

---

---

ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

---

---

OF THE MIDDLE EAST



---

---

BULLETIN 30  
SPRING 1993

# OSME Bulletin 30

Spring 1993

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 August 1993.** 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:** Hume's Tawny Owl (Cover); Grey Hornbill 4; Klaas's Cuckoo 5; Red-billed Tropicbird 6; Green Warbler 11; Griffon Vulture 13; White-headed Duck 14; Pygmy Cormorant 18; Blackcap 24; Citrine Wagtail 27; Crowned Sandgrouse 30; White Storks 39; Red-fronted Serin 41; Red-tailed Wheatear 42.

**Anna Marrett:** Ring-necked Parakeet 22; Nile Valley Sunbird 25.

**Hilary Welch:** Arabian Bustard 9.

We are grateful to the RSPB for the use of the following illustrations: White-tailed Eagle, Darren Rees, 33; Montagu's Harrier, John Busby, 35; Knot, Rob Hume, 40; Common Terns, John Busby, 44.

# OSME in Yemen: news from the field

Nine years after our initial enquiries into mounting an expedition to southern Yemen, it was with some relief that the team for the first half of the project arrived in Sana'a on Tuesday 16 March. This 'stop press' report is made after the expedition's first week in the field.

Thanks to the hard work of the expedition's agent in Sana'a, Dr Derek Harvey, and our helpful hosts at the American Institute of Yemeni Studies, we completed formalities remarkably swiftly.

We made good use of a 'permissions stop' in Ta'izz to check marshlands adjacent to Ta'izz sewage lagoons. Here we found a Spotted Thick-knee *Burhinus capensis* nest with two eggs – the first proved breeding for Yemen – a scattering of migrants and a third-winter Armenian Gull *Larus armenicus*, showing that non-breeding birds may occur farther south than previously documented (although this has long been suspected).

The status of the Ta'izz marshlands was, however, disappointing. One of the more extensive areas where the Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita* flock foraged regularly in 1985 has been completely drained for agriculture. On a happier note, during survey work for the Atlas of Breeding Birds of Arabia elsewhere in the southern uplands around Ta'izz, we discovered previously unknown marshlands in excellent condition.

The team continued southward, anxious to explore Jebel Iraf, on the border of the old Yemens. Recently identified by botanists as excellent for plants, we were not disappointed with the birds. We were delighted to discover a small area of Juniper forest. We spent three days in the area and found substantial populations of Golden-winged Grosbeaks *Rhynchostruthus socotranus* and Arabian Woodpeckers *Dendrocopos doraе*. Camping enabled us to concentrate on nocturnal species. Both African Scops Owl *Otus senegalensis* and Plain Nightjar *Caprimulgus inornatus* (previously known only from one record in Yemen) were discovered, and one of the latter was netted. This was virtually identical to the detailed description of the nearby continental populations presented in *Birds of Africa*. Jebel Iraf is clearly a priority for conservation and would be a candidate for inclusion in a network of protected areas in Yemen.

The expedition is now moving to concentrate on its central objective: fieldwork in what was South Yemen, together with an exploratory visit to Socotra. Transects to assess the bird communities typical of the principal plant communities of Yemen continue daily, with over 70 km undertaken so far. The future looks bright for more exciting discoveries and a successful expedition.

# Goodbye ICBP – welcome, BirdLife International!



On 3 March 1993, a new force for bird conservation was born – BirdLife International. The old International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP), with which OSME has worked so closely, has been transformed into this new global partnership. OSME hopes to work equally closely with BirdLife International.

Never have the threats to birds been so severe: around 10% of all bird species are now giving cause for concern. And never has biodiversity had such prominence in the world's media. But until now there has been no world organisation to fight for birds with the strength of some of the wider environmental alliances.

For all its merits, ICBP was a low-key body, rarely achieving the publicity it deserved. If you need confirmation of the importance of ICBP, read the review of *Putting Biodiversity on the Map* in this Bulletin; better still, read the report. BirdLife International, by contrast, will be a truly international partnership of the world's major bird conservation organisations, with all the power for action and publicity that brings.

Eventually, for each country there will be an official BirdLife partner. In the UK, this will be The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds; in Turkey, the Society for the Protection of Nature (DHKD) will assume the role. Many partners have already been announced, and negotiations are taking place with conservation bodies in many other countries. The BirdLife partnership will benefit them all.

BirdLife International will provide a forum for sharing expertise and resources and will provide a basis for international co-operation on a scale hitherto unseen in the bird conservation world. The time is right for this new, bolder partnership. OSME gives it our full support. It must succeed.

For more information about BirdLife International, please write to: BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA, UK.

# Priority bird species in the Republic of Yemen – a provisional assessment

*Richard Porter*

In a previous OSME Bulletin (Porter 1991), I prepared a provisional list of Priority Bird Species in Turkey, with the intention of inviting comment. This paper attempts the same objective, but for the Republic of Yemen (in 1990 the Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen) and Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen) combined to form one country). The paper excludes Socotra and its neighbouring islands.

The reason for preparing priority species lists is to direct conservation action at those species (and their habitats) which are at most risk or for which the country has a regional or international responsibility.

Nine criteria were established to determine species for inclusion in the priority list (Table 1) and these are listed below. The principle is similar to that used for preparing the Turkish list and also *Red Data Birds in Britain*. For full discussion see Porter (1991) and Batten *et al* (1990).

## **Endemic (End)**

Entire world population confined to Yemen (and in some cases adjacent highlands of SW Saudi Arabia).

## **Internationally significant breeder (IB)**

More than 20% of the world population, or 20% of the world range is in Yemen.

## **Internationally significant wintering/non-breeding (IW)**

Same criteria as above but for wintering and migrant populations.

## **Regionally significant breeder (RB)**

More than 20% of the regional (Arabian) population or range is in Yemen. Arabia is defined as the whole Arabian peninsula, north to the Mediterranean and including Syria and Iraq.

## **Regionally significant wintering/non-breeding (RW)**

As above but for wintering and migrant populations.

## **Rare breeder (Rare)**

Less than 300 known breeding pairs in Yemen. As there have been no systematic surveys of Yemen's breeding birds, in most cases this is a best guess.

## **Localised breeder (BL)**

Occurs in a small number of areas or specialised habitats. Generally 50% of the population occurs in less than 10 sites.

## **Localised wintering (WL)**

As above, but for wintering populations.

## **Declining breeding population**

Species for which there has been a marked decline in population or contraction of range.

## The sources of data and method

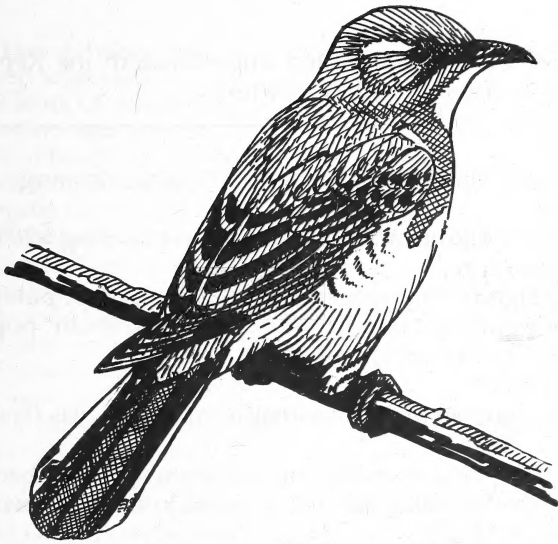
These criteria were applied to the 345 species on the Yemen list, and Table 1 was prepared using population and range data for Yemen and other areas of the world from a combination of: Brooks et al (1987), Cramp et al (1977 - 1988), Hall & Moreau (1970), Hollom et al (1988) and Snow (1978). It must, however, be clearly stated that because so few population data exist and because of the provisional nature of so many breeding and wintering ranges, Table 1 must be regarded as provisional. Nevertheless, I believe it to be a fair assessment of current bird conservation priorities in the Yemen even though very little is known about the southern part of the Republic.

## Discussion

It follows that the species that occur in Yemen that do not appear on Table 1 are not of such high priority in conservation terms as the 101 species that do. Examination of the various 'conservation' categories into which these 101 species fall is given in Table 2. Of these, the greatest priority must be given to the endemics, the species which breed and winter in internationally important numbers and those which breed and winter in regionally important numbers, especially if their distribution is localised. Because the avifauna of Yemen has been so poorly studied, especially that of southern Yemen, and because there have been no repeat censuses (even sample censuses) of any of its bird populations, it has not been possible to identify any species which is declining in numbers or whose range is contracting.

Nearly 40 (c. 70%) of the 56 regionally important breeders are African species whose most northerly population occurs in Southern Arabia. Similarly, over 60% of the rare breeders are species that are common in Africa.





As habitat conservation is arguably the most important aspect of species conservation, the 101 species of conservation concern were assigned to the habitats on which they mostly depend. These data are presented in Table 3. Broadly, this shows the importance of the highlands (in which most of the endemics occur), the uncultivated areas of the Tihamah, and the offshore islands which are the home of breeding seabirds. Unlike many other parts of the world, freshwater wetlands are relatively unimportant, but where they occur they act as a magnet for wildlife simply because they are at a premium.

I do not wish to comment further at this stage. One of the aims of the OSME survey of southern Yemen in spring 1993 is to collect data to enable further examination of this provisional list.

## References

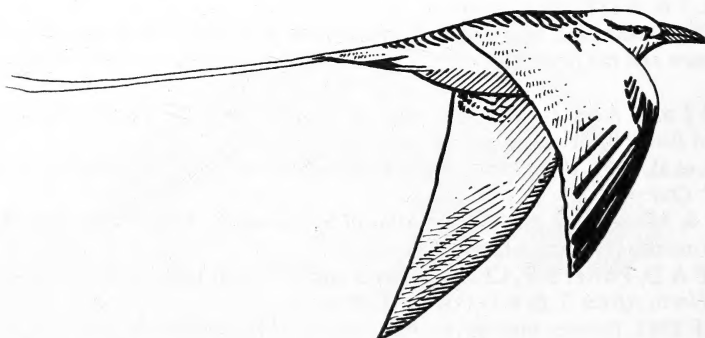
- Batten L A, Bibby C J, Clement P, Elliott, G D & Porter R F (1990).** *Red Data Birds in Britain*. T & A D Poyser, London.
- Brooks D J, Evans M I, Martins R P, and Porter R F, 1987.** *The Status of Birds in North Yemen and the Records of the OSME Expedition in Autumn 1985*. Sandgrouse 9:4-66.
- Collar N J and Andrew P, 1988.** *Birds to Watch: the ICBP World Check-list of Threatened Birds*. ICBP. Cambridge.
- Cramp S, et al, 1977, 1980, 1983, 1985, 1988.** *The Birds of the Western Palearctic Vols 1-5*, OUP. Oxford.
- Hall B P & Moreau, R E 1970.** *An Atlas of Speciation in African Passerine Birds*. British Museum (Natural History). London.
- Hollom P A D, Porter R F, Christensen S and Willis I, 1988.** *Birds of the Middle East and North Africa*. T & A D Poyser. Calton.
- Porter R F 1991.** *Priority bird species in Turkey*. OSME Bulletin 26: 1-8.
- Snow D W 1978.** *An Atlas of speciation in African Non-Passerine Birds*. British Museum (Natural History). London.

