt likely that birds would be naturally focused towards the count site.

## Methods

Systematic counts were made from the house by two observers on a total of 12 days between 14 and 28 October 1991, with additional counts being made from a point north of Harathi (21°N, 40°17'E) on 13 October and at Ash Shafa (21°06'N, 40°17'E) on 21 October; 250 man-hours observation time in total. Observations were made using 10x40 and 7x42 binoculars and a 20x77 telescope. Counts were made at hourly intervals (using hand tally counters for the most numerous species), information being recorded in a field notebook. At the end of each hour, counts were totalled and tally counters zeroed. Simple meteorological records (wind direction, wind speed and cloud cover) were also made, together with notes on visibility and height and direction of migrating birds. At the end of each day, the information was transferred to standardised migration recording sheets. Opportunistic counts of obvious migrants were also made when travelling to and from the main count site and elsewhere.

## Results

A total of 25,330 migrant raptors of 18 species was recorded, the most numerous being Steppe Buzzard *Buteo buteo vulpinus* (22,495) and Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis* (2,001). All other visible migrant species were also counted and gave an additional total of 1,337 birds of a further 17 species - see summary table.

## Discussion

For this preliminary study, it was decided to count at the time when large numbers of Steppe Buzzards and Steppe Eagles could be expected to be migrating.

In the case of Steppe Buzzard, the available information indicates that a significant part of the population migrates around the eastern end of the Black Sea, with 205,000 birds in autumn 1976 (Beaman and Porter, 1977), but then remains virtually undetected until it crosses the Bab-el-Mandeb into Africa (Welch and Welch, 1988) suggesting a rather narrow migration route through western Arabia. This study's count compares favourably with figures for the equivalent period in Djibouti in 1987 - 22,501 in Saudi Arabia, 16,791 in Djibouti - and is the third highest autumn count in the Middle East. This clearly demonstrates that the Asir mountains lie on the migratory route of this species and that Al Hada offers an excellent opportunity for monitoring the autumn migration of Steppe Buzzards through Saudi Arabia.

The situation with the Steppe Eagle is, however, more complex. This species migrates slightly later than the Steppe Buzzard (peak being mid to late October compared with early to mid-October) and therefore would have been expected to be passing along the escarpment in increasing numbers as the count progressed. This was not the case, and no significant

daily counts were made. There are several possible explanations for this:

- the migration was later in 1991
- any narrow-front migration route for this species does not follow the escarpment
- the species has a more dispersed migration throughout the area.

There is circumstantial evidence for the first of these explanations. The general impression of researchers based in both Taif and Riyadh, and of Bedouin falcon-trappers at Al Lith, was that the migration of raptors in 1991 was both smaller and later than in previous years. There are, however, no documentary data available to support this and any variation could simply be a natural fluctuation.

The Steppe Eagles which migrate through Arabia originate from breeding grounds covering an area extending from the Black Sea to the Kirgiz steppes. The route these birds use to reach the peninsula is unknown, but there are various possibilities (Welch and Welch, 1991) including broad-front migration from the Caucasus, and concentrated migration round the Arabian Gulf - at the northern end through Kuwait, and at the southern end via the Strait of Hormuz. There is evidence that each of these routes is used by some birds, but the relative proportions at each has yet to be determined. Thus the birds enter Arabia from several widely separated points, and with few geographical features to channel them it is possible that they continue on a broad front until they are funnelled at the southern tip of the peninsula across the Bab-el-Mandeb straits. If this is the case, one would expect the Steppe Eagles to pass on a generally broad front through Saudi Arabia, gradually becoming more concentrated as they move south and west. This could also account for the frequent scattered sightings of small numbers of eagles throughout much of northern Arabia. In contrast to the relatively small number of eagles counted at Al Hada during this study, casual observations made in the Abu Arish area in October 1987 noted over 800 Steppe Eagles in four hours (P Symens in litt), which tends to support the idea that the movement becomes more concentrated as it moves southwards.

Of the other raptor species recorded, Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*, Black Kite *Milvus migrans*, Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* and Booted Eagle *Hieraetus pennatus* all tend to be early migrants and thus no significant numbers were expected. Conversely, Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* and Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca* are late migrants with their main migratory period being in late October and November. The very small numbers of these two species at the end of the count are thus likely to be the start of the movement. Among the remaining species, Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*, harriers *Circus* and falcons *Falco* are more 'active' migrants, and thus are not concentrated at narrow sea crossings as are the broad-winged species.

Site	Al Hada				
	Date in October 1991	14	15	16	17
Count period (hours from 08.00)	9	10	10	9	9
Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>			58		11
Black Stork <i>Ciconia nigra</i>	1		1		
Honey Buzzard <i>Pernis apivorus</i>					
Black Kite <i>Milvus migrans</i>	6	2		2	2
Egyptian Vulture <i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	1	3			
Griffon Vulture <i>Gyps fulvus</i>		3	3		
Short-toed Eagle <i>Circaetus gallicus</i>		1	2	1	
Pallid Harrier <i>Circus macrourus</i>			1	2	
Pallid/Montagu's H C. <i>macrourus/pygargus</i>			1	1	1
Sparrowhawk <i>Accipiter nisus</i>	21	25	22	24	14
Steppe Buzzard <i>Buteo buteo vulpinus</i>	1730	2815	2742	4026	3234
Long-legged Buzzard <i>Buteo rufinus</i>					
Buzzard sp. <i>Buteo sp.</i>					
Steppe Eagle <i>Aquila nipalensis</i>	250	73	206	238	85
Imperial Eagle <i>Aquila heliaca</i>					
Golden Eagle <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>		1			
Eagle sp. <i>Aquila sp.</i>	1		7		
Booted Eagle <i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>	4	1	3		
Lesser Kestrel <i>Falco naumanni</i>					
Kestrel <i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	3	1	2	3	1
Hobby <i>Falco subbuteo</i>	1	2	1		2
Saker <i>Falco cherrug</i>					
Peregrine <i>Falco peregrinus</i>					
Falcon sp. <i>Falco sp.</i>		1	1		
Raptor sp.	7	7	48	10	
Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>Larus fuscus</i>				1	
Herring Gull <i>Larus argentatus</i>		1			
Turtle Dove <i>Streptopelia turtur</i>					1
Swift <i>Apus apus</i>			2	2	2
Pallid Swift <i>Apus pallidus</i>					
Alpine Swift <i>Apus melba</i>	1		7		
Little Swift <i>Apus affinis</i>				2	
Bee-eater <i>Merops apiaster</i>	53+	66	40-	112+	1+
Sand Martin <i>Riparia riparia</i>					
Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	47	16	79	33	230+
Red-rumped Swallow <i>Hirundo daurica</i>		1			
House Martin <i>Delichon urbica</i>	3		3	1	
Hirundine sp.		1			
Tawny Pipit <i>Anthus campestris</i>	1				
Tree Pipit <i>Anthus trivialis</i>					
Yellow Wagtail <i>Motacilla flava sp.</i>					
White Wagtail <i>Motacilla alba</i>					
<b>Daily total - migrant raptors</b>	2024	2934	3039	3706	4131
<b>Daily total - all migrants</b>	2130	3017	3230	3858	4376

								Total Al Hada	North of Harithi	Ash Shafa	Incidental observations	Total all sites
20	22	23	25	26	27	28	13		21			
10	10	8	10	10	10	10	2		8			
							58					58
	2			6			21					21
1	1						2					2
4	5	23	20	3	11		78	1	2			81
							4	1				5
							6					6
	1	1	3	1	1		11					11
		1	1				5					5
			3				6					8
17	15	20	66	22	10	6	262	1	1	2		272
3234	832	238	786	409	356	6	20596	1343	112	444		22495
			2	2			4					4
								270+				270+
102	113	89	497	140	159	8	1960	8	15	18		2001
			2	1			3					3
							1					1
	1	2	1				12	1				13
							8					8
	3						3		1			4
2	1						13					13
1	4	1	2	2	1	1	18					18
			1				1					1
										1		1
		1	1	3			7					7
	8	4	7	5			96		5			101
							1					1
							1					1
							1					1
	2	1	1	4	1		15					15
2					2		4					4
	14			1	27	18	68					68
	9	73	1	2			87					87
40+	7+	2	1	4	12	6	344	47	29	20		440
									1			1
46	115	17				1	584		32			616
							1					1
							7	1				8
							1					1
3	2		1				7		1			8
1							1					1
1							1	2				3
		2					2					2
3361	984	380	1392	588	536	21	23096	1625	142	467		25330
3454	1135	475	1396	695	578	46	24300	1675	205	487		26667

Although this count confirms the existence of a major migration route along the Asir mountains, the Al Hada escarpment is not necessarily the optimum site for monitoring all species. The reasons for the large fluctuations in daily numbers are unknown, but a contributory factor is likely to be the weather conditions, both in the immediate vicinity of the escarpment and farther north along the birds' migratory route.

### **Acknowledgments**

Our thanks go to all those staff at NWRC, Taif and NCWCD, Riyadh who made this study possible and our stay in Saudi Arabia so enjoyable. Special thanks go to Dr Holger Schulz and Patrick Paillat who showed particular interest in our work.

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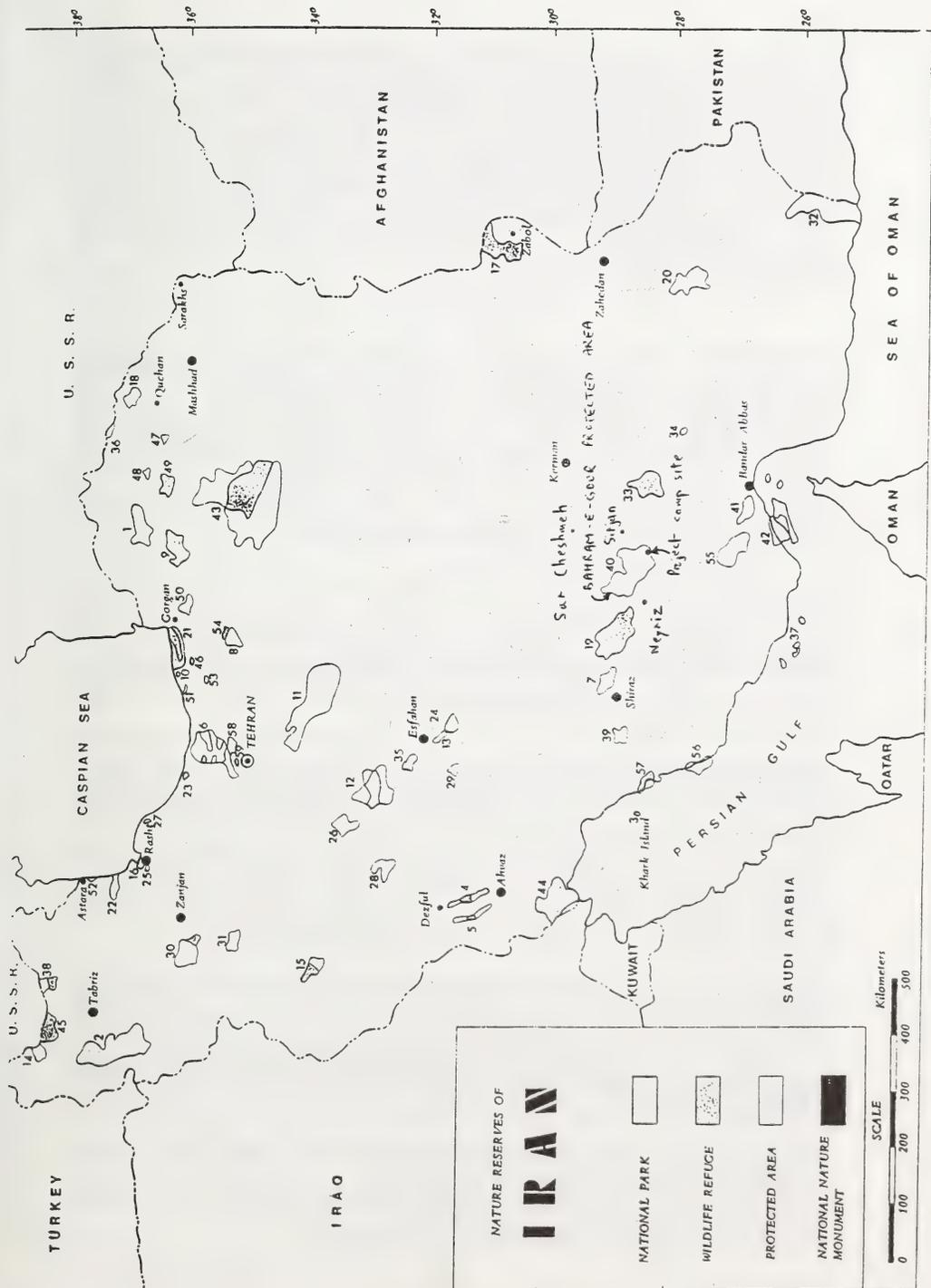
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## **Bird observations in Southern Iran 1975/76 with particular reference to the Bahram-e-Gour Protected Area**

*SJ Farnsworth*

I visited southern Iran as a water resources engineer from 2 June 1975 to 1 May 1976, working mainly in the eastern part of the Bahram-e-Gour Protected Area, near Sirjan (Sa'idabad) (see Fig 1). The project camp site was located just inside the eastern boundary of the Protected Area at elevation +1720m, where the majority of the bird (and mammal) observations were made whilst carrying out project work (co-ordinates 55° 17'E 28° 44'N). During a leave period with my wife in November 1975, we visited Tehran, Esfahan and Shiraz, which allowed additional observations to be made.



The protected Area covers 385,000 ha (Iran Department Of The Environment 1975 *Biotic Community Reserves of Iran, Tehran*). The water resources project area of about 160,000 ha, lying partly within the Protected Area, consisted of a group of catchment basins draining into several closed depressions or salt pans (Kavir). The project was required to define the long term reliable yield of non-saline water (groundwater + precipitation) as an industrial supply to an iron ore mine and crushing plant to be developed at Gol-e-Gohar, just outside the eastern boundary of the Protected Area.

During project work, a new road was being constructed through the Protected Area westwards from Sirjan to Neyriz. A protected railway with a spur line to the mine site was also being surveyed along the eastern edge of the Protected Area. Evidence of hunting was noted in the Protected Area. It is regretted that an opportunity to revisit the Protected Area since May 1976 has not occurred. These notes, although somewhat old, are presented here since apparently little ornithological data from Iran has been published in the intervening period.

The climate of the project area is much affected by its location just to the north of the main watershed of the Zagros mountains, which divide coastal climate areas from those with an inland desert climate. Mean annual rainfall in Sirjan (up to 1976) was 116 mm, mean annual evaporation being about 2,400 mm. Temperatures during project work ranged from +40°C in the summer to -8°C in the winter.

Vegetation in the project area consisted of low bushes at higher elevations, with occasional trees such as wild pistachio, merging through scrub, grasses and aromatic herbs on the intervening plains down to the sterile salt-pans. An artesian spring forming a small pond with some vegetation was located about 20 km east of the camp site, the only permanent surface water available for a considerable distance. This was used extensively by both migrant and resident bird species, particularly sandgrouse.

Hand operated water wells existed in the project area, used by local shepherds for flocks of sheep, goats and camels. A few pumped wells were also used for small areas of cultivation, such as cereals, pistachio and alfalfa, the irrigated fields being utilised particularly by migrant waders.

During project work I noted the presence of bird species but without carrying out precise counts of all species. All bird observations are included in the systematic list, arranged in a monthly sequence. More detailed notes on some species are given below.

**Houbara *Chlamydotis undulata***

Present in the Protected Area throughout the project period, usually seen once or twice a week. Numbers seen were generally one or two at a time, with up to five at any one time in February - March 1976, during which period some display was noticed. This concerned 1 male and at least 1 female although I cannot be sure that on each occasion it was the same pair of individuals. I noted at least three display sites, generally slight rises in the otherwise reasonably uniform scrub covered plains, and within about 1 km of each other. The male would fluff out his feathers but without achieving the more dramatic display of, for example, Great Bustard *Otis tarda*. The female would generally be about 10-20m distant, usually walking slowly behind the low vegetation, occasionally glancing at the male. No juveniles were noted, however, during the project period.

**Black-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles orientalis***

One adult with a very young juvenile noted at the end of July 1975, on the scrub covered plains in the Protected Area. Small flocks seen and heard at dawn generally flying over the camp site in the direction of the artesian spring. Presumed breeding resident in the Protected Area.

**Scops Owl *Otus scops***

One individual noted in a wild pistaccio tree at mid-day, 8 July 1975 (photograph published in *British Birds*). The only sighting during the project period.

**Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti***

Present in the Protected Area throughout the period. Initially the identification was not absolutely certain, due to the very dark brown colouration of all the individuals seen.

**Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica***

Noted October - November 1975 at the camp site, generally foraging around the kitchen effluent pipe. The several individuals appeared to show (winter plumage) characteristics of the white-spotted race *Ls cyanecula*.

**Desert Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca minula***

One showing the characteristics of an adult male of this race in a thorny hedge near a small village in the Protected Area, 30 August 1975.

**Twite *Carduelis flavirostris***

One, 14 April 1976, at the artesian spring showing a bright pink rump characteristic of the race *Cf brevisrostris*.

**Pleske's Ground Jay *Podoces pleskei***

Juvenile initially seen on 8 July 1975 in the Protected Area near one of the project drilling sites; presumed to be a resident breeding species in the Protected Area.

## Systematic list

- \* Identified in the Bahram-e-Gour Protected Area
- Presumed present in the Protected Area
- Identified outside the Protected Area

### Locations:

Project camp site	55° 17'E 28° 44'N
Sirjan (Sa'idabad)	55° 42'E 29° 28'N
Sar Cheshmeh	55° 47'E 30° 14'N
Kerman	57° 5'E 30° 17'N
Neyriz	54° 17'E 29° 13'N
Shiraz	52° 32'E 29° 48'N
Esfahan	51° 40'E 32° 43'N
Tehran	51° 27'E 35° 39'N

- Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* • November 1975, Esfahan  
Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* • November 1975, Esfahan  
Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* • November 1975, Esfahan  
Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber* \* one long dead, 21 September 1975; March 1976  
Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* \* April 1976  
Teal *Anas crecca* • November 1975, Esfahan  
Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* • November 1975 Esfahan  
Black Kite *Milvus migrans* • November 1975, around 200, Shiraz  
Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus* \* October 1975 and March 1976  
Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* • July 1975, Sirjan  
Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* \* September 1975 and March 1976  
Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* \* September 1975  
Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* \* October 1976  
Harrier (Ringtails) *Circus* \* September and October 1975  
Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus* \* September, October, November 1975 and April 1976  
Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* \* September, November and December 1975 and February and March 1976; • January 1976  
Tawny/Steppe Eagle *Aquila rapax* \* September, October and November 1975; one recently dead, 1 October 1975  
Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* \* June, September and October 1975  
Saker *Falco cherrug* \* September 1975  
See-See *Ammoperdix griseogularis* - Recorded June and November 1975, presumed present throughout  
Chukar *Alectoris chukar* - Recorded June and November 1975, presumed present throughout  
Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* • November 1975, Esfahan  
Coot *Fulica atra* • November 1975, Esfahan  
Houbara *Chlamydotis undulata* June-September 1975, October-November 1975, January, February, March onwards 1976  
Stone-Curlew *Burhinus oednicnemus* \* June 1975  
Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor* \* June 1975 and March 1976  
Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* \* September 1975  
Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* • November 1975, Shiraz  
Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* \* September 1975 and March 1976

Redshank *Tringa totanus* • November 1975, Esfahan  
 Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* \* September and October 1975, March and April 1976  
 Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* \* August and September 1975  
 Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* \* September 1975  
 Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* \* September 1975  
 Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* \* September and October 1975  
 Dunlin *Calidris alpina* \* September and October 1975  
 Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* \* April 1976  
 Black-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles orientalis* - Recorded June and July 1975, presumed present throughout  
 Crowned Sandgrouse *Pterocles coronatus*- Presumed present throughout  
 Rock Dove *Columba livia* \* June 1975  
 Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* \* June 1975  
 Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis* • November 1975, Esfahan  
 Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* • November 1975, Esfahan, Tehran  
 Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* \* June and September 1975, March and April 1976  
 Scops Owl *Otus scops* \* July 1975  
 Little Owl *Athene noctua* \* June and September 1975, March 1976  
 Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* \* June and September 1975  
 Swift *Apus apus* \* June and August 1975; • April 1976, Sirjan  
 Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis* • November 1975, Esfahan  
 Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* • November 1975, Esfahan



Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* \* June and August 1975, April 1976  
 Roller *Coracias garrulus* \* September 1975  
 Hoopoe *Upupa epops* \* June 1975, February, March and April 1976  
 Syrian Woodpecker *Picoides syriacus* - Presumed present throughout  
 Hoopoe Lark *Alaemon alaudipes* \* December 1975  
 Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti* \* Recorded every month  
 Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* \* March 1976  
 Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens* \* October and November 1976  
 Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* \* Recorded every month

Shore Lark *Eremophila alpestris* \* June 1975, Sar Cheshmeh  
 Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* \* August 1975  
 Swallow *Hirundo rustica* \* June-November 1975, April 1976  
 House Martin *Delichon urbica* • November 1975, Shiraz  
 Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* \* September 1975  
 White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* \* April 1976  
 Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* \* September 1975 and March 1976  
 Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta* • November 1975, Neyriz  
 White-cheeked Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucogenys* \* June 1975; • November 1975, Neyriz  
 Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* \* July, September-November 1975, March and April 1976  
 Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor* \* February and April 1976  
 Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* \* July, September, October and November 1975  
 Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator* \* March and April 1976  
 Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus* \* April 1976  
 Radde's Accentor *Prunella ocularis* \* November 1975  
 Robin *Erithacus rubecula* \* November 1975  
 Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* \* August 1975  
 Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica* \* October and November 1975  
 Eversmann's Redstart *Phoenicurus erythronotus* \* November 1975  
 Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* \* September and November 1975, April 1976  
 Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* \* September, October and November 1975, April 1976  
 Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* • November 1975, Shiraz  
 Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* \* June 1975  
 Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* \* March 1975  
 Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* \* June 1975 and presumed present throughout  
 Finsch's Wheatear *Oenanthe finschii* - Recorded August and December 1975, presumed present throughout  
 Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* Presumed present throughout  
 Red-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe xanthopyrmyna* \* September, October and November 1975  
 Mourning Wheatear *Oenanthe lugens* \* November 1975 and February 1976  
 Hume's Wheatear *Oenanthe alboniger* Presumed present throughout  
 Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* \* September and October 1975, March and April 1976  
 Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* \* October and November 1975, April and May 1976  
 Blackbird *Turdus merula* • November 1975, Esfahan  
 Black-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis atrogularis* \* November 1975-March 1976  
 Common Babbler *Turdoides caudatus* \* September 1975  
 Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* \* March 1976  
 Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* • November 1975, Esfahan; \* April 1976  
 Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* \* July 1975  
 Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* \* July 1975  
 Scrub Warbler *Scotocerca inquieta* \* June and December 1975  
 Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* \* October 1975  
 Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybitus* \* November 1975 and May 1976  
 Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* \* October and November 1975

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* \* September 1975  
 Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria* \* September and October 1975  
 Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortensis* \* April 1976  
 Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* \* September 1975  
 Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca* \* April 1975  
 Desert Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca minula* \* October 1975  
 Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* \* July and September 1975  
 Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* \* August 1975 and March 1976  
 Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva* • November 1975, Tehran  
 Sombre Tit *Parus lugubris* • November 1975, Neyriz  
 Great Tit *Parus major* • November 1975, Shiraz  
 Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus* • November 1975, Shiraz  
 Rock Nuthatch *Sitta neumayer* • November 1975, Shiraz



Great Rock Nuthatch *Sitta tephronata* \* Presumed present throughout; • November 1975, Shiraz  
 House Bunting *Emberiza striolata* \* September 1975  
 Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* \* August 1975  
 Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* \* September 1975  
 Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* \* November 1975  
 Red-fronted Serin *Serinus pusillus* \* March 1976  
 Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* \* April 1976  
 Twite *Carduelis flavirostris* \* April 1976  
 House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* \* June and October 1975; • September and December 1975, February and May 1976, Tehran  
 Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* \* May 1976  
 Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* • December 1975, Tehran  
 Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* \* September and October 1975  
 Magpie *Pica pica* \* September and November 1975  
 Pleske's Ground Jay *Podoces pleskei* \* - Presumed present throughout  
 Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* \* November 1975  
 Rook *Corvus frugilegus* • November 1975, Shiraz  
 Hooded Crow *Corvus corone cornix* \* July 1975; • November 1975, Kerman  
 Raven *Corvus corax* \* - Presumed present throughout

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# A record of Aquatic Warbler from Turkey

*Guy Kirwan*

Between 5 and 7 September 1991, I was birdwatching in the vicinity of Anamur (Southern Coastlands), Turkey. Principally, I was attempting to compare the migration of raptors (both numbers and direction) in the area with the observations of Vincent van den Berk, and others, at the Goksu Delta, approximately 120 km farther east. I was, however, also aware that the area might have potential for attracting unusual passerine migrants. The first Turkish record of Cyprus Warbler *Sylvia melanothorax* comes from this area (Kasperek 1986, Martins 1989, Kasperek 1990).