Table 1: The Species of Conservation importance in the Republic of Yemen according to criteria of entry (see text).

END	Endemic
IB	Internationally significant breeder >20% of world range/ population
IW	Internationally significant wintering/non-breeding >20% world range/population
RB	Regionally significant breeder >20% of Arabian* population
RW	Regionally significant non-breeder >20% of Arabian* population
Rare	Rare breeder (<300 pairs) best guess
DB	Declining breeder
BL	Localised breeder occurring in a small numbers of areas/specialised habitats
WL	Localised non-breeder, excluding species which number <1000 (eg grebes, ducks which quickly respond to man-made or temporary wetlands)
RED	A World Red Data Species (in Collar & Andrew, 1988)

\* Arabia is defined as the whole Arabian Peninsula north to the Mediterranean and including Syria and Iraq.

Little Grebe <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	Rare	BL
Jouanin's Petrel <i>Bulweria fallax</i>	IW	
Audubon's Shearwater <i>Puffinus lherminieri</i>	RW	
Red-billed Tropicbird <i>Phaethon aethereus</i>	RB?	BL
Masked Booby <i>Sula dactylatra</i>	RB	BL
Brown Booby <i>Sula leucogaster</i>	RB	BL
Pink-backed Pelican <i>Pelecanus rufescens</i>	RB	BL
Green-backed Heron <i>Butorides striatus</i>	BL	





Goliath Heron <i>Ardea goliath</i>	RB	Rare	BL
Hamerkop <i>Scopus umbretta</i>	RB		
Abdim's Stork <i>Ciconia abdimii</i>	RB	BL	
Bald Ibis <i>Geronticus eremita</i>	RW	WL	RED
Black-shouldered Kite <i>Elanus caeruleus</i>	RB	Rare	BL
Black Kite <i>Milvus migrans</i>	RB		
Lammergeier <i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>	RB		
Bateleur <i>Terathopius ecaudatus</i>	RB	Rare	BL
Dark Chanting Goshawk <i>Melierax metabates</i>	RB		
Gabar Goshawk <i>Micronisus gabar</i>	RB	Rare	BL
Shikra <i>Accipiter badius</i>	RB	Rare	
Buzzard <i>Buteo buteo</i>	RW		
Tawny Eagle <i>Aquila rapax</i>	RB		
Steppe Eagle <i>Aquila nipalensis</i>	RW		
Verreaux's Eagle <i>Aquila verreauxii</i>	RB	Rare	BL
Sooty Falcon <i>Falco concolor</i>	Rare	BL	
Philby's Rock Partridge <i>Alectoris philbyi</i>	END	IB	
Arabian Red-legged Partridge <i>Alectoris melanocephala</i>	END	IB	
Helmeted Guineafowl <i>Numida meleagris</i>	RB	BL	
Demoiselle Crane <i>Anthropoides virgo</i>	RED		
Arabian Bustard <i>Ardeotis arabs</i>	RB	Rare	BL
Crab Plover <i>Dromas ardeola</i>	RW		
Caspian Plover <i>Charadrius asiaticus</i>	RED		
Slender-billed Curlew <i>Numenius tenuirostris</i>	RED		
Sooty Gull <i>Larus hemprichii</i>	IB?	BL	
White-eyed Gull <i>Larus leucophthalmus</i>	IB?	IW	BL
Swift Tern <i>Sterna bergii</i>	BL		
Lesser Crested Tern <i>Sterna bengalensis</i>	BL		
White-cheeked Tern <i>Sterna repressa</i>	BL		
Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse <i>Pterocles exustus</i>	RB	BL	
Crowned Sandgrouse <i>Pterocles coronatus</i>	Rare		
African Collared Dove <i>Streptopelia roseogrisea</i>	RB		
Red-eyed Dove <i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>	RB		
Dusky Turtle Dove <i>Streptopelia lugens</i>	RB		
Bruce's Green Pigeon <i>Treron waalia</i>	RB		
Jacobin Cuckoo <i>Clamator jacobinus</i>	RB		
Klaas's Cuckoo <i>Chrysococcyx klaas</i>	RB	Rare	
White-browed Coucal <i>Centropus superciliosus</i>	RB		
Senegal Scops owl <i>Otus senegalensis</i>	Rare		
Spotted Eagle Owl <i>Bubo africanus</i>	RB		
Barn Owl <i>Tyto alba</i>	Rare		
Hume's Tawny owl <i>Strix butleri</i>	Rare	BL	
Plain Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus mornatus</i>	RB	BL	
Nubian Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus nubicus</i>	RB	BL	
Alpine Swift <i>Apus melba</i>	RB		
Palm Swift <i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>	RB		
Grey-headed Kingfisher <i>Halcyon leucocephala</i>	RB		
White-throated Bee-eater <i>Merops albicollis</i>	RB		
Abyssinian Roller <i>Coracias abyssinicus</i>	RB		
Grey Hornbill <i>Tockus nastus</i>	RB		

Arabian Woodpecker <i>Dendrocopos dorae</i>	END	IB	
Singing Bush Lark <i>Mirafrca cantillans</i>	RB		
Black-crowned Finch Lark <i>Eremopterix nigriceps</i>	RB		
Red-capped Lark <i>Calandrella cinerea</i>	RB		
Red-rumped Swallow <i>Hirundo daurica</i>	RB		
Richard's Pipit <i>Anthus novaeseelandiae</i>	RB	Rare	
Tawny Pipit <i>Anthus campestris</i>	RW		
Long-billed Pipit <i>Anthus similis</i>	RB		
Arabian Accentor <i>Prunella fagani</i>	END	IB	BL
Black Bush Robin <i>Cercotrichas podobe</i>	RB		
Black Redstart <i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	RW		
Stonechat <i>Saxicola torquata</i>	RB		
Isabelline Wheatear <i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>	RW		
Red-breasted Wheatear <i>Oenanthe bottae</i>	RB		
South Arabian Wheatear <i>Oenanthe lugens lugentoides</i>	END	IB	
Little Rock Thrush <i>Monticola rufocinerea</i>	RB		
Yemen Thrush <i>Turdus menachensis</i>	END	IB	
Yemen Warbler <i>Parisoma buryi</i>	END	IB	BL
Menetries' Warbler <i>Sylvia mystacea</i>	RW		
Arabian Warbler <i>Sylvia leucomelaena</i>	IB?		
Brown Woodland Warbler <i>Phylloscopus umbrovirens</i>	RB		
Gambaga Dusky Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa gambagae</i>	RB		
African Paradise Flycatcher <i>Terpsiphone viridis</i>	RB		
Arabian Babbler <i>Turdoides squamiceps</i>	IB		
Nile Valley Sunbird <i>Anthreptes metallicus</i>	RB		
Shining Sunbird <i>Nectarina habessinica</i>	IB?		
Palestine Sunbird <i>Nectarina osea</i>	IB?		
White-breasted White-eye <i>Zosterops abyssinica</i>	RB		
Black-headed Bush Shrike <i>Tchagra senegala</i>	RB		
Isabelline Shrike <i>Lanius isabellinus</i>	RW		
Fan-tailed Raven <i>Corvus rhipidurus</i>	RB		
Tristram's Grackle <i>Onychognathus tristrami</i>	IB		
Arabian Golden Sparrow <i>Passer euchlorus</i>	END	IB	
Lesser Rock Sparrow <i>Petronia dentata</i>	RB		
Rüppell's Weaver <i>Ploceus galbula</i>	IB		
Arabian Waxbill <i>Estrilda rufibarba</i>	END	IB	BL
Zebra Waxbill <i>Amandava subflava</i>	RB		
African Silverbill <i>Euodice cantans</i>	RB		
Arabian Serin <i>Serinus rothschildi</i>	END	IB	
Yemen Serin <i>Serinus menachensis</i>	END	IB	
Golden-winged Grosbeak <i>Rhynchostruthus socotranus</i>	END	IB	
Yemen Linnnet <i>Carduelis yemenensis</i>	END	IB	
African Rock Bunting <i>Emberiza tahapisi</i>	RB		

**Table 2. Summary of categories for species of special concern in the Republic of Yemen (for key, see Table 1)**

END	13
IB (excluding END)	8
IW	2
RB (Excluding IB and END)	56
RW only (excluding IW)	10
Rare	15
BL	27
WL	1
DB	not known



**Table 3. The main habitats in Yemen showing the number of priority species that depend on them.**

<b>Coastal</b>	
Offshore islands and maritime	10
Mudflats and mangroves	4
<b>Tihamah coastal plain</b>	
Sandy Wadis	9
Acacia/Commiphora bushland	11
Heavy cultivation	6
Dobera Parkland	2
<b>Highlands</b>	
Valley forests of foothills	11
Euphorbia/Acacia Scrub	7
Relict Acacia woodland	14
Escarpment ravines & high tops	17
<b>Freshwater wetlands</b>	5
<b>Interior desert</b>	1
<b>Non-specific</b>	4

*Richard Porter, RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, UK*

# Bird sites in Turkey requiring research during 1993

*Murat Yarar and Gernant Magnin*

In 1986, the then ICBP (International Council for Bird Preservation) initiated an ambitious project to list all the sites in Europe that are important for birds. To identify and describe the Turkish Important Bird Areas (IBAs), ICBP secured special funding and commissioned Max and Aygün Kasperek and Asaf Ertan (DHKD) to do the desktop and field studies and to write the inventory.

Much of the information which was used to compile the first IBA inventory came from foreign birdwatchers. After a lot of fieldwork in 1986 and 1987, the three authors accurately listed and described 79 IBAs. The inventory was published in Turkish and English, in 1989.

The inventory was the first of its kind and was therefore of great importance to decision makers and planners in Turkey. Even today, it is still the only site-reference work in Turkey and is so important that DHKD has reprinted the Turkish edition three times, twice with funding from the Turkish Ministry for Environment.

Since 1989, DHKD and ICBP have carried out an IBA project from the DHKD headquarters in Istanbul. Two full-time officers work for the project to identify the most important and threatened sites and work for their conservation.

As a result of large-scale bird surveys by, among others, WIWO, SOVON and OSME, and field surveys by the project itself and the increasing number of visiting birdwatchers, knowledge of Turkey's birds and bird sites have increased enormously. To date, 15 new IBAs have been identified. An updated IBA inventory is now planned for publication in 1994, but more information is needed for many sites.

If you wish to help the IBA project by visiting one or more of these sites please contact Murat Yarar, IBA project Officer, PK 18, 80810 Bebek-Istanbul, Turkey; fax (90 1) 279 55 44. DHKD especially wants to hear from drivers prepared to survey a number of these sites during the period April-June. There may be limited financial support from international organisations for such surveys. For 1993, DHKD will support two teams with 100 GBP each to spend at least two weeks surveying one or more of the sites mentioned below.

DHKD can provide Turkish birdwatchers as counterparts in some instances if required. Further details and maps of the sites can be obtained from the address at the end of this article.

The sites have been graded depending on how urgently we need to receive information as follows:

\* urgent; \*\* very urgent; \*\*\* extremely urgent.

## List of sites

### \* Longoz Ormani

*Location:* on the Black Sea, near the Bulgarian border, near the township called Igneada.

*Description:* inundated forests and few lakes; very good during migration.