On 5 September, I was investigating an area of reed-choked dykes and damp grassland to the south of the town in the late afternoon, when my attention was drawn to a movement in the nearest patch of reeds. Focusing my binoculars, I swiftly realised that I was observing a rather strikingly marked, bright, streaked *Acrocephalus* warbler. For the following five minutes, I watched the bird as it moved along the near side of a reed-filled ditch, at a distance of approximately five metres, until it eventually disappeared into rather thicker cover. I had only seen Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* on one previous occasion (in Britain), but it required little to convince me that the bird I had just been watching was of this species. All the salient features Aquatic Warbler had been visible.

I took the following notes:

**Size and structure:** size as Sedge Warbler *A. schoenobaenus*, but with sharp, pointed tail feathers, and generally slimmer, slighter body appearance.

**Plumage:** Head strikingly patterned, very crisp, straw-coloured central crown-stripe, wide and prominent, unstreaked, and graduating to a point on the nape; strongly demarcated by black, or near black lateral crown-stripes; slightly paler supercilium, distinctly flared behind the eye; eye black; pale lores and dull brown ear coverts combine to give bird rather 'bare-faced' expression. Breast and flanks pale buff ground colour, former with few dark brown streaks becoming more noticeable on the upper flanks and neck sides; belly off-white, unstreaked. Upperparts with rich straw-coloured tram-lines on sides of mantle; mantle heavily streaked black, streaks extending onto the deep buff coloured rump and uppertail coverts. Wings with dark, or nearly black centres to all feathers, with warm deep buff fringes. Tail dark with paler (brownier) fringes to all feathers, and distinctly spiky appearance.

**Bare parts:** legs and feet quite bright, flesh coloured. No call heard.

Kumerloeve (1961) lists several records of Aquatic Warbler in his avifauna of Asia Minor as follows: a small (but unspecified) number of observations from Izmir, Braun was given the species during the autumn migration when an example was obtained during bird-catches (presumably in the final years of the last century, or the first decade of the twentieth, but no year, date or locality supplied), while Smith mentions a 'possible' sight record to the west of Trabzon in June 1958 (in Smith 1960). Kumerloeve appears to question this.

Most importantly, Mathey-Dupraz (1920/23) mentions a specimen held in the Robert's College, Istanbul (Bebek) collection. On the basis of these records, the species is listed for Turkey by Hollom (1971), Hollom et al (1988), Ertan et al (1989), Parmenter and Byers (1991) and Kasperek (in press). No subsequent records from Turkey have been published (Bird Report 1966-86, Kasperek 1990). As all of the records documented by Kumerloeve, with the possible exception of the specimen record, fall well short of today's standards, this new record is perhaps only the second verifiable record for Turkey.

### Acknowledgments

I should like to thank Ruth Maier (for translation of German material) and Richard Porter (for comments on the species' status in Turkey) for their help in the preparation of this note.

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# Diurnal migration of Nightjars at the Goksu Delta, South Turkey



*Vincent van den Berk and Jan van der Winden*

While seawatching along the Goksu Delta coast from early April 1991 onwards, Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* was one of the few landbound birds seen in shore/at sea. The records were as follows:

**24 April:** at the beach some kilometres east of the western Delta cape during the only systematic seawatch (13.00-17.00h), a group of three, and two singles passed parallel to the beach some 50-100 m offshore. They flew very low, almost touching the water, and followed the coastline around.

**25 April:** same location; one seen around 16.00h acting as described above.

**6 May:** at the beach some kilometres east of the Goksu river mouth, two were seen flying west very low across the sea around 18.00h, parallel and close to the coast.

## Discussion

These three records (and four others inside the Delta that spring) fit in the normal pattern of dates described for the Goksu Delta. Nightjars are spring passage migrant, normally seen as singles, but up to three regularly recorded between late April and late May (Magnin et al. in press).

Typically, the Nightjar is a nocturnal and broad-front migrant (Cramp 1985). We had some difficulty in recognizing the Nightjars: they flew very low, regularly disappearing behind waves, and were a wholly unexpected species to see while seawatching.

Given the infrequency of our seawatches and that most of them revealed Nightjars, these records may reflect a migration pattern of some substance. This migration was hardly nocturnal, and unfortunately we did not watch the sea during mornings.

A most striking feature was the birds' shearwater-like flight, close inshore and closely following the contours of the coastline. Despite the

intensive birdwatching effort inland no obvious migration of Nightjars was seen, although a few were either flushed or seen resting.

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## The Snow Bunting in Turkey

Lieuwe J Dijkse and Michel Klemann

In the Checklist of the Birds of Turkey (OST 1971), the Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis* is listed as vagrant, but apparently there are no records from at least 1966 onwards. The species is not mentioned in the Turkish bird reports of 1966-1986, published by the OST and later by OSME, or in the Birds of Turkey series (edited by Akcakaya and others, 1983-1989).

During research on geese in the delta of the Kizilirmak on the Black Sea coast on 2 February 1992, we recorded a group of eight Snow Buntings between the sparsely vegetated dunes and the beach, just north of the semaphore east of Balik Gölü. This habitat is almost exactly the same as that where Snow Buntings winter in Holland.

Identification was easy. The only species more or less looking alike, at least in flight, is Snow Finch *Montifringilla nivalis*. Although the group was quite restless, we watched the busy foraging birds twice at a distance of about 40 m through binoculars. We could clearly see the creamy brown and whitish heads and breasts and the backs with the black stripings, which helped to distinguish them from Snow Finches. We did not hear the calls, probably because of the noise of the strong wind and the heavy sea. A little later, the group flew away, and we lost sight of them. They could not be relocated the following days by another party of birdwatchers, despite perfect weather conditions.

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# Winter 1991/1992 around the Kizilirmak Delta, Turkey

*Lieuwe J Dijkse and Michel Klemann*

Bird numbers and species composition last winter were quite remarkable in the Kizilirmak delta in particular and Turkey as a whole. During the mid-winter waterfowl counts, for instance, numbers of White-headed Ducks *Oxyura leucocephala* on Burdur Gölü were much lower than usual, but the birds seemed to be more widespread over other wetlands. There were, however, tens of thousands of the normally scarce Red-headed Pochard *Netta rufina* (pers comm Gernant Magnin and DHKD).

There were huge numbers of Reed Buntings *Emberiza schoeniclus* in the Kizilirmak delta. Large groups were foraging like Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* in the wet meadows.

Along the coast, little Gulls *Larus minutus* were more common than usual. In the Samsun harbour 2,500 were counted (pers comm Sancar Baris). Also the numbers of Great Crested Grebes *Podiceps cristatus* were exceptional. They could be found on every spot of water in the delta, even on pools of a few square metres. We did not make a total count, but easily came to a number of about 1,000, of which 368 were swimming in the fast flowing river itself between Bafra and Korukler Köy. The total for the whole delta and adjacent sea must have been several thousands, many more than counted in the mid-winter waterfowl counts of 1970-1973 and 1986-1990.

Many of the grebes were in a very bad condition and/or were dying. They hardly showed any fear, and most were not foraging. At sea, feeding conditions were poor because of the strong winds and subsequently high waves. In the pools and canals hundreds died in fishermen's nets, while hunters also took their toll. To a lesser extent the same applied to Black-necked Grebes *Podiceps nigricollis*.

Much of these phenomena could be explained by severe winter conditions in the northern parts of the Black Sea but unfortunately we can not confirm this.

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## Goldcrests in Egypt



On 22 October 1989, a warm, still day, I was birdwatching in the grounds of the Hotel PLM Azur El Alamein at Sidi Abd El Rahman, 30 km west of El Alamein on the Egyptian Mediterranean coast. Among the migrants feeding in bushes in the gardens were two Goldcrests *Regulus regulus*. According to *The Birds of Egypt*, these are the first Goldcrests recorded in Egypt for 21 years, since

one at Bahig (90 km east) on 30 October 1968. The species' status in Egypt is of 'a rare and irregular winter visitor'.

There was a range of other migrant passerines at Sidi Abd El Rahman on 22 October, including (with numbers in brackets) Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*, Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*, White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* (45), Robin *Erithacus rubecula* (12), Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*, Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*, Blackbird *Turdus merula*, Song Thrush *T philomelos*, Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortensis*, Lesser Whitethroat *S curruca*, Blackcap *S atricapilla*, Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*, Willow Warbler *P trochilus*, Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*, Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*, Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* (72 - 'a scarce winter visitor'), Brambling *F montifringilla* (three - 'rare winter visitor'), Linnet *Acanthis cannabina* and Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*.

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## Southernmost record of Kittiwake in Egypt

On 5 May 1989, I was birdwatching at Ain Sukhna on the western side of the Gulf of Suez, 50 km south of Suez, Egypt. Perched on the pier adjacent to the unfinished hotel were a number of Black-headed *Larus ridibundus*, Lesser Black-backed *Larus fuscus* and White-eyed Gulls *Larus leucophthalmus*, as well as Common Terns *Sterna hirundo*. Amongst them was a Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* in first-summer plumage, apparently in good health and unoiled. It was seen both perched and in flight.

*The Bird of Egypt* states that this species is a 'rare and irregular winter visitor, mainly to the north of the country.' This is therefore not only a late date for the species to be recorded in the country but also the most southerly locality, though there are two previous October records farther north in the Gulf of Suez.

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## A Nile Valley Sunbird nest in Egypt

From the early weeks of 1989, Nile Valley Sunbirds *Anthreptes metallicus* were present in the garden of Mrs Jane Bowman's villa at Giza, near Cairo, Egypt. Up to three males squabbled territorially up to 3 March, and thereafter a pair were present with the pendulate nest 2.2m high in the centre of a flowering shrub completed by 10 May.

From this date, the female sat on the nest while the male was frequently vocally aggressive to all intruders. I saw the female on the nest on 27 May. Soon afterwards, the nest was found hanging limply, wrecked and torn.

An unfledged juvenile was dangling from the nest by synthetic thread entangled in its bill and gape. The gardener said that two young had successfully fledged but this could not be confirmed. He also thought that the nest had been destroyed by a cat.

According to *The Birds of Egypt*, Nile Valley Sunbirds are a scarce breeding species as far north as Cairo, where they are mainly a non-breeding visitor, but newly fledged young were present in Giza and Zamalek in late September 1986.

The record is interesting both because of the scarcity of confirmed breeding records so far north and because of the amount of synthetic material used in the construction of the nest. Shreds of nylon string were common in the body of the nest. Other materials used in the construction of the nest were animal hair, wool, string made of natural fibres and leaf, twig and seed-pod material.

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# Cannibalism in Senegal Coucal

During a visit to Gebel Asfar, near Cairo, on 24 January 1992, I saw two Senegal Coucals *Centopus senegalensis* standing in the middle of a paved road pecking at an unknown item on the ground. Closer inspection revealed that the two birds were actually feeding on a third, less fortunate, coucal, apparently killed very recently by a passing car. The birds were surprisingly persistent in finishing their meal and were very reluctant to fly away when approached. I do not know of any records of cannibalism in coucals.

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## Letters

### The Dead Sea Sparrow in Iraq: a correction

In my account of the distribution of the Dead Sea Sparrow *Passer moabiticus* in Iraq (Summers-Smith *The Sparrows*, 1988. Poyser: Calton), I inferred from Marchant (*Ibis* 1963 105: 516-537) that the first record for Mosul was in the early 1960s. Mr Marchant has, however, pointed out to me that the clutches from Mosul were, in fact, collected by RS Stewart and IM McNeile in 1947 and 1949, coinciding with the record for 1945 by Moore & Boswell (*Publ. Iraq Nat. Hist. Mus.* 1957, No 12: 239), a reference that I overlooked.

This additional information throws doubt on my suggestion that a northward expansion of range (paralleling that in Israel from 1950-80) occurred in Iraq, leading to the colonization of Syria, southern Turkey and, finally, Cyprus in 1975. It reinforces the alternative hypothesis that the species has been present along the length the Tigris-Euphrates valley, and even in southern Turkey, for a long time, the absence of records being merely an observational lacuna. Further, this keeps open the possibility that Israel was the source of the colonization of Cyprus.