*Information required:* breeding bird survey of some parts of the forest complex (minimum three days) during 15 May-15 June; observations of migration, spring and autumn (minimum one week each) during 15 March-31 May and 15 August-15 October. Winter data also welcome.

*Details:* about five hours drive from Istanbul; possible accommodation, and good camping; can be very wet in places even in summer; and most parts accessible only by four-wheel-drive or on foot or mountain bike.

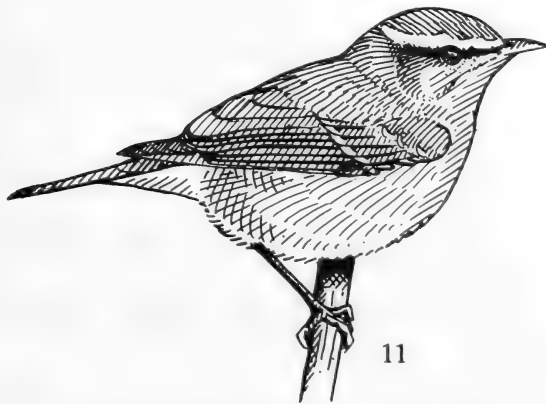
### \* Sülüklü Lake

*Location:* an alternative to the Istanbul-Ankara road is to turn south at Akyazi, about 20 km east of Sakarya (Adapazari). Some 50 km after Akyazi, before reaching Mudurnu, a track leads to the lake which, together with the surrounding forests, has the status of Nature Reserve.

*Description:* beautiful mixed forest with lake. Breeding of Green Warbler *Phylloscopus nitidus* confirmed in 1992, probably the most westerly breeding site.

*Information required:* this area should especially be investigated for owls (at night during February) and woodpeckers (during April-May). General breeding bird survey could be carried out during May and June.

*Details:* owl researchers will need four-wheel-drive cars to get to the lake and forests; may be inaccessible in February because of snow. Also accessible on foot but accommodation on-site not guaranteed; accommodation may be provided through DHKD and the Turkish forestry service.



## \* Yedigöller National Park

*Location:* north of Bolu, halfway between Istanbul and Ankara.

*Description:* lakes and forest area.

*Information required:* a one-week survey during May or June would provide a better understanding of the importance of this forest area.

*Details:* Excellent for camping; surveys on foot.

## \* Ilgaz Mountains

*Location:* near Kastamonu.

*Description:* forest area.

*Information required:* The Ilgaz montane forest area is well-known for its botanical importance, but little is known of its birds. A one-week survey during May or June would provide important new information.

*Details:* Excellent for camping.

## \*\* Köroglu Mountains: raptors

*Location:* south of Bolu, between Nallihan and Bey pazari.

*Description:* largely treeless, rocky area. The area seems very good for raptors: White-tailed Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla*, Griffon Vultures *Gyps fulvus*, Egyptian Vultures *Neophron percnopterus*, Golden Eagles *Aquila chrysaetos*.

*Information required:* large area to be surveyed for at least one week during May or June to locate major vulture colonies and possibly the territories of other raptors.

*Details:* four-wheel-drive vehicle essential. A large area has to be surveyed, and there is little information about where to start; the area is sparsely populated so surveyors should be ready to operate independently and be willing to cover long distances on foot.

## \*\*\* Balikdami Lake

*Location:* about 140 km southwest of Ankara, south of Sivrihisar, on the Sakarya river.

*Description:* freshwater marshes and river covering about 500 hectares. First described in 1992, Balidami Lake appears to have a rich avifauna: probably up to 10 pairs of Montagu's Harriers *Circus pygargus*, Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris*, Pygmy Cormorants *Phalacrocorax pygmaeus*, a tree colony of Night Herons *Nycticorax nycticorax*, Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta* and Squacco Herons *Ardeola striatus*, Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus*, and perhaps Cranes *Grus grus*.

*Information required:* A breeding bird survey is urgently required for at least six days in the period 1 May to 15 June. Information from the migration period is also welcomed, as is a waterfowl count during October-November or February.

*Details:* accommodation in tents or village house. Should be surveyed on foot; can be reached with some effort by public transport.

## \*\* Aksehir Lake

*Location:* near Aksehir, lake district.

*Description:* very large freshwater lake fringed with dense reedbeds. Research carried out in 1992 indicates possibly breeding Dalmatian Pelicans *Pelecanus crispus*. Large colonies of herons and cormorants.

*Information required:* better estimates of numbers of breeding birds and locations

of main nesting areas: one week survey required during May or June.

*Details:* small boat essential. Accommodation in tents or in villages around the lake.

### \* Eber Lake

*Location:* near Aksehir, lake district.

*Description:* large freshwater lake covered mainly with dense reed. No recent information, but known to be still very good for birds. Eber Lake is probably strongly related to Aksehir Lake hydrologically and ecologically.

*Information required:* one-week survey during May or June, ideally simultaneously with survey of Aksehir Lake.

### \* Sugla Lake

*Location:* south of Seydisehir, lake district.

*Description:* formerly 20,000 hectares lake, now little water and sometimes totally dry. This lake has suffered enormously from abstraction. Local fishermen are now without income, and the site is therefore now known as the Turkish Aral Sea. Complaints from locals forced the authorities to pump water occasionally, but extent of wetland at present unknown.

*Information required:* at least four days during 15 May-30 June should be spent by a team with a car to establish whether there are reedbeds or other suitable places with birds.

### \* Sütçüler vulture colony

*Location:* 70 km south of Egirdir, lake district.

*Description:* cliff faces in Taurus mountains. Probably eight nests of Griffon Vultures *Gyps fulvus* identified in 1992.

*Information required:* exact number should be determined during one day during May-June.

*Details:* accommodation in tents. There is a bus service from Istanbul to Sütçüler and regular buses from Egirdir to Sütçüler.



### \*\*\* Tuz Lake

*Location:* Central Anatolia, in the heart of Turkey.

*Description:* about 110,000 hectares saltlake. Presence of Turkey's major colony of Greater Flamingos *Phoenicopterus ruber* (11,000 nests) proved during aerial surveys in 1991 and 1992, but still little information on south and southwest which are probably extremely important. Extensive areas of saltflats and some springs or streams creating freshwater habitats.

*Information required:* breeding bird survey during May to June, for at least 10 days.

*Details:* Probably the area is largely inaccessible even with four-wheel-drive vehicles, and likely to require a lot of footwork.

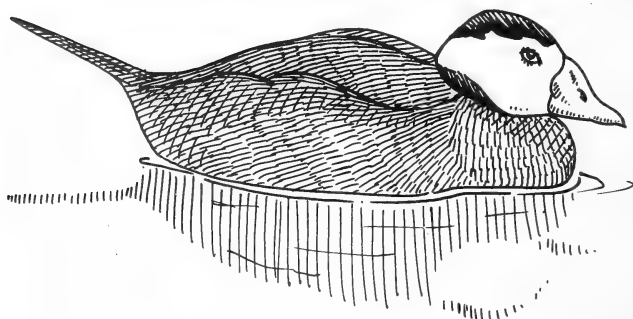
## \* Cöl Lake and Uyuz Lake

*Location:* 75 km south of Ankara on the way to Konya.

*Description:* Cöl Lake is a saline lake that dries up in summer: breeding birds include Greater Sand Plovers *Charadrius leschenaultii*. Uyuz Lake is a small freshwater lake south of Cöl Lake and has breeding Little Grebes *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, and probably several duck species such as the White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala*.

*Information required:* Cöl Lake needs to be surveyed for breeding birds, e.g. estimate of numbers of Greater Sand Plovers and Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea*. For Uyuz Lake, breeding of the White-headed Duck should be confirmed. Breeding birds and spring migration can be studied during the period 15 April-15 June (minimum of three days).

*Details:* accommodation in tent or, if asked politely, in village house. Best surveyed on foot. Can be reached by taking a bus to Konya from Ankara and getting out at the junction at Gölbek.



## \*\*\* Eregli Marshes

*Location:* east of Konya, west of city of Eregli.

*Description:* extensive marshes with patches of open water; one of the most important wetlands in Central Anatolia. Breeding Pygmy Cormorants *Phalacrocorax pygmaeus*, Dalmatian Pelicans *Pelicanus crispus*, several species of herons, Spoonbills *Platalea leucorodia*, Marbled Ducks *Marmaronetta angustirostris* and White-headed Ducks *Oxyura leucocephala*. Regularly visited by birdwatchers, but continuous monitoring of the site remains important for DHKD's conservation work: there is, amongst others, a serious threat of a bombing range for fighter jets to be constructed just west and north of the marshes.

*Information required:* after 15 June a good impression can be obtained of the size of the mixed heron colonies (there are several). Also important to obtain are estimates of the breeding populations of Marbled Duck and White-headed Duck.

*Details:* good for camping; car not required.



## **\*\* Sultan Marshes**

*Location:* south of Kayseri.

*Description:* Central Anatolia's largest and best known wetland, a true bird paradise. Although well-protected by its status as Nature Reserve, the area is threatened by irresponsible and uncontrolled irrigation and drainage schemes outside the reserve. Hence DHKD is working on the preservation of the site and needs updated information.

*Information required:* breeding bird information from selected parts of the area, obtainable by staying at one site for at least two days during June; spring migration (especially March-April) and autumn migration also welcomed.

*Details:* accommodation on site in Ovaciftligi. Car needed for complete survey.

## **\*\*\* Central Plateau: Lesser Kestrels *Falco naumanni***

*Location:* entire central plateau, especially Ankara-Eskisehir-Aksehir-Konya-Karaman-Eregli-Nigde-Kayseri-Kirsehir-Kirikkale.

*Description:* mainly flat; extensive steppes and agricultural land.

*Information required:* the Lesser Kestrel is rapidly disappearing from other parts of Europe as a result of changes in agriculture and has therefore become a conservation flagship in many countries. Spain and Turkey hold the largest numbers in the Western Palearctic, but there is no proper estimate of the Turkish population. OSME has mapped the known distribution up to 1990. Since then incidental observations suggest that the species is concentrated in the area mentioned above. Some regions within this area turned out to contain 15 pairs in every village and the total Turkish population may well be larger than the 5,000 pairs of the Spanish population. To obtain an impression of the size of the Turkish population, a team with a car could cover this area during two-three weeks in June, after having first assessed all existing information.

*Details:* a number of other central Anatolian sites could be visited during this survey. Financial support for this survey is probably available from international sources: serious candidates should apply now to DHKD. One car and three experienced birdwatchers, all drivers, would be needed for this difficult task.

## **\* Erzurum Plain**

*Location:* just north of Erzurum, northeast Turkey.

*Description:* extensive grassland plain at over 2,000 metres.

*Information required:* quick breeding bird survey, especially confirmation and estimate of number of breeding Cranes *Grus grus* (minimum two days) during 15 May-30 June; assessment of importance of the area during migration seasons, 15 April-31 May and 15 August-30 September.

*Details:* accommodation in Erzurum, can be surveyed on foot.

## **\* Ispir Vulture Colony**

*Location:* northeast Turkey, between Trabzon and Erzurum.

*Description:* cliff faces in Pontic mountains. The colony of Griffon Vultures *Gyps fulvus* probably holds over 15 nests but exact number has still to be determined. Also Lammergeiers *Gypaetus barbatus* and Egyptian Vultures *Neophron percnopterus* have been seen here and may breed nearby.

*Information required:* a survey would probably take two full days, during June.

*Details:* hotel in Ispir, five km from the colony.

### \*\*\* Hacli Lake

*Location:* few kilometres south of Bulanik, northwest of Van Lake.

*Description:* freshwater lake with marshes in southern parts.

*Information required:* only "discovered" in 1992, the lake needs a thorough breeding bird survey during the period 1 May-15 June for at least five days. Possible breeding birds include Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*, Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmaeus*, several species of small herons and ducks. Observations from spring or autumn migration also appreciated.

*Details:* accommodation in tent or village houses.

### \*\* Kuyucuk Lake

*Location:* about 50 km north east of Kars, east Turkey.

*Description:* about 220 hectares, freshwater lake at 1700 metres, surrounded by grassland. Only "discovered" in 1992, this lake contained over 200 pairs of Black-necked Grebes *Podiceps nigricollis* breeding in colonies in the water vegetation, and several pairs of Red-necked Grebes *Podiceps grisegena*.

*Information required:* information on breeding birds and spring migration can be obtained in the period 1 May-15 June (minimum two days) and information on autumn migration is also welcomed.

*Details:* car essential to reach the site from Kars. Accommodation in tents at the site or in hotel in Kars.

### \* Karli Lake

*Location:* east Turkey, Kars above Igdır, 15 km from Kars at 2200 metres.

*Description:* small densely vegetated wetland. Initial observations indicates that it may be important.

*Information required:* a one-day survey during June.

*Details:* can easily be surveyed en route.

### \* Saz Gölü

*Location:* at foot of Mount Ararat, east Turkey.

*Description:* complex of marshes, formerly probably larger. Present extent unclear and ornithological information should be updated.

*Information required:* Two or three days during June to give reliable impression.

*Details:* accommodation in nearby Dogubayzit. Can be covered on foot from Dogubayzit, which is accessible by public transport.

### \*\*\* Igdır Plain

*Location:* north of Mount Ararat, around but mainly north of city of Igdır, east Turkey.

*Description:* extensive cultivated area at 850 metres. Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*, Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters *Merops superciliosus* and Ménétries' Warblers *Sylvia mystacea* discovered here in 1991 and 1992, well-outside their known range. Exceptional climate and fauna because of low altitude (immediately next to Mount Ararat, 5137 metres).

*Information required:* thorough breeding bird survey should be carried out for at least 14 days during May or June.

*Details:* car essential because of extent; but area flat enough for mountain bikes. Good hotels in Igdır.

## **\*\* Marshes around Van Lake**

*Location:* Van Lake, east Turkey.

*Description:* IBAs 067, 069, 070, 072 are wetlands on the shores of Van Lake.

*Information required:* recent detailed information on the ornithological importance of all of these sites is lacking. Eight days of fieldwork during the period 1 May-15 June would be required to establish their importance again.

*Details:* One can hitch-hike around the lake.

## **New Birds of Turkey recording forms**

If you are travelling to Turkey, but do not intend to visit any of the sites listed below, you can still help by completing the new Birds of Turkey recording forms. From spring 1993, DHKD is asking all birdwatchers to standardise the way they submit their records so that the information can be entered into a sites and species database. This will revolutionise the conservation of species and habitats in Turkey. Many of Turkey's key habitats and important globally threatened species are under pressure from planned developments. DHKD has the energy and influence to prevent many damaging changes, but needs the help of visiting birdwatchers to collect the data to support their case.

Please contact Murat Yazar for forms. Detailed instructions will be provided and all contributions will be acknowledged in the new IBA inventory.

*Murat Yazar, IBA project Officer, PK 18, 80810 Bebek-Istanbul, Turkey. Fax (90 1) 279 55 44*

This list of sites is welcome. OSME would happily publish lists of sites that need surveying, or other projects that visiting birdwatchers could undertake, from any other part of the OSME region. Ed

## **Ahlat Marsh, eastern Turkey**

*Mark Cocker and John Temple-Lang*

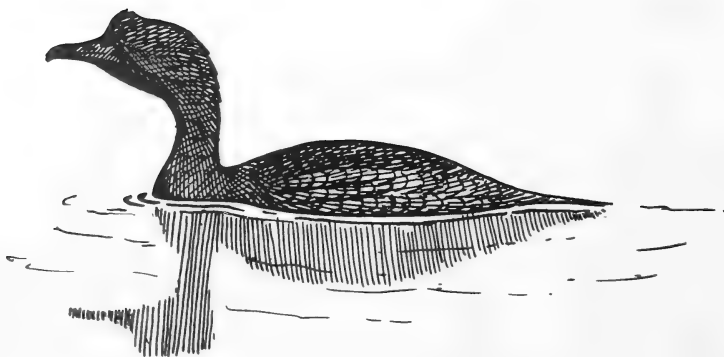
During June 1991 and 1992, the Naturetrek birdwatching groups to eastern Turkey have spent four nights at Ahlat, a small town situated about 20 km northeast of Tatvan, on the northwestern shore of Lake Van. On each occasion, a number of hours was spent at a small freshwater marsh, which lies approximately two kilometres southwest of the centre of Ahlat. Although it is a relatively small area (possibly less than 40 hectares in extent), the site was extremely good for birds, including a number of species listed in ICBP's *Birds to Watch*: Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmaeus*, Marbled Duck *Marmaronetta angustirostris* and White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala*.

Although Ahlat has apparently been known for some years as a regular site for the last of these species, it appears underwatched and under-recorded. This note is intended to alert others to Ahlat's potential and encourage more frequent coverage.

The site comprises an area of open freshwater around a small *Phragmites* reedbed. To the northeast and southwest of these are larger stretches of damp grassland. The limits of the marsh are marked by two roughly northwest to southeast flowing watercourses, of which the more easterly has been artificially embanked. The marsh is cut off from Lake Van, which lies immediately to the southeast, by the raised Ercis-Tatvan road. On the opposite (northwesterly) side, it is bordered by a steep slope, which rises to approximately 20 metres above the marsh. Almost the entire length of this slope is broken by small rivulets that flow into the marsh, which is also fed by natural springs.

Most of the site can easily be observed from the top of this steep ridge, including an area of open water (possibly the site of a large spring) in the middle of the reedbed. This is inaccessible and also invisible, except from the ridge above. It appears to be a valuable area for loafing ducks, notably White-headed Duck, which may also breed here.

The site seems to be used extensively by the local population. Cattle and other livestock graze all the accessible areas of suitable vegetation, and the reed is apparently harvested. The marsh would be difficult to drain, and there is at present no obvious conservation problem.



## Systematic list

The figures represent the maximum counts.

25-6 June 1991 22-3 June 1992

Little Grebe <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	3	6
Pygmy Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax pygmaeus</i>	4+	
Night Heron <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>		1
Squacco Heron <i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	1	
Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>		1
Great White Egret <i>Egretta alba</i>	1	
Purple Heron <i>Ardea purpurea</i>	1	
Ruddy Shelduck <i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>	3	2
Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>	40*	4
Teal <i>Anas crecca</i>	10	15
Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	5+	15+
Garganey <i>Anas querquedula</i>	2	3
Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i>	2	5
Marbled Duck <i>Marmaronetta angustirostris</i>	2	
Red-crested Pochard <i>Netta rufina</i>	1	
Pochard <i>Aythya ferina</i>	32*	80
Tufted Duck <i>Aythya fuligula</i>	8	4
White-headed Duck <i>Oxyura leucocephala</i>	5m, 1f	2m, 1f
Egyptian Vulture <i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	2	2
Marsh Harrier <i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	7*	6*
Montagu's Harrier <i>Circus pygargus</i>	2+	1
Hobby <i>Falco subbuteo</i>	2	2
Moorhen <i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	1	2
Coot <i>Fulica atra</i>	100+	100+
Black-winged Stilt <i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	c.10	5
Little Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius dubius</i>	2	
Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	30	c.20
Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>	c.15	c.20
Black-headed Gull <i>Larus ridibundus</i>		1
Armenian Gull <i>Larus armenicus</i>		c.30
Gull-billed Tern <i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>	1	
Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>	2	1
White-winged Black Tern <i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>	1	
Turtle Dove <i>Streptopelia turtur</i>		1
Bee-eater <i>Merops apiaster</i>	c.10	
Roller <i>Coracias garrulus</i>	2	1
Sand Martin <i>Riparia riparia</i>		3
Yellow Wagtail <i>Motacilla flava feldegg</i>	c.20	c.20
Citrine Wagtail <i>Motacilla citreola</i>		2**
Sedge Warbler <i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>		2
Red-backed Shrike <i>Lanius collurio</i>		1
Rock Sparrow <i>Petronia petronia</i>		4

\* Indicates proved breeding. \*\*Including singing male.

Mark Cocker and John Temple-Lang, 9 Primrose Road, Thorpe Hamlet, Norwich  
NR1 4AT, UK

# The Birds of Gezira, Egypt

*Derek J Evans and Klaas Douwe Dijkstra*

Those birds that choose the narrow passage-way which the River Nile provides on their migration through Cairo, Egypt, pass what is the green heart of this metropolis: the island of Gezira and the 140 hectares of clubs and gardens in its centre.

Gezira (Arabic for 'island') is almost 3900 m long and just over 800 m wide. To the west lies the broad Bahr el Ama, and to the east the Nile, which is at its narrowest beside the Marriott Hotel. The island covers an area of approximately 251 hectares. The northern half of Gezira consists of the totally built-up area of Zamalek; the clubs and parks are in the centre and south. The most ornithologically interesting and frequently visited part lies north of the 6th of October Bridge – the Gezira Sporting Club (GSC).

GSC consists largely of golf courses and trees. In the north of the complex, there are stands of mature trees, and in the south there are open golf courses and football pitches which are frequently inundated to encourage grass growth. In the northwest there is a walled area, surrounded largely by trees. This area includes a house with garden, tennis courts, a plant nursery and a pet graveyard. At the southwest end of the golf course is a walled football pitch, an overgrown garden, a *Ficus* plantation, a rubbish dump and a dilapidated building besides some unkempt bushes and tall grass. The southern perimeter is fringed by a row of bushes; several shallow and often dry ditches run through the whole area.

There have been rather few studies of birds in urban areas in the OSME region. The sightings listed below largely confirm the comments on species status made in *The Birds of Egypt* but some new information is presented. The article principally covers the years 1986-1988 with some records for 1989-1992; no observations were made during July or August. Access to Gezira Sporting Club and the National Sporting Club is by membership only, but other 'green' areas, especially around the Cairo Tower, are open to the public though considerably less peaceful. All these areas should be avoided on a Friday (except in the early morning) when they become particularly busy.

Following is a systematic list of the birds seen on or from the island of Gezira with particular reference to GSC.

**Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus* one on the Nile, 14 December 1991.

**Comorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo* 16 flew north over the Nile, 2 May 1987 and one beside the 6th of October Bridge, 28 and 29 November 1987.

**Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* one flushed from the Nile river bank adjacent to the Marriott Hotel, 17 March 1987.

**Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* many hundreds, sometimes thousands, overfly the area in the morning and evening on their way to and from the Giza Zoo colony/roost with smaller flocks passing all day during the breeding season. Wind force and direction affect flight lines: 1,324 were counted flying south to roost on 10 May 1989. Cattle Egrets rarely rest on the island, but are occasionally recorded pausing in riverside trees and feeding on the golf course.

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea* birds flying north over Zamalek include one on 25 March 1987 and two on 11 April 1990.

**Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* eight flew north over the British International School, 27 April 1988.

**Black Kite** *Milvus migrans* frequently one to three over GSC.

**Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus* frequently one or two over GSC; possibly breeding in the towers of the Marriott Hotel.

**Lanner** *Falco biarmicus* one, 20 September 1986, seen from Zamalek soaring over Bulaq to the east of the island.

**Steppe Buzzard** *Buteo buteo vulpinus* one, 1 May 1989, flew north over Zamalek.

**Black-shouldered Kite** *Elanus caeruleus* one, 25 September 1989, over GSC was an unusually urban record.

**Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus* one, 27 April 1990, over Zamalek.

**Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus* one in spring. (Guy Kirwan)

**Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis* along the Nile, singles on 1 March 1990, in October 1991, two, 14 December 1991 and one, 18 January 1992. These records are of wandering birds outside the breeding season.

**Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis* one along the Nile, February 1991.

**Quail** *Coturnix coturnix* singles at GSC, 29 October 1986 and 24 March 1988.

**Moorhen** *Gallinula chloropus* regular in small numbers in aquatic vegetation along the Nile.

**Coot** *Fulica atra* three on the Nile, 21 January 1987.

**Senegal Thick-knee** *Burhinus senegalensis* resident breeder on roof-tops in Zamalak; heard after dark over urban areas and along the river, but seldom seen.

**Spur-winged Plover** *Hoplopterus spinosus* one, 6 May 1987, GSC was an unusually urban record.

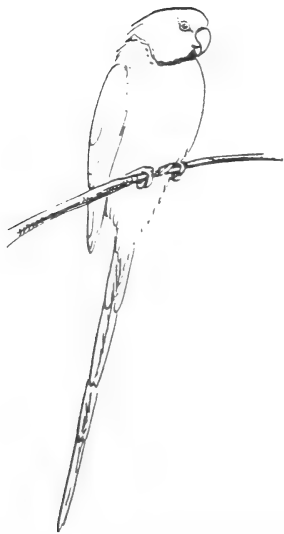
**Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos* one along the Nile, autumn 1990.

**Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus* winter visitor present in large numbers on the Nile from early November to early May, the latest record being a sub-adult, 8 May 1989. Birds move north along the river past the island each day at dusk during the winter months to roost at an as yet unknown site, probably on the Nile 10km to the north of Cairo near the Barrages.

**Lesser black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus* one adult on the Nile, 13 May 1989; probably under-recorded.

**Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur* three, 3 May 1989, at GSC.

**Palm Dove** *Streptopelia senegalensis* common resident breeder throughout the island; at dusk on 30 December 1986, a roost of 314 assembled in riverside trees along the Nile just north on the 26th of July Bridge. These arrived mainly from the central Cairo district of Bulaq to the east.



**Ring-necked Parakeet** *Psittacula krameri* resident in small numbers, maximum of six, most commonly observed at GSC and in the gardens around the Gezira Tower. The species seems especially attracted by the Silk-cotton tree and large, fruit-bearing *Ficus* species such as Banyan and Sycamore which also provide suitable nesting sites.

**Barn Owl** *Tyto alba* present in small numbers, probably breeding in the minarets of mosques and the towers of old villas.

**Long-eared Owl** *Asio otus* resident and probably breeding at GSC. The only previous breeding records in Egypt came from the Delta. (Lillian Goulty)

**Little Owl** *Athene noctua* one calling in Zamalek, November 1988.

**Pallid Swift** *Apus pallidus* breeds in the tall buildings of Zamalek and is common during the breeding season. In most years, the species is largely absent during November to January when it presumably winters farther south. During this period, small flocks of up to 65 birds occasionally fly south high over the island, but sometimes also appear to move north at dusk. The species returns in strength at the end of February or the beginning of March.

**Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** *Merops superciliosus* four, 13 April 1991, at GSC.

**Bee-eater** *Merops apiaster* spring migration over the island from the third week in April to the end of May with peak numbers usually during the second week of May; flocks of typically 20 to 65 birds. Autumn passage less obvious than spring, with birds from the start of September until the end of October; flocks typically 20 birds.

**Little Green Bee-eater** *Merops orientalis* apparently only a winter visitor, present from the second week in October until the first week in March; in groups of up to six wherever taller trees provide perching sites.

**Hoopoe** *Upupa epops* common breeding resident.

**Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla* singles at GSC, 17 March 1987 and 1 April 1988.

**Short-toed Lark** *Calandrella brachydactyla* at GSC in 1987: two, 17 March and 13 in flight to the northeast, 21 March.

**Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia* spring migration from mid-February to mid-May with maximum of 175 on 28 February 1987. No autumn records.

**Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* the Egyptian race *savignii* is a common resident breeder, but the nominate race is a surprisingly scarce migrant during March to May and in October.

**House Martin** *Delichon urbica* scarce spring passage migrant, March to May.

**Tawny Pipit** *Anthus campestris* the commonest pipit on the island. On spring passage from 19 March to 22 April, with an average of six per visit and maximum of 12 on 24 March 1987. Much scarcer in the autumn: two on 29 October and 5 November 1986. All recorded at GSC.

**Meadow Pipit** *Anthus pratensis* up to three between 4-19 November at GSC.



**Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus* passage and winter visitor in low numbers arriving at the end of September and recorded occasionally through the winter until the third week in April with peaks in November and March.

**Water Pipit** *Anthus spinoletta* at GSC three on 13 November 1986 and two on 1 and 8 December 1990.

**Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* one *feldegg*, 30 March 1987; and three not racially identified, 23 September 1989. Surprisingly scarce.

**Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea* three wintering along the Nile mud banks exposed due to unusually low water levels, 30 December 1986 and 21 January 1987.

**White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba* common winter visitor from the end of September until the end of April with maximum of 77 on 3 January 1987 at a pre-roost gathering at GSC.

**Common Bulbul** *Pycnonotus barbatus* common breeding resident.

**Rufous Bush Robin** *Cercotrichas galactotes* singles at GSC, 6 May 1987 and 22-23 April 1989.

**Robin** *Erithacus rubecula* winter visitor in small numbers to GSC and other suitable gardens on the island. Earliest arrival date is 18 November 1990, with a slight increase in December and again in March with final record on 30 March 1987.

**Nightingale** *Luscinia megarhynchos* up to three recorded in the very limited period 25 March to 13 April.

**Bluethroat** *Luscinia svecica* one or two at GSC, 27 November to 4 December 1986. Probably under recorded.

**Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros* winter visitor in small numbers, mainly to GSC, from 26 October to 21 March.

**Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* passage migrant, mainly at GSC; in spring from 4 March to 26 April with the bulk in April and in autumn from 22 September to 10 November with the bulk in November.

**Stonechat** *Saxicola torquata* winter visitor in small numbers to GSC from 4 November until mid-February, with the bulk of the records in November and December.

**Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina* early migrants recorded on 28 January and 4 February 1987 and singles, 17, 23 and 24 March 1988; always on the most open, driest areas of the golf course.

**Wheatear** *Oenanthe oenanthe* common spring migrant between 17 and 31 March, with an average of 10 per day and maximum of 15 on 26 March 1987. The only autumn record concerns three, 17 September 1989.

**Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka* one female, 31 March 1987.

**Black-eared Wheatear** *Oenanthe hispanica* one, 21 March and five, 25 March 1987; all of the *melanoleuca* subspecies.

**Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti* one female, 31 March to 1 April 1987.

**Blue Rock Thrush** *Monticola solitarius* one on roof-tops in Zamalek, 19 March 1989.

**Blackbird** *Turdus merula* formerly only a winter visitor to Egypt, this species has been breeding in the Nile Delta since 1984. Wintering at GSC and other sites on the island is now obscured by probable breeding pairs at a number of localities. Following is a year-by-year summary of this species' status:

1987 – A pair at GSC from 18 February with the male in alarm on 25 February, in song on 6 April, collecting nest material on 28 April and last recorded on 2 May. Singles in Zamalek gardens, 5 November and 17 December.

1988 – At GSC two, 3 January, and then a pair from 17 to at least 23 March with the male in song. One in Zamalek in November.

1989 – Pairs and song at two sites in Zamalek from January to May. At GSC just singles on 17 September and 19 October.

1990 – Pairs and song at four sites in Zamalek from January to June. At GSC five, 18 November, seven, 1 December and four, 8 December.

1991 – Pairs and song at three sites in Zamalek from January to April.

Taken together with breeding season records from elsewhere in and near Cairo and confirmed breeding at the Fayoum oasis 100km southwest of Cairo in April 1989, it would seem that this species is probably expanding its breeding range in Egypt.

**Song Thrush** *Turdus philomelos* winter visitor in small numbers from 17 October to 27 April with peak numbers in November and March.

**Fan-tailed Warbler** *Cisticola juncidis* scarce winter visitor to GSC from early November to early February. These records are of interest because they seem to demonstrate that this species is at least a partial migrant in Egypt.

**Graceful Warbler** *Prinia gracilis* common breeding resident; adults feeding young at GSC on the rather late date of 23 September 1989.

**Olivaceous Warbler** *Hippolais pallida* common migrant breeder. Earliest record is 7 March 1989, but more usually arriving during the last week in March. Noted collecting nest material on 13 and 22 April and feeding fledged young on 4-5 June. Last recorded during the first week of October.

**Subalpine Warbler** *Sylvia cantillans* in 1987 two, 17 March and singles, 19 and 24 March. Probably occurs every spring.

**Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala* winter visitor in small numbers, 1 December to 23 March.

**Rüppell's Warbler** *Sylvia rueppelli* up to three recorded at GSC in the very limited period 19 to 31 March.

**Lesser Whitethroat** *Sylvia curruca* the commonest *Sylvia* warbler, particularly attracted by insects high in silk-cotton trees. In spring from 11 March to 24 April and in autumn from 17 September to 8 December; records from the second week of November onwards probably represent wintering birds.

**Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis* the only two records are of singles, 31 March 1987 and 23 September 1989.

**Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla* the only records are of singles, 17 and 19 March 1987, 23 September 1989 and 10 November 1990.

**Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus bonelli* spring passage migrant in reasonable numbers between 19 March and 13 April with most during the last week in April.

**Wood Warbler** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* passage migrant in small numbers; in spring between 13 and 28 April with just one autumn record, 23 September 1989.

**Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus*



the only records are of two, 26 April 1987 and singles, 13 May 1987 and 17 September 1989.

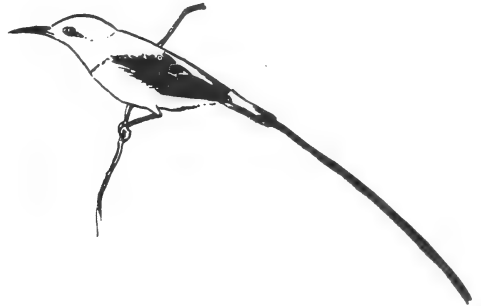
**Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita* common winter visitor from 17 September to mid-April with the largest numbers during the second half of November and again during the last two weeks of February and the first week of March. Song is especially noticeable during November when a large number of birds arrive and establish territories for the winter.