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# News and Information

Compiled by Simon Albrecht

*The aim of this section is to inform readers about events in the OSME region. It is not intended as a definitive report or write up of the projects concerned. Many of the projects are sponsored; such support is appreciated, but is not generally given acknowledgment here.*

## Turkey

*Manyas Golu - proposed extension of Kus Cenneti reserve*

DHKD (The Society for the Protection of Nature) has been lobbying the Turkish Government to get this famous bird reserve extended to the whole of Manyas Lake.

*Sultan Marshes - still threatened by drainage*

In spite of the publicity OSME and others have given to this important wetland, it remains threatened by excessive use of its waters by the state water authority. DHKD has been lobbying for a management plan to be implemented to protect the wetland and its valuable wildlife.

*Menderes Delta - an Integrated Management Plan*

Last spring, we reported the establishment of an Integrated Management Plan for the Goksu Delta. This has been running successfully, and a project officer has now been appointed to establish a similar plan for the Menderes Delta. We hope to be able to report further on these projects in due course.

*Burdur Golu workshop*

DHKD's initiative to organise a workshop last December on the

protection of Burdur Golu, where 70% of the world's population of White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* overwinter, was extremely successful. The participants at the workshop, which was well covered by the Turkish media, represented a wide range of local, national and international interest groups. A major achievement was the final declaration which was unanimously adopted by all the participants.

The recommendations of the final declaration included:

- Burdur Golu be included as a priority site in the list of Wetlands of International Importance once Turkey has joined the Ramsar Convention.
- Burdur Golu be included in the national protected area system.
- Environmental Impact Assessments of the threats to the lake, together with management plans for the removal of the threats be prepared in collaboration with international organisations.
- Sources of pollution be removed in collaboration with all relevant parties.
- Funds be immediately sought for installing a proper sewage treatment system for Burdur city's sewage.
- The current afforestation and soil erosion control programme be accelerated.

- That a workshop-follow-up committee be established, comprising representatives of all interest groups, to review the progress that is made in the implementation of these recommendations and to organise future symposia and events to generate interest in the lake and its problems.

#### *Two new IBAs*

Two new Important Bird Areas have been identified in Turkey following the appeal in the last Bulletin: Longoz Ormani, near the Bulgarian border; and Golbek, a wetland area some 70 km south of Ankara.

#### *Dalyan loses its Special Protection Area status*

In 1988, the Dalyan river and estuary and part of Koycegiz Golu were declared a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution. Under a 1982 Protocol, SPAs can be created to provide special protection to endangered Mediterranean species as well as habitats considered vital to their conservation.

The SPA was created following international outcry against proposed tourist development adjacent to important breeding beaches of the Loggerhead Turtle *Caretta caretta*. It seems that now that international attention has gone elsewhere, the Turkish authorities have felt safe to de-notify the area. We hope that this decision will be reversed and that we shall be able to provide better news in the future. Details on the importance of the area and its birds can be found in *Birds of Turkey 8*, available from OSME sales.

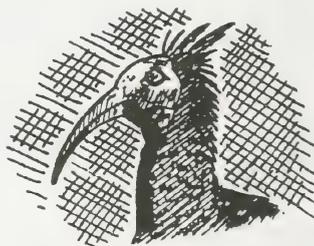
#### *Greater Flamingo at Tuz Golu*

Survey work in 1991 established that at least 3,000 pairs of Greater Flamingos *Phoenicopterus ruber* bred at Tuz Golu.

Some 3,000 young were seen in two creches, and aerial photographs suggested up to 11,000 nests. This is the first proved breeding record in the area for over 15 years.

#### **Bald Ibis in Morocco**

We have previously reported on the threats to the Moroccan population of Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita*. We now learn that local people are throwing stones at Bald Ibises to get them to fly for foreign birdwatchers! Apparently they are then tipped (payed money). OSME is totally opposed to this disgusting practice. Anyone wanting to see the birds can apply to the local Water and Forest Authority for a guide who will not disturb the birds. If anyone witnesses more stone throwing we suggest that, where possible, you pass their names and addresses to the bird protection society of the appropriate home country.



#### **Bald Ibises in Saudi Arabia**

In late April 1991, up to seven Bald Ibises were seen at Kulach, near Taif, Saudi Arabia. None of the birds had rings, suggesting that they did not originate from Birejik, Turkey, whose wild population appears to be extinct. This is further evidence that there may be a remaining undiscovered colony in the Middle East.

*Threats to Siberian White Cranes in Iran*  
During the 1990/91 winter, some 10 Siberian White Cranes *Grus*

*leucogeranus* were reported from Iran. Of these between one and three were killed and four captured for zoos. The Iranian population of this species was the subject of a workshop at the IWRB/ AWB wetlands and waterfowl conference in Pakistan in December 1991. See report by Mike Evans in this Bulletin.

## Bahrain

### *Autumn wader study*

Some 456 waders of nine species were trapped and ringed in a four-week study of wader turnover and movements in Bahrain last autumn, according to the interim report of the Bahrain Wader Study. In addition, biometric measurements were made to determine where the birds originate and weights were taken to determine feeding efficiency. It was found that recaptured individuals were increasing their weight by over 10% daily, indicating the importance of feeding areas in Bahrain for migrating waders. Counts were also made at high tide roosts as part of a study started in 1989. The largest roost contained about 7,000 birds.

A study of the feeding strategies of sandpipers was also carried out. This involved recording the rate of pecking, the success rate and the type of food for Greater *Charadrius leschenaultii* and Lesser Sandpiper *C mongolus*. An analysis of the food available on the shore has yet to be carried out. (Source: Bahrain Natural History Society Newsletter 9).

## The Gulf

### *Saudi Arabian coast*

In November and December 1991, two ICBP teams worked in the Gulf with national conservation agencies in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to monitor bird populations after the immense oil and smoke pollution caused by the Gulf

War. Most of the Saudi Arabian coast was surveyed and very large numbers of coastal waterfowl were found at two unoiled sites - Tarut Bay (50,000) and Jubayl Waste-water Lagoons (20,000).

Over 1,000 waders were ringed and colour-dyed (yellow) at the latter site by the Yamashina Institute for Ornithology (Japan) during the same period. The oiled section of the Saudi coast had very few waders compared with before the spill, principally because most of the invertebrate food supply had been killed. Most of the oiled inter-tidal areas have now been covered with a thin layer of sediment thus reducing the risk of direct oiling to the birds.

### *Kuwait oil lakes*

Huge oil lakes resulting from sabotaged oil wells covered at least 20 km<sup>2</sup> at the time of the survey. Further evidence was gathered on the devastating effect these are having on migrant waterfowl. The data suggest that many tens of thousands of waterfowl may have died in the oil lakes during the autumn migration, including herons, ducks and crakes.

Among non-waterfowl species, corpses of aerial insectivores which hawk over water (such as hirundines, bee-eaters and nightjars) were conspicuously common. The coast could not be surveyed because of mines and other hazards. Bird shooting was found to be widespread and intense at most good waterfowl sites in the country.

### *Socotra Cormorant survey*

A planned survey of breeding Socotra Cormorants *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis* in Saudi Arabia in January 1992 has been postponed until autumn 1992. It is hoped that as many of the relevant Gulf countries as possible will take

part in this census, which will attempt a population estimate as well as collecting more information on breeding biology and carrying out chick ringing.

## The Phoenix

We have recently received a copy of *The Phoenix* Number 8 produced for contributors to the Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Arabia (ABBA) which OSME has helped to support for a number of years. It is available from Michael Jennings, ABBA, 1 Warners Farm, Warners Drove, Somersham, Cambridgeshire PE17 3HW, UK. (Price £2.00)

### *New breeding birds for Arabia*

*The Phoenix* reports a number of new breeding birds for Arabia. In June 1990, Short-toed Larks *Calandrella brachydactyla* were found breeding north of Riyadh. In June 1991, at Hamraniyah in UAE, adult and juvenile Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris* were seen. Pied Mynah *Sturnus contra* has been reported breeding in a number of places in the UAE.

Spanish Sparrows *Passer hispaniolensis* have previously bred in Kuwait, but in 1991 they were reported breeding at three sites in Saudi Arabia. The Avadavat *Amandava amandava* has been known from the Riyadh area for 15 years, but in 1990 and 1991 was found nesting in a reedbed near al Hair south of Riyadh.

The first colony of Sandwich Terns *Sterna sandvicensis* were found on a small island in Tanageeb Bay during a survey of birds killed by oil in July 1991. Both Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* and Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* bred in 1991 near the al Hair dam. These are the first breeding records for these two species in Arabia. In addition Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* and Ferruginous Duck *Aythya*

*nyroca* successfully nested, and Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* attempted to nest in the same area. These are the first breeding records for these species in Central Arabia.

Ambient temperatures in the area were at least 5-7°C below average as a result of the oil fires in Kuwait. These lower temperatures may have encouraged some of the migrants to stay and breed. It remains to be seen what happens in 1992 and subsequently.

## Syria

Syria is ornithologically one of the least known countries of the Middle East. Apparently, barely a handful of bird watchers have visited the country in the last decade. In summer 1991, Max Kasperek and Wolfgang Baumgart undertook a sea turtle survey of the Syrian Mediterranean coast from the Turkish to the Lebanese border. This project was carried out on behalf of MEDASSET, the Mediterranean Association to Save the Sea Turtles.

Although birds were not the main interest, a lot of interesting bird records were made. Many of them improve our knowledge of the distribution area of some species. Breeding records and/or breeding season records include Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*, Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*, Little Swift *Apus affinis*, Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* and Syrian Serin *serinus syriacus*. Some evidence was found that the Lapped-faced Vulture *Torgus tracheliotus* occurs in Syria.

A report on the ornithological results of the project is being published in *Zoology in the Middle East*. Anyone who has visited, or who intends to visit Syria, is invited to contact Max Kasperek, Bleichstr. 1, 6900 Heidelberg, Germany. [Contributed by Max Kasperek]

# Initiatives from the Goksu Delta In September 1991

Hilary Welch, Guy Kirwan and Geoff Welch represented OSME at a three-day meeting to discuss bird research in Turkey. The meeting was held in Tasucu, Turkey, and was also attended by representatives from DHKD (the Turkish Society for the Protection of Nature) and WIWO (the Foundation Working Group for International Wader and Waterfowl Research).

The first half of the meeting was occupied with updates from each organisation on their current and planned activities in Turkey. OSME's contributions were:

- a report on Guy Kirwan's work at Hotamis in spring 1991
- the presentation of a preliminary desk-study carried out by OSME member, Nick Williams, endeavouring to establish the status of Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* and Black Vulture *Aegypius monachus* in Turkey (both species are declining in Europe)
- plans for setting up a system through which rare bird records in Turkey could be vetted
- the possibility of producing a gazetteer of Turkish place names
- tentative plans to produce an annotated checklist of Turkish birds.

WIWO's efforts are currently concentrated on the Kizilirmak Delta survey - preliminary research was underway in September and the full project will run from 15 March to 15 June 1992. The project had already attracted funding and won £1000 from the BP conservation expeditions award. This brings with it the recognition of ICBP and the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society, demonstrating both the value of the project and the good reputation of WIWO.

As the active conservation body in Turkey, DHKD has many ornithological activities. These include projects at Important Bird Areas (IBAs) - including Manyas Golu, Sultan Marshes, Eregli Marshes, Burdur Golu and the Kizilirmak Delta; work on individual bird species - White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala*, Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber* and Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus*; together with general lobbying, publicity and education work.

All those present at the meeting knew that the work which had been outlined was unlikely to be the only ornithological research being carried out in Turkey. For many years, individuals and organisations have been visiting Turkey to study the birds and, following their visits, have produced anything from bird lists to detailed reports of full ecological surveys. For DHKD - with no experienced ornithologists and many

threatened birds and habitats to fight for - this is a source of great frustration: if only birdwatchers could be persuaded to visit little known areas or imminently threatened sites instead of always following the same circuit; if only scientists wishing to carry out detailed research consulted DHKD on where work was needed; if only all birdwatchers provided DHKD with a copy of their results. If only all data were collected and presented in a standardised way...

The meeting spent one and a half days discussing solutions to these problems. Many ideas were exchanged on how bird research in Turkey might be better stimulated and co-ordinated, and the results then made more widely available. Although there were differences of opinion over what form the research might take, all agreed that the conservation of Turkey's birds and habitats had to be the principal aim.