**Clamorous Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus stentoreus* one at GSC on 5 December 1991 undoubtedly wandered from riverside vegetation.

**Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata* singles, 26 April 1987 and 22 October 1988.

**Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis* just four records of singles at GSC, 1 April and 2 May 1987, 1 April 1988 and 13 April 1991.

**Nile Valley Sunbird** *Anthreptes metallicus* winter visitor to GSC in small numbers, 18 October to 13 March. Pairs are formed during this period; males have been seen in full breeding plumage by 6 February and song noted from 1 December. Sub-song was noted from one male, 8 December 1990; three birds together on 1 December 1990 bathed in early morning dew on the ground, and the species is particularly attracted to *Lantana camara* bushes.



**Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius senator* spring passage migrant in reasonable numbers, maximum of three, 17 March to 9 May.

**Masked Shrike** *Lanius nubicus* spring passage migrant, slightly less numerous than the preceding species and only ever singly, 17 March to 23 April.

**Hooded Crow** *Corvus corone cornix* common breeding resident.

**House Sparrow** *Passer domesticus* common breeding resident.

**Spanish Sparrow** *Passer hispaniolensis* at GSC, two, 24 March 1987.

**Greenfinch** *Carduelis chloris* at GSC in 1990, one in song, 20 February, four, 10 November and one, 18 November.

**Goldfinch** *Carduelis carduelis* probably resident with breeding likely in small numbers. Song noted April to June.

**Linnet** *Carduelis cannabina* at GSC singles, 29 November 1986 and 21 March 1987.

**Ortolan Bunting** *Emberiza hortulana* at GSC two, 21 to 23 March 1987, with one remaining until 25 March.

**Escapes:** Fischer's Lovebird during November 1986 and Budgerigars on a number of occasions.

## Acknowledgments

Thanks to Mindy Baha El Din, Lillian Goulty, Guy Kirwan and Anna Marett.

Derek J Evans, Alexandria Language School, El Nabawi El Mohandis Street, Mandara El Kebleya, Montazah, Alexandria, Egypt

# Diet of the Desert Eagle Owl in Harrat al Harrah reserve, northern Saudi Arabia

*Mike Evans and Paul Bates*

ME collected four owl pellets in the Harrat al Harrah reserve, northern Saudi Arabia, at 30° 40'N 39° 15'E on 16 November 1990. They were identified as belonging to an Eagle Owl *Bubo (bubo) ascalaphus* by their huge size (7 x 3 x 3 cm) and their location: a slightly overhanging natural hollow on a shallowly sloping, bare, open hillside, with no nearby cliffs or holes characteristic of the roosts of smaller desert owl species. PB identified mammalian remains in the pellets as belonging to two specimens of *Jaculus jaculus* (museum registration nos HZM.106.25089 and HZM.107.25091), one of *Meriones* species, either young/small *Mlibyscus*, or *M crassus*. Surprisingly, there were no *Gerbillus* remains, given the presumed abundance of this genus in the area (see maps in Harrison and Bates 1991, *The mammals of Arabia*).

The only other recognisable remains were of arachnids, comprising one young specimen of the scorpion *Apistobuthus pterygocercus* and at least two specimens of unidentified solifugids (M Goyffon in litt). The above rodent species, and scorpions, are known to be eaten by Eagle Owls, but invertebrate prey is generally infrequent in the species' diet. Solifugids do not appear to have been previously recorded (Cramp 1985, *Birds of the Western Palearctic*); it is not known how the birds deal with the scorpion's potent sting.

Thanks are due to the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development and the Nature Conservation Bureau Ltd, for the opportunity to work in Harrat al Harrah, as well as to M Goyffon of the Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris, for identifying the arthropod remains.

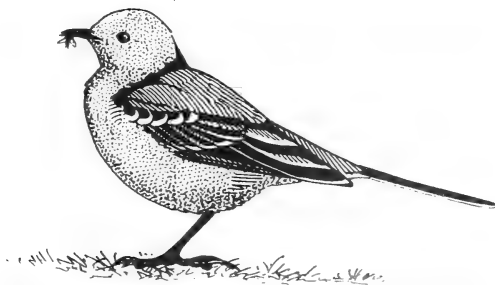
*Mike Evans, Montrose, Llanddeiniol, Llanrhystud, Dyfed SY23 5AN, UK*  
*Dr Paul Bates, Harrison Zoological Museum, Bowerwood House, St Botolph's Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3AQ, UK*

# A large breeding colony of Citrine Wagtails in eastern Turkey

Geir S Andersen, Magne Klann, Gunnar Sandve & Bjorn Olav Tveit

On 5 June 1992, during a visit to eastern Turkey, we found great numbers of Citrine Wagtails *Motacilla citreola* at Cildir Gölü. Cildir Gölü is a large saline lake at an altitude of 1970 m, close to the Armenian and Georgian borders. It is surrounded by fields, stony hills, and small patches of wet grassland and marsh. It is listed by OSME (*Bulletin 27*, p29) as a site from which ornithological observations are required.

We found Citrine Wagtails at two localities to the extreme south of the lake – the only two localities we checked. These were the two wetlands on the eastern side of the lake that looked most interesting from the main road.



The first was a small delta at the mouth of the southern river. We saw about 10 Citrine Wagtails along the river, on ploughed fields, in the delta and on the shoreline. The birds were well spaced out and were mostly searching for food. Two females were seen chasing each other in the wetter part of the delta. Only three or four of the birds were adult males.

The second locality was a couple of kilometres farther north on the eastern side of the lake. Here, a larger wetland lay around and between two streams, and between the shoreline and the main road. This areas abounded with Citrine Wagtails. We counted about 40, mainly males. They seemed to have territories in the wetter part of the marsh, standing erect on tussocks, flying short distances, chasing each other and being chased themselves by black-headed Yellow Wagtails *M flava feldegg*.

The behaviour of the citrine wagtails left us in no doubt that they were breeding, but as we didn't see any carrying food we presume that most of the females were incubating or had not yet laid eggs.

We did not make any effort to cover all of the marsh at the two localities, and we could see what looked like similar habitat in two or three more localities on the western shore. We therefore suspect the total number of Citrine Wagtails in the area exceeded our count of 50.

At both localities black-headed Yellow Wagtail was the most common species in and around the marsh, with unidentified Sedge/Moustached Warblers *A schoenobaenus/melanopogon* in the reedbeds and Skylarks *Alauda arvensis* on the fields.

Later the same day, we stopped at a small lake a few kilometres east of Ardahan, at an altitude of about 1800 m. Here we found one pair of Citrine Wagtails foraging on the fields around the lake. All the males we saw showed the characteristics of the subspecies *M c werae*.

Geir Sverre Anderson, Munkedamsveien 78 B, 0270 Oslo, Norway

## "Cinnamon-browed" white-eyes in Sana'a, Yemen

Derek Harvey

On 11 December 1992, while watching a group of Palestine Sunbirds *Nectarinia osea* feeding in Acacia trees in a mountain wadi at approximately 2,500 metres, I noticed a noisy flock of White-breasted White-eyes *Zosterops abyssinica* moving up the wadi through the Acacias. There were approximately 30 birds, and they all had cinnamon-coloured foreheads, the colour extending around the sides of the cheeks and down on to the chin. So consistent was this cinnamon patch, that I searched the books for reference to some sub-species unknown to me, but found none.

I returned with friends twice during the next week, and each time saw the same flock with the same characteristic cinnamon foreheads. On the third occasion, two birds flew down to a patch of purple flowers growing against a wall, to feed deep into the flower heads.

On investigation, the plants were identified as *Acanthus Arboreus*, not unlike a prickly Foxglove *Digitalis*, and in the base of each flower was a sticky, hairy seed with purple pollen adhering to the hairs. The explanation was clear, and since the plants ceased flowering, the resident white-eyes have reverted to their normal plumage.

Pollen staining of plumage is well known. Gallagher and Woodcock (1980 *The Birds of Oman*) commented on the common appearance of

yellow on the forehead of white-eyes, and I have seen similar patches on individual sunbirds, but I had never before seen so consistent a feature on a whole flock of birds over several days, nor had I seen purple discolouration.

*Derek Harvey, J O C Clinic, PO Box 19751, Sana'a, Republic of Yemen*

## **A change in the nut-cracking technique used by Hooded Crows in Kibbutz Netzer Sereni, Israel**

*Henk K Mienis*

Pecans *Carya illinoensis* are popular nut trees in agricultural settlements all over Israel. The nuts are also popular with birds, in particular the Syrian Woodpecker *Dendrocopos syriacus*, the Jay *Garrulus glandarius atricapillus* and the Hooded Crow *Corvus corone*, which are considered agricultural pests in commercial plantations.

Until about 10 years ago, the Hooded Crows in Netzer Sereni used only one technique for opening the nuts. They pulled the nuts from their husks with their bill and carried them to a flat, hard surface. There they grasped the nuts with their feet and started to break them open by pecking at them.

In 1984, we noticed that one particular crow opened the nuts by dropping them from a height of 10-15 m on to a tennis court. After a while, other crows followed its example, so that by the end of the season approximately 20% of the crows used this new technique.

The following year almost half the Hooded Crows employed the nut-dropping technique, and in 1986 the figure rose to almost 80%.

This winter (1992-1993), the grasping-pecking technique is, however, again very popular (about 60%). This is probably because this year's nuts have an extremely thin shell, which is easily smashed by one or two blows with the bill. The balance appears to be between the energy saving benefit of dropping nuts and increased piracy with this technique, with thickness of the shells being a deciding factor.

*Henk K Mienis, Zoological Museum Dept. Evolution, Systematics & Ecology, Berman Building, Hebrew University, 91904 Jerusalem, Israel*

# OSME News

## **OSME AGM 1993**

The fifteenth Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 17th July 1993, in the Palaeontology Demonstration Room, Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, South Kensington, London. Doors open at 1.00 pm for a 1.35 pm start. Full details are to be found on the programme enclosed with this Bulletin. Your programme entitles you to free entry to the Museum for the meeting.



## **Progress with Important Bird Areas in the Middle East**

*Mike Evans*

Since the project started in October 1991, participants have put together key information on at least 117 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) out of an estimated total of perhaps 450 in the region. There is still a large amount of work to do if the IBA book is to be published by the end of 1993. The rate of data compilation is now greatly increasing as people and organisations from all Middle Eastern countries become involved and make their contribution.

Some countries have already virtually completed the job of identifying and writing up the details of their IBAs, notably (numbers of IBAs in brackets) Kuwait (8), Bahrain (3), Jordan (17) and Lebanon (4). Substantial progress towards this goal has been made by contributors for the United Arab Emirates (20), Oman (33), Afghanistan (18) and Israel. Still in the early stages of data compilation are Syria (2), Qatar (2), Yemen (10) and Iraq. Data compilation is only just starting for the two giants of the region, Saudi Arabia and Iran, but this is not too worrying, given the co-operation of Saudi's NCWCD and Iran's DoE.



Most governmental or national conservation agencies in the region have already agreed to participate in or support the project, but new participants are always welcome. The financial, technical and administrative support for the project by The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds is greatly appreciated by BirdLife International and OSME.