Out of these discussions, the idea of the Kuslar International project was born. Run by a project officer working from DHKD, but guided by an advisory board, it is envisaged that Kuslar International will be a framework through which all existing and future work can be co-ordinated; a framework which also encourages and initiates further work in a systematic way. Kuslar International aims to establish national representatives in European countries through whom the project can be promoted to potential visiting birdwatchers. These national representatives may, at a later date, help to co-ordinate the gathering of data for a Turkish breeding bird atlas.

Specific research will be encouraged by awarding annual grants, available to both individuals and teams of birdwatchers. To provide the project with an action plan, a Projects Register will be drawn up in consultation with bodies such as ICBP and IWRB (two international organisations already involved in Turkey). Turkey has long needed a prioritised list of what needs doing where, and by when. Kuslar International still has some way to go before it becomes a reality - there is still some fine tuning to do and the first major hurdle is going to be finding the £140,000 needed to run it for the first five years.

In the meantime, if you visit Turkey - even if only for casual birdwatching - please do send OSME and DHKD copies of anything you write-up afterwards. If you are thinking of more serious study, consider contacting DHKD before you formulate your plans; they may be able to direct you to areas and species desperately in need of work, and you will be able to make a real contribution to conserving Turkey's natural heritage.

*Hilary Welch*

# Progress on the ICBP/OSME Important Bird Areas in the Middle East Project

*Mike Evans*

Since the start of the project in September last year, contacts have been made with most countries in the region. Attendance at two conferences concerning the Middle East allowed me to meet up with people from government agencies and NGOs concerned with nature conservation in the following countries: Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Kuwait, Bahrain and Iran.

The first conference was on "Protected Areas in the Middle East and North Africa", held at short notice in Tunis in October, and the second was on "Conservation of wetlands and waterfowl in South and West Asia" in Karachi (and is reported on separately elsewhere in this issue). The main result of discussing and promoting the project with all these people was to gain very useful advice on the project's development, details of further contacts, and up-to-date information on bird conservation activities occurring in each country.

Initially, the project has needed a set of criteria by which to assess objectively the importance of a site for birds, and this has now been developed with the help of the International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau. The judgements are based mainly on either "species" or "habitats"; for instance, whether the site supports globally threatened species, whether it supports significant numbers of the world population or flyway population or biogeographical population of a species, whether the site is a particularly good example of a bird community with important "dispersed" species, whether the site has great importance or potential for education/recreation concerning bird conservation, and so on.

In addition, the questionnaire that will be used to gather the data has been designed and completed, as has the computer database which will be used to analyse some of the information gathered. As far as possible, data collection for this project will be coordinated by those people with most knowledge, competence and current involvement in birds/conservation in the country concerned. Several countries have accepted this responsibility already.

So the stage is now set for data collection to begin in most countries. I would appeal to all OSME members who can provide information on

good bird sites in the less well-known countries in the region, especially Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, to please contact me at the address below; any such data would greatly enhance the project's value and effectiveness in promoting nature conservation in the Middle East in the future. ICBP, 32 Cambridge Road, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0PJ, U.K. Tel (0223) 277318 Fax (0223) 277200.

## The IWRB/AWB wetlands and waterfowl conference in Pakistan

*Mike Evans*

"Strategies to conserve wetlands and waterfowl in South and West Asia": this was the theme of a six-day conference held in Karachi in December last year which I attended as coordinator of the ICBP/OSME project Important Bird Areas in the Middle East. Activities centred around finding ways to minimise the loss and degradation of wetlands, their functions and biodiversity in South and West Asia. Apart from the plenary sessions, smaller groups met to discuss four topics: (1) The plight of the Siberian White Crane; (2) Threatened waterfowl species in the region; (3) The annual, mid-winter Asian Waterfowl Census; and (4) The Ramsar Convention in the region.

The definition of West Asia included the Middle East, and there were a total of 10 delegates attending from Iran, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, the Yemen and Jordan. There were some very interesting talks on the Middle East. SA Motabelli-Pour, of the Department of Environment in Iran, outlined the National Wetland Inventory that the Department is carrying out; having finished the 12-month preparatory phase, the next 28-month phase has now begun, whereby information is being compiled for each site on plants, animals (including birds, but down to the invertebrate level too, e.g. snails), climate, geology, socio-economic conditions and so on, for eventual publication (the final two-month phase).

Other interesting news from Iran was that the Shadegan Marshes in the southwest had suffered from chemical warfare during the Iran-Iraq war, but were now recovering (10 days before the conference, 2,500 Marbled Teal had been counted at this site). A Gulf War Pollution Project last year, in cooperation with a Japanese team, found that Iran had generally suffered little from pollution due to the Gulf War; the impact of the previous war had been much greater.

Dr Saeed Mohamed of the University of Bahrain talked about the serious loss of coastal habitat that has occurred on the island in the last 30 years due to land claim and dredging. Formerly the most bird-rich natural coastal area was Tubli Bay, with extensive mangroves, freshwater springs discharging under the sea and rich mudflats mainly on the east side of the Bay. However, all of the mangroves and much else of the area was landfilled. The freshwater springs are drying up due to the massive use of underground water, leading to cut-backs in the extent of reedbeds and date palms associated with the springs on land. Large areas of date palm plantations are also being cleared to make way for urban development and other agriculture. A particularly poignant image was of the last mangrove tree in Tubli Bay, miraculously overlooked by the developers and now somehow surviving alone in a hollow in the middle of a supermarket car park.

Not all is doom and gloom however: in 1986 an Amiri decree was passed to protect the remaining 200-250 ha of mangrove woodland in Bahrain and give it National Park status, and a national Environmental Protection Committee has been set up to identify key sites and try to preserve or protect them. However it has been proving difficult to arrive at compromises with developers.

As a result of all the speeches, discussions and recommendations put forward during the conference, a Programme of Priority Actions was drawn up and distributed with commendable speed by the conference organisers, the International Wildfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau (IWRB) and the Asian Wetland Bureau (AWB). It is worth giving in full the priority actions specific to Middle Eastern countries:



## Bahrain

The government is urged to impose a strict ban on all infilling of mangrove and mudflat areas along the east coast of the main island of Bahrain.

Adequate protection should be given to small offshore islands, such as the Hawar Group. These islands support huge numbers of waterbirds (including the world's largest colony of Socotra Cormorants *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis*) as well as breeding Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* and Sooty Falcons *Falco concolor*.

## **Islamic Republic of Iran**

The national wetland directory, recently initiated by the Department of the Environment, should be completed and published as soon as possible.

The government is urged to designate more Ramsar sites, such as Choghakor and Gandoman Marshes.

Studies should be undertaken on the impact of dams on the Helmand River in Afghanistan on the flood regime in the wetlands of the Seistan Basin in Iran, with a view to securing the future of the Ramsar sites in the Iranian part of this cross-border wetland.

An environmental impact assessment should be conducted for the proposed free port on Queshm Island, especially with respect to its impact on the Ramsar site of the Hara Protected Region in the Khuran Straits.

## **Jordan**

The government is urged to restore and manage the wetland of the Azraq Oasis by providing water from another source.

## **Saudi Arabia**

The National Council for Wildlife Conservation and Development's national wetland inventory should be completed and published as soon as possible.

Priority should be given to implementation of the System Plan for Protected Areas by NCWCD, with particular emphasis on the establishment of protected areas in the coastal zone.

## **Republic of Yemen**

The government is urged to join the Ramsar Convention and to designate the Lake of Marib Dam and other key wetlands in its territory for inclusion in the List of Wetland of International Importance.

There were various calls for lists or inventories of wetlands in the Middle East or "West Asia" region to be drawn up, eg lists of potential Ramsar sites, of critically threatened sites, of internationally important sites. The joint OSME/ICBP Important Bird Areas in the Middle East Project is designed to start meeting these needs within a year's time. Iran and Saudi Arabia were praised for having started National Wetland Inventories, and all other West Asian countries were urged to carry out similar detailed surveys for eventual publication. Those West Asian countries with mangrove woodlands (especially Iran, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the UAE) were strongly encouraged to establish National Mangrove Committees in order to look after these valuable natural resources. The implementation, without further delay, of existing Protected Areas Plans in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kuwait was requested, because of the damage already suffered by these areas in various ways.

A body to coordinate activities and information exchange between ringing schemes in the region was proposed ("Asia-Pacific Waterbird Ringing Research Group"), with particular reference to colour-marking studies; the Asian Wetland Bureau may take the lead in this development, which is of obvious interest to Middle Eastern countries where ringing is taking place.

The workshops produced their own interesting news and recommendations. There are plans to attach satellite transmitters in February 1992 to one or two birds of the remaining western population of 11 Siberian White Cranes which winters in the east Caspian Sea lowlands of Iran, so as to determine their unknown migration route and breeding grounds. The central population which winters in Bharatpur (India) has undergone a catastrophic decline recently (down to 10-12 birds in winter 1990/91), which is thought to be mainly due to the crane-hunting which occurs along their migration route through Afghanistan and Pakistan. Last-ditch efforts to save these two populations were agreed upon by representatives of all the range states bar Afghanistan.

The threatened waterfowl workshop mostly dealt with South Asian species, but it should be noted that "Recovery Plans" are currently being prepared for three Middle Eastern waterfowl (Marbled Teal, Lesser White-fronted Goose and Red-breasted Goose), and any Middle Eastern records of these species should be passed on to Dr Andy Green at IWRB (address below). The White-headed Duck recovery plan has already been published by IWRB. IWRB have also concluded that Ferruginous Duck should be added to the list of globally threatened waterfowl; the OSME region is one of the species's most important wintering strongholds.

Details of all these and many more specific recommendations for action can be found in two documents, the Karachi Declaration and the Action Programme, obtainable from IWRB (Slimbridge, Gloucester, GL2 7BX, U.K.) and AWB (Institute of Advanced Studies, University of Malaya, Lembah Pantai, 59100 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia).

# OSME News

## Subscription rate increase

OSME has held its subscription rates constant since 1 January 1985. Since then, the Society's conservation activities have increased greatly and its publications and meetings have been greatly improved. Inevitably, the membership subscription must now be increased. The following rates will be effective from 1 January 1993:

Ordinary membership	£10
Family membership	£15
Airmail membership (Europe)	£11.50
Airmail membership (outside Europe)	£13
Life membership	£200
Joint life membership	£275
Life member over 60	£100

**Deposited covenant** A deposited covenant will enable OSME to reclaim tax on a lump sum donation. It may be used for any sum in the range £50 to £599, and any sum of £200 or over will confer Life Membership. Further details are available on application. Application for life membership at the present rate of £150 will be accepted up until 31 December 1991 - very good value for money!

**Standing orders and deeds of covenant** OSME is still run by hard-working volunteers. Please make our lives easier by paying your subscription by standing order. If you have a sterling bank account, please complete a standing order form and forward it to OSME. Those with a GIROBANK account may make a standing order to OSME's GIRO account, no 55 019 4207. A form for a GIRO standing order may be obtained from OSME or from the GIRO Centre. When completing it, please enter your NAME in the section marked "reference".

If you pay in foreign currency (for sales or for subscriptions) please add £3 to cover bank charges.

It will also help the Society considerably if subscriptions are covenanted, enabling the Society to claim a refund of tax. All those who pay British Income Tax are asked to complete a Deed of Covenant. Those who covenanted their subscriptions at the old rate are asked to complete a new form and send it to the Society, to replace the previous one. New standing order and covenant forms are being prepared and will be sent to all members soon.

## OSME AGM 1992

The fourteenth AGM will be held on Saturday 11 July 1992, in the Lecture Theatre, Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, South Kensington, London. Doors open at 1.15pm for a 1.45pm start. The speakers this year are Dr Holger Schultz on the work of the National Wildlife Research Centre, Saudi Arabia; Paul Doherty on Israel, spring 1992; Richard Porter on OSME's Conservation Research Committee; and Steve Madge on some lesser-known Middle East birds.

You do not need tickets in advance, but please show the enclosed programme at the door to ensure free entry to the museum.

After the AGM, why not join OSME Council members, speakers and friends in the bar of the nearby Hoop and Toy public house for an informal drink and chat. We look forward to seeing you there.

### New items on the sales list

**OSME Ties** At the request of members, ties are again available in the colours olive-green and silver. This is in addition to the popular blue, maroon and red. All are made of 100% Polyester and feature our flying Sandgrouse motif. The cost is £6.