Mike Evans, IBAME coordinator, BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA, UK

## News and Information

Compiled by Simon Albrecht and Tom Nightingale

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 acknowledgement here.

### Bahrain

#### *New Bird Recorder*

Erik Hirschfeld, who has done much to put Bahrain on the birdwatching map, has returned to his native Sweden after three years on the island. Howard King is the new Bird Recorder for Bahrain: c/o Bahrain Natural History Society, PO Box 20336, Manama, Bahrain, Arabian Gulf.

#### *Wader study*

Following the success of the first Bahrain Autumn Wader Study in 1991, ringers from Poland, Finland and France joined local ornithologists in Bahrain during autumn 1992 to repeat and expand the exercise. Between August and October 1,431 birds of 17 species were ringed, including Dunlins *Calidris alpina* (415), Little Stints *Calidris*

*minuta* (328), Kentish Plovers *Charadrius alexandrinus* (267) and Curlew Sandpipers *Calidris ferruginea* (214). Biometric and moult data were gathered; blood samples were taken from Dunlins for DNA analysis and efforts were made to determine a pattern in different migration timings of male and female, juvenile and adult birds of particular species appearing in Bahrain.

#### *Winter attraction*

Eight groups of birdwatchers visited Bahrain during autumn and winter 1992 to watch Grey Hypocolius *Hypocolius ampelinus*. For Martin Edwards of Canada, this scarce Middle Eastern speciality was his 5,305th tick. Bahrain looks set to welcome more

visiting birdwatchers during the often sunny months of November and December, when these attractive and otherwise elusive birds are best seen there.

## Iran

### *Bird-strike*

A Tristar airliner taking off from Shiraz in February 1991 suffered a double engine failure after hitting a large flock of crows which rose from the runway to meet the aeroplane at 50 feet. Flying on their one good engine, the crew dumped eight tons of fuel before calmly landing their 168 passengers back at Shiraz after a flight of six minutes. The repair bill for this major bird-strike came to over 2.5 million US Dollars. (Source: Bahrain Natural History Society Newsletter)

## Slender-billed Curlew

Last autumn, we reported that the Italian Government was helping to fund a road that would destroy the important wintering area for Slender-billed Curlews *Numenius tenuirostris* at Merja Zerga in Morocco. We understand that funds for the road are also promised from Kuwait. Conservationists are pressing for an environmental impact assessment and for the road to be re-routed.

## Kuwait/Gulf

### *Oil pollution*

Bulletin 27 in Autumn 1991 contained an initial report on the impact of the Gulf War on birds. Now there are reports in the British *Sunday Times* (21 February 1993) of White-cheeked Terns *Sterna repressa* in particular failing to breed owing to lack of fish food. Many White-cheeked Tern eggs have been abandoned, and any chicks that did hatch were eaten by Swift Terns *Sterna bergii*. Estimates now put the volume of oil spilled into the sea at 10.8 million barrels, with the pollution made worse

by the fallout from the smoke from the 500 million barrels burnt at the sabotaged oil wells. It seems that the effects of the oil pollution have taken time to work through the food chain with a delay on the failure of the terns' food supply. We hope to report further on this in *Bulletin* 31.

## Israel

### *Transmitter plans revived*

The Israeli government is apparently keen to press ahead with building a huge Voice of America radio transmitter in the Arava Valley in Israel, even though the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) ordered by the Israeli court in 1990 is incomplete.

The EIA was ordered after considerable opposition from environmentalists. The transmitter, which would be one of the largest and most powerful in the world, would cover a 8 km<sup>2</sup> site in the central Arava Valley. The site is one of the main migration routes for millions of birds, and large numbers would be likely to collide with the structures. There are also concerns about the disorientating effect of radiation from such a huge transmitter.

We hope that the government of Israel will give further consideration to the environmental consequences of building the transmitter, and will at least wait for the EIA report before making a decision.

### *White-tailed Eagles released to the wild*

A pair of White-tailed Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla*, raised in captivity, were released to the wild in mid-June 1992 in the hope that they will set up home in the Hula Valley. Electronic homing devices were fitted to the young birds to help keep track of them.

The White-tailed Eagle, classified as an endangered species, bred in Israel until the mid 1950s, when the remaining

two pairs – which had nested in the Hula and Beit She'an valleys – disappeared, probably because of the draining of the Hula and the increased use of pesticides.

Nature Reserve Authority officials say that two previous attempts to reintroduce the birds to their natural environment - in 1980 and in 1986 - were unsuccessful.



## CITES

### *New member*

Djibouti acceded to CITES (The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) on 7 February 1992 thus becoming the 113th member of the convention.

### *Dubai burns ivory stocks*

Ten tonnes of African Elephant ivory and two tonnes of rhinoceros horn were publically burnt on 22 January 1992. The estimated value was US\$ 2 million. Uniquely, the Dubai government paid compensation to the owners for their financial loss.

## Dubai – UAE

### *First bird tour*

Birdwatching tours have recently started to Dubai. The first two-week tour from Germany in spring 1992 saw 172 species. Birds seen included Arabian rarities such as Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola*, Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*, Pin-tailed Snipe *Gallinago*

*stenura* and Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus*. It is hoped that this new aspect of Dubai's attraction to overseas visitors will help to promote a new awareness among the authorities to conserve the country's birdlife.

## Cyprus

### *Springtime hunting resumed*

After two years ban, and despite strong representations from the Cyprus Ornithological Society, springtime hunting of migratory birds on Cyprus is to be resumed from 25 April. This can only add to the huge numbers of birds shot in the country (see the review of Birds of Cyprus in this Bulletin for more details). This is contrary to the UNESCO Convention concerning the protection of the world's cultural and natural heritage and the Berne Convention, both of which are ratified under Cyprus Law.

OSME Council has formally objected to this retrograde step in a world increasingly concerned with bird conservation. If OSME members wish to express their own views, they should fax Mr Glafkos Clerides, President of the Republic of Cyprus (Fax no. 357-2-445016).

### *Parks and reserves*

The state forests of Cyprus cover 161,820 hectares - about 18% of the country. So far, 10,091 hectares have been declared national forest parks and 1,043 hectares nature reserves. The two together amount to about 7% of all state forests. In addition, 41,000 hectares have been provisionally designated national forest parks or nature reserves. Thus the total area of land protected or awaiting protection amounts to about 32% of state forests and almost 5.5% of the area of the country.

### *Protection of sea turtles*

The sandy beaches of Toxevtra and Lara on the western coast of Cyprus

were designated as the "Lara protected region" by the Cypriot authorities in July 1989. The beaches are important for the breeding of Green Turtle *Chelonia mydas* and Loggerhead Turtle *Caretta caretta*.

## Yemen

### *Report on biodiversity*

BirdLife International has recently conducted the first ever survey of Yemen's biodiversity and made recommendations for its conservation. Over 3,000 plant species have been recorded in the country. Some 350 bird species have been recorded, of which 13 are endemic to southwest Arabia and five are globally threatened.

While Yemen has only a small area of 'wilderness', the traditional methods of land management, especially the extensive terracing of many escarpments and low-intensity agriculture, has allowed the biodiversity and local communities to survive side by side. Modern developments in agriculture and land use are now threatening this balance.

The report gives recommendations for environmental policy as well as proposing specific field initiatives. The challenge is to work with the Government and people of Yemen to maintain the diversity of biological resources for the benefit of people and the environment. The full results of the survey are published as ICBP Study Report No. 52. It is available from BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA, UK. Price: £5.00.

## Turkey

### *White-headed Ducks at Burdur*

A preliminary report on the winter ecology of the White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* at Lake Burdur has revealed the extent of illegal shooting. Possibly 1,000 White-headed Ducks

were shot out of a total less than 4,000 wintering on this, the world's most important winter site for the species.

Wildfowling at the lake is prohibited for two years out of three - last winter was the third, and even protected species were shot in huge numbers. Many of the hunters were apparently unaware of the White-headed Duck's protected status, and many reported the species to be easily shot.

The researchers, from the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, DHKD and Burdur Municipality, also found that industrial pollution and development pressures on the lake were high. In their full report, to be published shortly, the researchers will recommend action to safeguard the lake and its important wildfowl populations.

### *DHKD protects wild bulbs*

DHKD is concerned with wildlife in general, not just birds, and is now involved in a major project with the Flora and Fauna Preservation Society (UK) to protect Turkey's valuable wild bulbs from over-collection. The project has three main aims: to remove the pressures from wild populations of bulbs in Turkey by promoting village-based cultivation of threatened species; to secure a safe and secure income for those involved in cultivation; and to supply high-quality bulbs for horticulture. Success will mean that bulbs like Snowdrops *Galanthus* sold throughout Europe, North America and Japan under the label 'Grown in Holland' are less likely to have been taken from the wild in Turkey. We wish DHKD success with the project.

## Publications

The latest issue of *The Phoenix* reports new breeding species for Arabia. These include the Shoveler *Anas clypeata*, breeding in the early summers of 1988-1990 on desert sewage lagoons among

the construction of the vast new King Fahd International Airport, east Saudi Arabia. White-tailed Plovers *Chettusia leucura* bred casually on a small freshwater marsh/rubbish tip near Al Khobar in early summer 1992. Cuckoos *Cuculus canorus* were heard in north UAE and adjacent Musandem, Oman, during March 1992, indicating probable breeding.

Issue nine of *The Phoenix* is available from Michael Jennings, ABBA, 1 Warners Farm, Warners Drove, Somersham, Cambridgeshire PE17 3HW, UK. (Price £2.00)

*Oman Bird News* 13, Winter 1992-1993, publishes an account of following up recordings made of unusual night-calls in the Asir Highlands of southwest Saudi Arabia during November 1982. These have recently been identified as probably being those of breeding Mountain Nightjars *Caprimulgus poliocephalus*, a species newly discovered as occurring very locally in that region.

*Tribulus* Vol 2.2 (October 1992) contains the following articles of interest to ornithologists: "Distribution of Harriers in Arabia" by Erik Hirschfeld



& Colin Richardson; "Socotra Cormorants breeding in the UAE" by John Stewart-Smith; "Wildlife and Conservation in Eastern Yemen" by Michael Jennings. Colour photographs of Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga*, Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* and Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* are also to be found among its pages. *Tribulus* is available from OSME sales.

## The world's biggest birdwatch

On the weekend of 9/10 October 1993, BirdLife International aims to involve one million people around the world in a giant birdwatch - Birdwatch '93. It is hoped that many organisations throughout the world will help make Birdwatch '93 a major success for conservation awareness and education.

BirdLife International invites you to take part.

You can use the event to raise money for OSME or any other organisation, recruit members, gain publicity or just to have fun! If you want to find out more about Birdwatch '93, please contact Birdwatch '93, BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA, UK.

## Request

### *Great Knots in the Gulf*

For a forthcoming *Sandgrouse* paper on the distribution and status of the Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* in Arabia, Robert Morris would like to receive any records of the species from within the OSME region. Please send records to: Robert Morris, 50 Great Clarendon Street, Jericho, Oxford OX2 6AX, UK, to arrive by 31 August 1993.



## Reviews

**Putting Biodiversity On The Map: Priority Areas for Global Conservation (1992).** By CJ Bibby, NJ Collar, MJ Crosby, MF Heath, Ch Imboden, TH Johnson, AJ Long, AJ Stattersfield and SJ Thirgood. 90 pages . Available from BirdLife International. £12.50.