**Zoology in the Middle East** Stocks of *Zoology in the Middle East* Volume 5 have now arrived and there is a review elsewhere in this Bulletin. The cost is £10 including post and packing.

**Tribulus** *Tribulus* is the name of the new journal replacing *Bulletin of the Emirates Natural History Group (Abu Dhabi)*. The first two issues are now available at £4 each and are reviewed elsewhere in this Bulletin.

The *Emirates Bird Report* No.15, compiled by Colin Richardson, is available at £4. This report covers the period January to June 1991 and also includes short articles on birds of the Emirates by various authors.

**ICBP Study Reports** ICBP Study Report No.42 by Harry Sigg is entitled *Bird Conservation Priorities in North Cyprus*. Study Report No.45 is *The Catching of Birds in North Sinai, Autumn 1990* and is by Sherif M Baha el Din and Waheed Salama. Both were published in 1991 and cost £5 each.

**DHKD greetings cards** These are beautiful photographic cards in full colour, depicting natural history subjects in Turkish and in English. On the back of each card is the message "We are against the destruction of the natural environment of Turkey." The price is £3 per pack of eight mixed designs and includes envelopes.

## OSME Survey of Yemen - 1993

Plans for the OSME Ornithological Survey of the southern part of the Republic of Yemen scheduled for Spring 1993 are taking shape. The Gulf War delayed progress, but we are now actively seeking permission and are optimistic it will be granted. So far, 44 people have expressed interest in going, but we do want all OSME members to have the opportunity of applying, even though many will be disappointed: it is likely we will be able to take only 18. We want the best 18, so if you are interested and haven't yet applied, please do so without delay.

Provisionally, we plan to spend eight weeks in what was previously South Yemen (until the North and South amalgamated) from about 13 March. We expect some people will be able to manage the full period but others probably only four weeks.

Anyone expressing interest will be sent further details and be asked to complete a questionnaire. Anyone selected will be expected to make a personal contribution of £600 (not £500 as stated in previous Bulletins).

Yemen is a very hot, humid and tough country, so this project is definitely not for the weak-willed. Everyone who has previously expressed interest will be contacted in the next two months with the questionnaire which will need to be submitted by mid-August.

*Richard Porter - Project Leader*

### **Rodney Martins**

It is with deep regret that I failed to pay tribute to Rod Martins in the Autumn Bulletin, who retired from Council after completing his five years at the 1991 Annual General Meeting.

Rod's contributions to OSME have been outstanding and considerable. He is probably best known for his editing of the Turkish Bird Report, but he was also a key figure on the OSME Yemen Expedition in 1985, which was my own first opportunity to meet with him. I was deeply impressed by his commitment to ornithology and conservation and his tremendous field skills. All of us greatly enjoyed working with him in Yemen, and I know a number of colleagues who have subsequently enjoyed his company on further field trips. It was Rod's subsequent work with one of the sponsors of the expedition that pioneered the opening up of Yemen to bird tourism, something that will not only benefit the tourists but has also had a considerable impact on the Yemeni appreciation of their natural resources, and something that ultimately will help their economy.

During his time on Council, Rod has been painstakingly thorough and will go down in history as a Council member who is not afraid to speak out and criticise when he feels things are wrong. This is a tremendous asset from which OSME has gained a great deal. I am delighted to say that Rod is continuing to serve as a co-opted Council member and will remain editor of the Turkish Bird Report. Thus we will continue to benefit from his knowledge and style, hopefully for many years to come.

Michael Rands

### Cover Auction

The original pen-and-ink drawing for the front cover of this Bulletin, a black-headed Yellow Wagtail by SM Andrews, measuring 18.5x21 cm, is for sale in a postal auction. The proceeds will go to the Conservation Research Fund. Please send your bid (no money at this stage) to Cover Auction, OSME, the Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, UK; to arrive by 31 July 1992. If your bid is successful, we will inform you immediately, and send the drawing on receipt of a cheque.



## Reviews

**Tribulus: Bulletin of the Emirates Natural History Group (Ed: Rob Western) Volume 1: No. 1 (April 1991) 36pp and No. 2 (October 1991) 40pp EHNG, PO Box 2380, Abu Dhabi, UAE. Free to EHNG members. Copies with OSME).**

Founded in 1975, the Emirates Natural History Group of Abu Dhabi published regular bulletins in stapled cyclostyle format from 1976-1990. Over that period, 42 issues emerged, including frequent bird reports and ornithological features. A comprehensive index by subject and author rounded out this phase of the EHNG Bulletin at the end of 1990.

Now in 1991, its successor *Tribulus* has appeared, professionally typeset and printed by the Emirates University Press of Al Ain. Two issues per year are

promised. As well as Recorders Reports and a regular Notes/Queries feature, articles on a wide range of natural history topics are included - many attractively illustrated by full colour photographs. Colour printing is effectively used too on front and back covers of each issue. Volume 1.1 appropriately focuses on the eponymous *Tribulus* flower (Zygophyllaceae); and volume 1.2 portrays two strikingly beautiful UAE migrant birds - Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* and Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*.

Of particular interest to OSME members is a bird list of 367 species for the UAE, and an article musing on another 50 that may confidently be expected to turn up there. Colin Richardson of Dubai is a co-author of both these papers, and unashamedly admits to six new species added to the official list even since his book was published late last year: Little Crane *Porzana parva*, October 1990; Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta*, September 1990; Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*, June 1991; Grey-headed Kingfisher *Halcyon leucocephala*, April 1990; Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*, October 1990; and Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus*, 1986 (Reviewed).

Adrian Chapman writes of a birding trip to Dalma Island (24°30'N 52°18'E) in October 1989; and Bish Brown et al describe a breeding colony of Crab Plovers *Dromas ardeola* on Abu al Abyadh Island (24°10'N 53°45'E) visited in the summers of 1990 and 1991. Sir Bani Yas Island (24°20'N 52°08'E) is currently being surveyed by EHNG on behalf of HE Sheikh Zayed, and is to be reported upon in a future issue.

Older Bird-persons (or do I mean Older-bird Persons) may also find the palaeontological work described in this volume of *Tribulus* of specific interest. I understand that numerous whole Ostrich eggs (thick-shelled) have been unearthed, along with the more exotic Miocene fossils mentioned, some of which are being displayed at the Natural History Museum in London from December 1991.

OSME Council will note with satisfaction the high degree of collaboration manifest between the local authorities and business enterprises on the one hand, and the international scientists and amateur naturalists on the other. The quality of the work being done and the manner of its presentation in the pages of *Tribulus* bodes well for the environmental cause in UAE. Best wishes for continued success with their surveys and conservation efforts, and in further enhancement of their already worthy Bulletin.

*Stan Howe*

**Türkiye Kuslari By I. Kiziroglu (1989) Ankara, 314 pp; and Türkiye'nin Av ve Yaban Hayvanlari: Kuslar By N Turan (1990) Ankara, 274 pp.**

In 1945, ERGENE published a book on the birds of Turkey. After a period of almost half a century, in which no comprehensive book on Turkish birds was available, two books have now been published at almost the same time. They are similar in style, and both give details on identification, habitat and distribution

of all species. İlhami Kızıroğlu's book was published by the Hacetepe University and is primarily for students' use.

Nihat Turn published his book privately, but as he is president of Turkey's largest hunters' club, hunters are the main address for the book. Although neither book is free of inaccuracies and mistakes, it is encouraging to see the growing interest in birds in Turkey even among organisations which do not have close contacts with international bodies.

*M Kasparek*

**Menderes-Delta. Zustand und Gefährdungen eines ostmediterranen Flußdeltas.** By R Brinkmann, J-U Heins, B Köhler and S Rösler (1990) privately published. 240 pages

The Menderes Delta is one of the largest river deltas in the eastern Mediterranean. Extensive lagoons, salt marshes, old river branches and fallow land form a unique landscape with a very rich wildlife. The authors carried out faunistic and floristic surveys during eight months in 1988 and 1989 and give a detailed description of the area and of the factors which threaten it. The most outstanding breeding bird is the Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus*, of which 42 pairs bred in 1989. Other breeding species include Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*, Spur-winged Plover *Hoplopterus spinosus*, Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*, Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* and Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*. Thousands of waders, ducks and Flamingos *Phoenicopterus ruber* winter in the area. The authors describe breeding, migration and wintering of 85 selected species.

The Menderes delta is visited by a good number of birdwatchers every year. Unfortunately, the authors made no attempt to include the results of others; not even the IWRB midwinter counts nor those observations published eg in the Turkish Bird Reports by OST/OSME were used.

The wetland system of the Menderes Delta forms more or less a unit with Lake Bafa, a former bay sea. Many bird species use both wetlands for roosting and feeding. Although there is a thorough study on Lake Bafa by the reviewer, the authors did not take this opportunity to make comparisons in order to show the close relations between both areas.

A certain laxity runs through the text: "Föhre" (German) is *Pinus sylvestris* (Scots Pine)(which is confined to northern Anatolia) and not *P brutia* (p.19). The Collared Dove is *Streptopelia decaocto* and not *Chlidonias leucopterus* (White-winged Black Tern) (p.87) etc. The authors present a lot of "migration diagrams", even for species which are definitively not migrants (eg Magpie *Pica pica* or House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*).

The authors come to the conclusion that the Menderes Delta should be protected as national park "according to international criteria" and they define several zones for the degree of protection. Unfortunately, this recommendation does not

make much sense, as the Turkish national park law does not allow zonation and it does not even prohibit the development of an area (like the Olimpos National Park which is one of the main tourist development areas of Turkey). Therefore, the authors' recommendation may go in the wrong direction.

They also recommend a "preserving and controlled form of nature-tourism" in order to give an economic basis for an integrated conservation conception. The power of this kind of tourism is clearly overestimated. If one takes into account that hundreds of tourists are necessary to secure the life of only a handful of local people throughout the year, one will quickly come to the conclusion that many thousands or even tens of thousands of tourists would have to come to the Menderes Delta in order to become a real regional economic factor which may form some basis of an integrated conservation concept and may thus compensate the economic loss of restrictions in fishery, agriculture etc. Tourism of this magnitude was apparently not in the mind of the authors.

*M Kasparek*

### **Zoology in the Middle East, Volume 5.1991. Edited by Ragnar Kinzelback and Max Kasparek. Heidelberg.DM 27.**

In this volume, five disciplines are covered in eight papers; mammals (one), birds (two), reptiles (two), insects (two) and leeches (one). By far the bulk of the journal's 118 pages are taken up with the two insect papers.

Of the bird papers, the first deals with the 'Preliminary results on the wintering of the Dalmatian Pelican, *Pelecanus crispus* in Turkey', while the second concerns the migration of the Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* in Bulgaria. The latter, by Rolf Uhlig, is in German, apart from a brief English summary. However the former contribution constitutes another important, and eminently readable production on this globally threatened species by Dr Alain Crivelli and his associates. A significant reduction in the numbers of Dalmatian Pelicans wintering in Turkey is documented. As only a relatively small, although variable proportion of these are immigrants from the Balkan states, this is indicative of a real decrease in the breeding population in Turkey. At the time of writing, there was no accurate census of the major colonies in Turkey, but DHKD is now organising more regular and far more complete counts of the known breeding areas, in addition to prioritising a project to develop an integrated management plan for the Menderes Delta, now one of the most important areas for the Dalmatian Pelican in Turkey. Perhaps the most vulnerable colony appears to be that at the Kizilirmak Delta, where once up to 25 pairs bred, but where now only a few pairs breed, and these only occasionally.

Once again, the journal is produced to the usual high standard of Max Kasparek publications, the Dalmatian Pelican paper will be particularly welcomed by conservationists with an interest in Turkey. It is hoped that in the future the increasing activity of DHKD will enable even more accurate and informed analysis of the species' status in the region.

*Guy Kirwan*

# Requests

## Colour-marked waders in The Gulf

In the course of studies on the effects of oil pollution on birds in the Gulf, more than 1,000 coastal Palearctic migrant waders had their underparts dyed yellow with picric acid during spring and autumn 1991 at Jubayl Industrial City on the Gulf coast of Saudi Arabia. The species involved were mainly Dunlin *Calidris alpina*, Little Stint *Calidris minuta*, Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*, and Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*. Any observers who see colour-marked waders in the Gulf region or elsewhere are kindly requested to report sightings to Mike Evans, ICBP, 32 Cambridge Road, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0PJ, UK.

## Ruddy Ducks in the Middle East

I am working on the distribution of the Ruddy Duck in the Western Palearctic. I should be extremely grateful if any reader could send me any information of its occurrence in the Middle East or North Africa. All contributions will be acknowledged in my work. Marcello Grusso, v. Cagliari, 2, 09095 MOGORO (OR), Italy.

## Vagrant birds in Seychelles

A Records Committee has been established to collate data on birds in the Republic of Seychelles, which also includes the coral limestone atolls of the Amirantes, Providence, Farquhar and Aldabra groups. It will assess and publish records of vagrants, as well as monitoring the populations of breeding species and migrants, with the ultimate aim of producing a full check-list. The members are Ian Bullock, Chris Feare, James Ferguson-Lees (chairman), David Fisher, Ron Gerlach, John Phillips and Adrian Skerrett (secretary), all of whom have spent much time in the islands. Past and present observations are needed of any species that have been reported less than annually. Lists are available from Adrian Skerrett, PO Box 336, Victoria, Mahe, Seychelles, to whom all records should be sent.



## Around the Region

This section details recent bird sightings within the OSME region. Whenever possible, the significance of the record will be included. Records are published for interest only, and their publication here neither implies acceptance nor rejection by the records committee of the relevant country. Any OSME member is welcome to contribute to this feature, and we are particularly keen to hear from anyone resident in the Middle East who could submit records. To submit records for Bulletin 29, covering the period March to September 1992, please write to: Around the Region, OSME, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, UK. Closing date for records is 15 September 1992.

Compiled by Guy Kirwan

All dates refer to the period August 1991 to February 1992, unless otherwise stated; and all records refer to single individuals unless numbers are given.

### Bahrain

**Caspian Plover** *Charadrius asiaticus* At least eight individuals, 30 August to 19 September. E Hirschfeld, T Stawarczyk

**Crab Plover** *Dromas ardeola* Small influx at ASRY in end of August and September, maximum five adults and one juvenile 24 August. Probably less than 10 individuals involved; adult and juvenile, Janabiyah 30 August; adult, BAPCO bay, 2 September. Rare, but annual, visitor in small numbers. Never before showing same regularity as in 1991. E Hirschfeld.

**Pintail Snipe** *Gallinago stenura* Dumistan, 28 September and 10-17 October; Janabiyah reeds, 14-16 October; Dumistan 6 January. First records for Bahrain. T Stawarczyk, E Hirschfeld

**Marbled Teal** *Marmaronetta angustirostris* With Teals *Anas crecca*, Al Areen 30 September. First record for Bahrain. The species occurs in Al Areen, but all individuals there are pinioned. E Hirschfeld, T Stawarczyk, J Semour

**Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni* Adult, Dumistan, 28 September. First record. T Stawarczyk, Dr Saeed Muhammed

**Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla* Adult and two juveniles, Janabiyah, 18-19 August; two juveniles, Janabiyah 30 August; Janabiyah 3-6 September. Rare, but presumably overlooked due to lack of suitable habitat. E Hirschfeld, J Ward

**Little Crake** *Porzana parva* Juvenile, Janabiyah reeds, 3-6 September. Scarce migrant. E Hirschfeld, J Ward

**Striated Scops Owl** *Otus brucei* Two injured, recovered Mina Suiman 5 November, and Awali, 6 November. Third and fourth records; birds examined in the hand. E Hirschfeld, J Samour

**Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis* Female or juvenile, UBF stream, 29 August; male Ghalali 11-15 November. Increasing species, suspected of breeding in 1990. E Hirschfeld

**Black-crowned Finch-lark** *Eremopterix nigriceps* Flock of five, north of Al Areen

16 October. First record for many years.

*E Hirschfeld*

**Small Skylark** *Alauda gulgula* First recorded Hamalah farm from 4 October, then at least 16 individuals throughout the period. Presumably a regular winter visitor. *E Hirschfeld, R Morris, T Stawarczyk*

**Richard's Pipit** *Anthus novaeseelandiae* At least 32 individuals from late September throughout the period. Previously considered rare, but probably an overlooked autumn and winter visitor. *E Hirschfeld, T Stawarczyk*

**White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba personata* Dumistan, 13 October. Third record of this distinctive form. *E Hirschfeld*

**Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* Small influx of around 20 first-winters, 20 August to 29 September for second consecutive year. *E Hirschfeld*

**Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola* Ghalali, 13 September. First record for Bahrain and third for Arabia. *E Hirschfeld, T Stawarczyk*

**Green Warbler** *Phylloscopus nitidus* Arad, 27 September. Second record for Bahrain; first was trapped on 1 May 1977. *E Hirschfeld, T Stawarczyk*

**Wood Warbler** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* ASRY, 11 October. Very rare migrant. *E Hirschfeld*

**Plain Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus neglectus* ASRY, 17 October. First record for Bahrain.

**Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva* Manama, 30 November to 2 December. Sixth record only, coincided with influx on the Gulf coast of Saudi Arabia. *E Hirschfeld, P & P Symens*

**Rose-coloured Starling** *Sturnus roseus* Adult, Dumistan, 30 August; Badan farm and Dumistan 14 November to 22 December. Second and third records for Bahrain; first was in October to December 1984. *S Jacobs, E Hirschfeld*

**Dead Sea Sparrow** *Passer moabiticus* At least 12, with House Sparrows *P domesticus*, Ghalali, 19 December; increased to 23, 20 December; 25, Badan farm, 22 December; increased to 90 by

end of month; up to 85, nearby Hamalah farm, 10 January. First records for Bahrain and only second for the Arabian peninsula (First was of migrating flock at Jubail, Saudi Arabia, November 1991). *E Hirschfeld*

**Red Avadavat** *Amandava amandava* Small flocks regular at Janabiyah since 1990 and presumed breeder; nine, Ghalali, 20 August until November. Introduced cage bird, probably establishing itself. *E Hirschfeld*

**Brambling** *Fringilla montifringilla* Male, Ghalali, 19-22 November; Mahrouz, 29 November; male, Badan farm 29 November. Tenth to twelfth records. *E Hirschfeld*

**Common Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus* Female or immature, Ghalali, and another, Arad, 11 September; four females or immatures, Arad, 13 September; female or immature, Ghalali, 14 September; Arad, 26-27 September. Fourth to eighth records only. *E Hirschfeld*

**Black-headed Bunting** *Emberiza melanocephala* Female or juvenile, Ghalali, 17 August, 5 and 8 September. Scarce migrant. *E Hirschfeld*

## Egypt

**White Pelican** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* 1,450 flying southwest, Bir Hasana, Sinai, 19 November, some of which were located later the same day farther south between Ras Sudr and Abu Zenima on Gulf of Suez. The largest party seen migrating through Egypt in recent years. *A Grieve*

**Red Kite** *Milvus milvus* Over Gebel Asfar, Cairo, 15 November. The first record from the vicinity of Cairo. *A Grieve*



**Dotterel** *Charadrius morinellus* Over Gebel Asfar, Cairo, 15 November. The

first record from the vicinity of Cairo.

*A Grieve*

**Striated Scops Owl** *Otus brucei* Wadi Taba, Sinai, 24 November. Third record for Egypt, the first this century. *A Grieve*

**Little Swift** *Apus affinis* Sharm el Skeikh, 21 and 22 November. Rare passage migrant. *A Grieve*

**Bimaculated Lark** *Melanacorypha bimaculata* Sharm el Sheikh, 23 November. Rare in autumn, only one previous record, though more common on spring passage. *A Grieve*

**Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* Na'ama, Sharm el Sheikh, 25 and 26 November; El Tur, Sinai, 26 November. Second and third records for Egypt. *A Grieve*

**Thrush Nightingale** *Luscinia luscinia* El Arish, 18 November. Latest autumn sighting for Egypt. *A Grieve*

**Finsch's Wheatear** *Oenanthe finschii* Three, Wadi Arish, 17 November. Rare winter visitor. *A Grieve*

**Thick-billed Warbler** *Acrocephalus aedon* In gardens at St Katherine Monastery, 20 November. The first record for Egypt and third record for the Western Palearctic. *A Grieve*

**Penduline Tit** *Remiz pendulinus* Two, El Tur, Sinai, 26 November. Rare winter visitor. *A Grieve*

## Israel

**Red-wattled Lapwing** *Vanellus indicus* Eilat, 28 January. First record. *Haim Hovel*

## Oman

All records have been accepted by the Oman Bird Records Committee (OBRC)

**Wedge-tailed Shearwater** *Puffins pacificus* Mirbat, 24 May 1991. *E Hirschfeld*

**Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster* Raysut, 16 May 1991; Mirbat 24 May 1991; off Taqah 25 June 1991. All South Oman. *E Hirschfeld, W F Simpson*

**Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis* Old records have been reviewed and rejected. The species is deleted from The Oman List

**Lesser Spotted Eagle** *Aquila pomarina* Al Ansab Dump, Sunub, 14 February 1991. Sixth record. *C M Greaves*

**Tawny Eagle** *Aquila rapax* Al Ansab Dump, Sunub, 21 February - 1 March 1991. First confirmed record of Tawny Eagle race. *C M Greaves*

**Demioselle Crane** *Anthropoides virgo* Two, near Salalah, 23 December 1990 to 9 January 1991. Ninth record. *I J A Brown, I McLeish*

**Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* Hilf (Masirah), 3 October 1990 and found dead 5 October; another there, 6-10 October 1990. Fifth and sixth records. *C M Greaves*

**Slender-billed Curlew** *Numenius tenuirostris* Two, Barr Al Hikman 6 and 8 January 1990. Second record. *J Uttley*

**Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea* One to three, Masirah, 9-14 July 1990; adult and immature there, 22 July 1991. Second and third records. *J Bryan, C M Greaves*



**Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger* At least one in non-breeding plumage, Masirah, 30-31 July 1991. Third record. J Bryan, C M Greaves

**Rufous Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia orientalis* Masirah, 5 October - 15 December 1990; and 13-19 February 1991. J Bryan, C M Greaves

**Little Swift** *Apus affinis* Wadi Hinna, Dhofar, 14 August. Sixth record. H & J Eriksen, C H Fry

**Grey-headed Kingfisher** *Halcyon leucocephala* Yalooni, 17-18 May 1991. First record for Central Oman. J Eriksen, A J Spalton

**Red-capped Lark** *Calandrella cinerea* Masirah, 7 January - 15 February 1991. First record. C M Greaves

**Eversmann's Redstart** *Phoenicurus erythronotus* Male, Masirah, 31 December 1990 - 11 January 1991. Eighth record. C M Greaves

**Naumann's Thrush** *Turdus naumanni* Masirah, 14 December 1990 - 17 March 1991. First record. J Bryan, C M Greaves

**Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella naevia* Qitbit, 16 August 1991. Fifth record. H & J Eriksen, C H Fry

**Reed Bunting** *Emberiza schoenioides* Hilf (Masirah), 12-13 December 1990. First record. C M Greaves

## Qatar

**Greylag Goose** *Anser anser* Flock of 17 flying over desert, 10 January. Scarce winter visitor; largest number to date. M and J Wooldridge

**Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* Pool near coast, 23 January. Scarce passage migrant; first January record. Bob and Helen Nation

**Great Skua** *Stercorarius skua* Fuweirit Sandspit, 17 January. First record for Qatar. Bob and Helen Nation

**Corncrake** *Crex crex* Doha, 26 September. Dead in NHG Chairman's garden; rare passage migrant. Bob and Helen Nation

**White-breasted Kingfisher** *Halcyon*

*smyrnensis* Wakrah Beach, 21 November. First record for Qatar; vagrant in adjacent eastern Saudi Arabia. A Hooper

**Bar-tailed Desert Lark** *Ammonanes cincturus* On gravel flats, 28 November. Very scarce, status unknown. Bob and Helen Nation

**Orphean Warbler** *Sylvia hortensis* In Doha garden, 1 September. Earliest record for Qatar. Scarce passage migrant. Bob and Helen Nation

## Saudi Arabia

**Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* 14, Wadi Rabigh, 24 January. First recorded indications wintering north of Jeddah. BS Meadows

**Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis* Yanbu Al-Sinaiyah, 10 November. Once previously (1986) at Yanbu. BS Meadows

**Imperial Eagle** *Aquila heliaca* Wadi Rabigh, 4 October, during large southward migration of Steppe Buzzards *Buteo buteo vulpinus*. Regular winter visitor to Central Arabia, but only once previously seen in Northern Hejaz in past 10 years. BS Meadows

**Verreaux's Eagle** *Aquila verreauxi* Pair, Jebel Fignal, 24 October. About 50 km from 1990 sighting (Bull 26: 62). BS Meadows

**Merlin** *Falco columbarius* Yanbu al-Sinaiyah, pale male, possibly *Fc pallidus*, 3 December. Once previously at Yanbu (in 1982), and there is a specimen of *pallidus* from Jeddah (Meinertzhagen 1954). BS Meadows

**Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* One pair bred, Yanbu al-Bahr salt pans. First breeding record for this site, but suspected once previously. BS Meadows

**Spur-winged Plover** *Hoplopterus spinosus* Pair and young, Masturah, 15 August. New breeding locality. BS Meadows

**Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse** *Pterocles exustus* Rabigh area, seen at two sites

(party of four and singleton). Reconfirmation of earlier siting (Bull 27:45). *BS Meadows*

**African Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia risegrisea* Pair, Madain Salah, 5 and 6 December. Reconfirmation of this most northerly extension of its range to date (Bull 26: 63). *BS Meadows*

**Little Rock Thrush** Wadi Al-Lith (Nakil Al-Nilah), around 280 km south of Jeddah, 22 November. New locality. *BS Meadows*

**Redwing** *Turdus iliacus* Yanbu al-Sinaiyah, 5 January; two from 9-16 January *BS Meadows*, *I Vickors*. First records for Northern Hejaz (and possibly Western Arabia). Fed on fallen dates at base of palm trees. Flock of seven, 4 km from the above site on 20 January. *I Vickors*

**Pygmy Sunbird** *Anthreptes platurus* Yanbu area, winter influx (first arrival on 17 October) for third year running and largest to date - particularly in landscaped areas of the industrial city (Bull 25: 46). *BS Meadows*

**Spanish Sparrow** *Passer hispaniolensis* Up to 450, Yanbu al-Bahr, at grain store, 10-17 January. Largest flock observed so far south in Hejaz. *BS Meadows*

## Saudi Arabia

**Cormorant** *Palacrocorax carbo* Jebel Armud, seen soaring with a pair of Golden Eagles *Aquila chrysaetos*. First record for Harrat al Harrah, and possibly for the Northern Region. *NCB/NCWD*

**Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* Ras Tanura 30 December *ICBP/NCWCD*

**Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* Roost of 40 at Rahima, Tarut on 30 November and 7 December. Largest flock. *ICBP/NCWCD*

**Greylag Goose** *Anser anser* Three, Safwa, 26 November. *ICBP/NCWCD*

**Red-breasted Merganser** *Mergus merganser* Female, Ranajib, 13 November. Possibly second record. *ICBP/NCWCD*

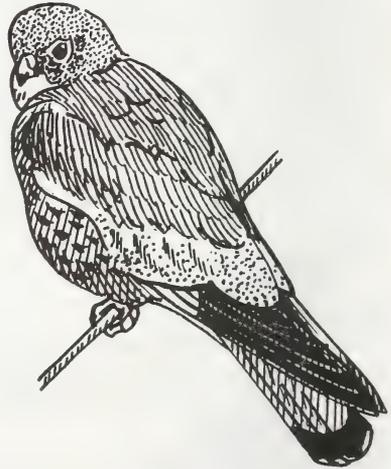
**Griffon Vulture** *Gyps fulvus* Harrat al

Harrah 12.6. First record for the reserve and possibly the Northern Region. *NCB/NCWD*

**Lappet-faced Vulture** *Torgos tracheliotus* 15, with 60 Griffon Vultures at a carcass, south of Tayma, 6 November. Unusual concentration in the Central Region. *NCB/NCWD*

**Imperial Eagle** *Aquila heliaca* Four sightings in Harrat al Harrah in November. No previous documented records for the Northern Region. *NCB/NCWD*

**Lesser Kestrel** *Falco naumanni* Probable colony, Jebel Armud 3 June. Five or more individuals present, including recently fledged, but not positively identified juvenile, thus only 'probably' the first breeding record for Saudi Arabia. *NCB/NCWD*



**Merlin** *Falco columbarius* Frequent sightings in Harrat al Harrah, November and December. *NCB/NCWD*

**Chukar** *Alectoris chukar* Not recorded in Harrat al Harrah since the records of Green in 1983 (Sandgrouse 6:48-58). Population would appear to have seriously declined. *NCB/NCWD*

**Grey Francolin** *Francolinus pondicerianus* Safwas, 18 November. First for Saudi Arabia. *ICBP/NCWCD*

**Houbara Bustard** *Chlamydotis undulata*  
Bred successfully in Harrat al Harrah, family party oversummered, and population was augmented in autumn by immigrants from north. *NCB/NCWD*. Two, Tanajib, 13 November; Safwa, 28 November. *ICBP/NCWD*

**Stone-curlew** *Burhinus oedicnemus* Pair present for most of June to 6 July, suggestive of breeding though not confirmed. Would be first for Saudi Arabia. *NCB/NCWD*

**Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva*  
Zur Bay, Tarut, 18 November. *ICBP/NCWD*

**Golden Plover** *Pluvialis apricaria* Jubail waste water lagoons, 17-23 November. Possibly first for Eastern Province. *ICBP/NCWD*

**Spur-winged Plover** *Hoplopterus spinosus* Pair, Doumat al Jandal, Harrat al Harrah 8 December. First record for Northern Region. *NCB/NCWD*

**White-tailed Plover** *Chettusia leucura*  
Two, wintering at Zur sewage lagoons, Tarut. *ICBP/NCWD*

**Great Knot** *Calidris tenuirostris* Zur, Tarut, 26 November. Fourth record. *ICBP/NCWD*

**Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* 329, Tarut Bay, 3 December. Flight numbers. *ICBP/NCWD*

**Eagle Owl** *Bubo bubo* A resident pair at Jubail. *ICBP/NCWD*

**White-breasted Kingfisher** *Halcyon smyensis* Holiday Inn, Jubail, 11 and 25 November/11 and 25/11; one at Daffi Park, Jubail, 23 and 27 November. *ICBP/NCWD*

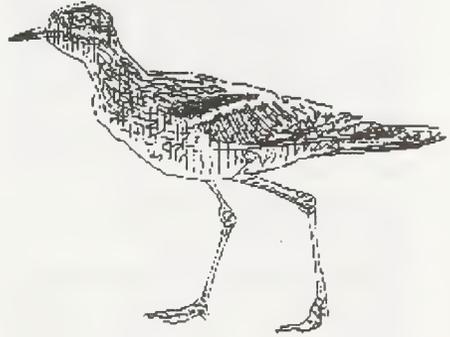
**Small Skylark** *Alauda gulgula* Three, Jubail Waste Water Lagoons, 17 November. *ICBP/NCWD*

**Grey Hypocolius** *Hypocolius ampelinus* Four, Jubail, 15 November; two, 22 November; nine, 28 November. *ICBP/NCWD*

**Evermann's Redstart** *Phoenicurus erythronotus* Two, Jubail, 16-17 November, one remaining until 19 November. *ICBP/NCWD*

**Fieldfare** *Turdus pilaris* Two records in

or near Harrat al Harrah November. Irregular winter visitor in Saudi Arabia. *NCB/NCWD*. Jubail, 3 December. *ICBP/NCWD*



**Spectacled Warbler** *Sylvia conspicillata*  
Male, Harrat al Harrah 25 November. Third record for Saudi Arabia, previous two in winter 1989 in same area. *NCB/NCWD*

**Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva*  
Jubail, 25-26 November. *ICBP/NCWD*

**Penduline Tit** *Remiz pendulinus* At least two, 20 November; three, 2 December.

**Dead Sea Sparrow** *Passer moabiticus*  
Flock of around 60, Jubail, 13 November. First for Saudi, possible Arabia. *ICBP/NCWD*

**Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs* Male, Jubail, 23 November. *ICBP/NCWD*

**Siskin** *Carduelis spinus* Four records in November in Harrat al Harrah A rare winter visitor to Saudi Arabia. *NCB/NCWD*

**Corn Bunting** *Miliaria calandra* Two records, November, Harrat al Harrah Rare winter visitor to Saudi Arabia. *NCB/NCWD*

## Turkey

**Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula* Female, Goksu Delta, 8 January. Uncommon winter visitor, the first record for this area. *V vanden Berk, B ter Haar, E Heunks, K Linders*

**White-headed Duck** *Oxyura leucocephala* Male, Kizilirmak Delta, 13

June 1991. First summer record from this locality (cf. Dijkzen and Kasperek 1985). *C Bradshaw, G Kirwan*

**Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus* Three, Goksu Delta, 8 January. Unusually far north in winter, very few previous winter occurrences. *V van den Berk, B ter Haar, E Heunks, K Linders*

**Little Bustard** *Tetrax tetrax* Female, Goksu Delta, 3 January. Only the ninth record since 1966, all other records in this period have come from the Central Plateau and the Ceylanpinar Ovalari (Kasperek 1988). *V van den Berk, B ter Haar, E Heunks, K Linders*

**Great Bustard** *Otis tarda* Nine, Goksu Delta, from late December to mid-January 1992 at least. Few records from the area, most recent in 1985 (Kasperek 1988). *V van den Berk, B ter Haar, E Heunks, K Linders*

**Caspian Plover** *Charadrius asiaticus* Two, juveniles, Bulanik, 3 August. Very rare migrant. *M Renner*

**Knot** *Calidris canutus* Kizilirmak Delta, 6 June 1991. About 20th record (cf. kasperek 1990). *L Dijkzen, S Baris, A van Dijk et al*

**Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica* Bulanik, 1 August 1991 *N Littlewood*; three Goksu Delta, 10 September, *G Kirwan, G Tucker, G and H Welch*. Uncommon passage migrant

**Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* Three, Ercek Golu, 27 July; four, Bendimahi Delta, 29 July 1991. Uncommon passage migrant. *N Littlewood*

**Arctic Skua** *Stercorarius parasiticus* Burdur Golu, 6 September. Unusual inland, although not unprecedented. *G and H Welch*

**Long-tailed Skua** *Stercorarius longicaudus* Adult, Kulu Golu, 3 June. *C Byers, R Chittenden*; two, Tasucu, 11 June *V van den Berk*. Second and third records for Turkey, and first in spring.

**Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla* Immature, Tasucu, 31 December. Only three previous sight, and one specimen record (Kasperek 1990). *V van den Berk, B ter Haar, E Heunks, K Linders*

**Aquatic Warbler** *Acrocephalus paludicola* First winter, Anamur, 5 September. Less than five previous records. *G Kirwan*

**Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides* Singing, Denizkent, Goksu Delta, 6 June. Two previous Turkish records, in October 1967 and May 1987. *V van den Berk, G Kirwan*

**Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* Adult male, Espiye, 16 May. Ninth record for Turkey (cf. Kasperek 1990). *G Kirwan*



## United Arab Emirates

**Mourning Wheatear** *Oenanthe lugens*  
10, Baynunah, Abu Dhabi, early  
November. Scarce winter visitor from  
October onwards. *National Avian  
Research Centre per R. Morris*

**Bar-tailed Desert Lark** *Ammomanes  
cincturus* Upto 10, Baynunah area, Abu  
Dhabi, late October and early  
November 1991. First live record,  
although has nested in Bahrain (cf.

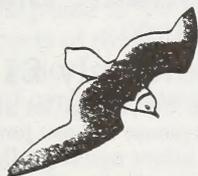
Richardson 1990). *National Avian  
Research Centre per R. Morris*

**Small Skylark** *Alauda gulgula* About  
eight, Baynunah area, Abu Dhabi, late  
October and early November 1991.  
*National Avian Research Centre per R  
Morris*

**Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva*  
Ruweis, Baynunah, late October.  
*National Avian Research Centre per R  
Morris*

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# Ornithological Society of the Middle East

c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, UK

The Ornithological Society of the Middle East was formed in April 1978 as a successor to the Ornithological Society of Turkey. Its aims are as follows:

To collect, collate and publish ornithological data on the birds of the Middle East.

To encourage an interest in and conservation of birds of the Middle East.

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. Until 31 December 1992, membership subscriptions are: £7 individual, £10 family; airmail £10 individual, £13 family. Life membership £150.

**Publications** *Sandgrouse* is the Society's journal and contains scientific papers on all aspects of the ornithology of the Middle East. The *OSME Bulletin*, issued twice yearly to all members, covers all aspects of birdwatching and conservation within the Middle East.

**For further details, please write to:**

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