This latest ICBP publication could hardly be more timely. At an abstract level, the last year has seen much wider acceptance of the need to conserve biodiversity, but in practice it is not at all clear that the fine words spoken by world leaders at the Earth Summit in Rio are having much impact.

The simplest response for conservationists is to take the moral high ground and point out that politicians, fixated with the short-term, are not prepared to put current material gain at risk for some Brundtland-esque vision of the future. But arguably conservationists have not been very skilled in promoting their own cause. Even the most committed of us would acknowledge that conservation is a tricky business, yet we do a lot less than we could to help decision makers through the maze.

Reports such as this are beginning to provide the type of information that is essential if we are to have any chance of slowing down the rate of species loss. On the basis that, at a global level, we neither wish nor are able to stop development (including land-use change), one of the key tasks is to steer it away from important conservation areas. By mapping concentrations of endemic bird species and showing that a great variety of unique wildlife inhabits a very small part of the world, the authors have made a very valuable addition to the guidance available.

The key facts bear repeating. Some 20% of all bird species are confined to just 2% of the Earth's land surface. The same places also accommodate 70% of the world's threatened birds and are of great importance for mammals, reptiles, amphibians, plants, molluscs and insects. Protection of these most critical areas for biodiversity would ensure the survival of a disproportionately wide variety of birds and other life.

Most restricted range birds are forest species and most of the 221 Endemic Bird Areas (EBAs) are tropical forest areas. There are equal numbers of island and continental EBAs, the former being generally smaller than the latter. The criterion used to define a restricted range species is one with a range of less than 50,000 km<sup>2</sup>, although more than half of all EBAs are smaller than 20,000 km<sup>2</sup>. With 63% of these located in just 10 countries, headed by Indonesia, the political implications of this work are substantial.

One mild concern is that, because this report is unusually well suited to practical use by decision makers, its findings will be closely scrutinised – the more so the more it is referred to. Clearer explanation on such matters as threat assessment, or at least reference to where underlying concepts are discussed more fully, would be helpful.

Another question arises from the case that is made out for birds being valuable indicators of biodiversity in general. Our relatively high level of knowledge of birds, and their wide distribution, are obviously major advantages. Further, from the evidence available it appears that, where avian endemism is pronounced, there is likely to be a high degree of endemism in other life forms. But the authors admit that the data to support this are fairly limited. The arguments for conserving places holding concentrations of restricted range birds are powerful in their own right. It would be disastrous if the findings of this report were called in to question because the 'indicator species' assertion had been over-played. Further work to support the thesis might be judicious.

Written from Sandy, UK, this review would not be complete without the northwest European perspective. Vital as the protection of EBAs is, care must be taken not to give decision makers the message that this is sufficient to conserve global biodiversity. The EBA concept is a very important part of a package that must also include measures to conserve more widely distributed and migratory species.

The most important point to make, however, is summarised in one sentence in the Foreword:

'The ICBP maps can be used right now as a reliable general blueprint for increased action in the field.'

The onus is on all members of BirdLife International to extract the maximum conservation value from this powerful new analysis.

*Graham Wynne*

**The Birds of Cyprus (1992). By Peter Flint and Peter Stewart. BOU Check List No 6 (Second Ed). 234 Pages 24 B/W, 15 Colour Plates. Available from British Ornithologists' Union. £18 UK. £20 Overseas inc P & P.**

The BOU should be congratulated for its continuing publication of these extremely useful guides based around 'check lists'. This is far more than an annotated guide to the 'Birds of Cyprus'. The authors have been meticulous in their presentation and updating of the information.

The introduction covers 35 pages of well-researched topics, from the history of Cyprus ornithology, geography and vegetation through migration and movement to bird killing and conservation.

On the latter, the suggestion is that up to 8 million birds are killed by liming and netting each year – in an island only 226 x 96 km!

The Check List itself is impressive, with in-depth accounts, particularly those covering resident species. There are, however, gaps to be filled in the Cyprus Check List and an equally well researched list of omitted species, in Appendix 1, provides an interesting read. For one, it highlights the complacency we all have occasionally in recording species that are a little too familiar. For example: Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*, one record – the observer did not realise the species was a rarity and thus took no description.

Ringling and recoveries are well presented but it is perhaps the remainder of the book that will particularly interest visiting birdwatchers. Sites of ornithological interest in Appendix 4 covers most areas, where to go, what to do and how to do it, with some beautifully drawn maps. This is followed by the Cyprus bird protection laws and protected species list, useful for both casual and investigative observers. The migration table in the final appendix provides the reader at a glance with which species are likely to be seen month by month.

The inclusion of colour and black-and-white plates to illustrate the wide variety of birds and habitats provides a nice finish to an excellent book. This is the authoritative guide to the island's avifauna. Any present or future visitor to Cyprus should get their copy now.

*Mark Andrews*

### **The Birds of Africa Vol IV, Broadbills to chats. (1992) By S Keith, E K Urban and C H Fry. Academic Press, London. £85.**

This is the latest volume in what is rightly described as the most authoritative and comprehensive work on the birds of Africa and is the first of four volumes dealing with the Passerines. It covers broadbills, pittas, larks, swallows and martins, wagtails, pipits, longclaws, cuckoo-shrikes, bulbuls, greenbuls, and thrushes, chats and their allies.

As in the previous three volumes, each species account contains information on range and status, detailed description, field characters, voice, general habits, food, breeding habits (if applicable) and references. Clear maps show breeding and wintering ranges within Africa and locations of extra-limital records. Additionally, there are brief introductory paragraphs giving a general overview at the start of each new family and genus.

Species entries are usually at least one page, with up to five pages for well-studied species such as Common Bulbul *Pycnonotus barbatus*. I checked the species accounts for several species I know well from Djibouti and found them all to be accurate and comprehensive. The 33-page bibliography and up-to-date inclusion of recent records clearly demonstrates the efforts put in by the editors.



A total of 311 species are covered in this volume, and all but two (Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* and Eastern Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe picata*) are illustrated on 32 superb colour plates by Martin Woodcock. The quality of the plates continues to improve with each volume, and I found the wheatear and chat plates particularly pleasing. Ian Willis' black-and-white sketches are used to good effect within the text to illustrate particular aspects of behaviour.

It is difficult to find fault with this book and although the price may put it out of the reach of some people, it is worth every penny. Everyone involved in this project is to be congratulated on producing an indispensable reference work.

Geoff Welch



## Around the Region

Records in *Around the Region* are published for interest only, and their inclusion does not imply acceptance by the records committee of the relevant country. To submit records for *Bulletin 31*, covering the period April to August 1993, please write to *Around the Region*, OSME, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, UK.

Compiled by Guy Kirwan

Records refer to single individuals seen between September 1992 and March 1993, unless otherwise stated.



### Bahrain

**White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia*. Two, Muharraq Airport, 25 October. Around 10 records. J Ward.

**Spotted Eagle** *Aquila clanga*. Al Areen, 11 December. Not annually recorded. P Yesou, J Samour.

**Montagu's Harrier** *Circus pygargus*. Juvenile, Hamalah Farm, 22 August; female, Hamalah Farm, 1 September; male, Al Areen, 10 September. Third-fifth records (cf Bull 29:35). E Hirschfeld, T Stawarczyk.

**Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus*. Al Areen, 10 September. First record since at least 1989. T Stawarczyk, J Samour.

**Great Knot** *Calidris tenuirostris*. Juvenile, Janabiyah, 17 September. Second record, first was in January 1990. M Fouquet, O Girard, H King, T Stawarczyk.

**White-tailed Plover** *Chettusia leucura*. Dumistan, 14-17 September; 17 November, 19 November-mid December. Scarce migrant, not annual. C Cedderoth, E Hirschfeld, P Yesou.

**Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni*. Dumistan, 25 September. Second record, first in September 1991. E Hirschfeld, T Stawarczyk.

**Kittlitz's Plover** *Charadrius pecuarius*. Non-breeding plumage, ringed, Dumistan, 20 August. First record for Arabia. E Hirschfeld, H King.

**Woodcock** *Scolopax rusticola*. Killed by car, Janabiyah, 4 December. J Bannon. Arad, 12 December. P Yesou. Sixth and seventh records.

**Pintail Snipe** *Gallinago stenura*. Janabiyah records, 23 October; another, 28 November 1-2; Ras Tubli, 27 November-late December at least. First records were in 1991. Cf also UAE. E Hirschfeld, J Ward, P Yesou.

**Egyptian Nightjar** *Caprimulgus aegyptius*. Up to five, Hamalah Farm, 29 August-mid December, one ringed, 11 December. A Forsten, T Numminen, T Stawarczyk.

**Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis*. Three, including a pair, Jasra, September-December. Nesting suspected in this area in 1990. M Fouquet, O Girard, E Hirschfeld.

**White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba personata*. Ghalali, 3 December. Fourth record (cf UAE). P Yesou.

**Moustached Warbler** *Acrocephalus melanopogon*. Janabiyah reeds, 18 September. Fourth record, and the earliest. M Fouquet, O Girard, T Stawarczyk.

**Penduline Tit** *Remiz pendulinus*. Three juveniles, ASRY, 20 November. Fourth record. E Hirschfeld, S Rodebrand, K Loftberg, B Svantesson.

**Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva*. First-winter, Arad, 12 December. Seventh record. P Yesou.

**Scarlet Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus*. Hamalah, 7 September. Arad, 2 October. Eighth and ninth records. E Hirschfeld, T Stawarczyk.

## Cyprus

**Red-necked Grebe** *Podiceps grisegena*. Two, Potomas Liopetri harbour after storm 15 November. Accidental visitor, four previous records. Per David Whaley.

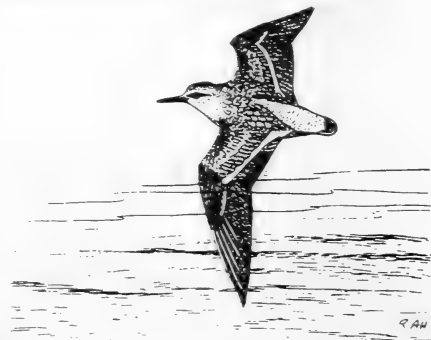
**Pygmy Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*. Asprokremmos Dam mid-December and late January, Mavrokymbos Dam 30/1/90, Mavrokymbos Dam 21 February. Scarce but possibly becoming regular visitors. Per David Whaley.

**Scaup** *Aythya marila*. Two drakes, Akhna Dam, 16-17 January. Four previous records, none since 1973. Per David Whaley.

**Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus*. Successful breeding in Paphos District and spring 1992. Four eggs, probably only one chick which fledged and flew. First Cyprus breeding record but nest may have been used before. Per David Whaley.

**Kittlitz's Plover** *Charadrius pecuarius*. Near breeding plumage, Paralimni Salt Lake, 4-6 January. Second record; first was in November 1991. Per David Whaley.

**Knot** *Calidris canutus*. Akrotiri, 22 August. Very scarce and irregular passage migrant. Per David Whaley.





**Armenian Gull**, *Larus armenicus*. At least six, Akhna Dam, 16 January, 17 Asprokremmos Dam, in large flock of Yellow-legged Herring Gulls (*Larus argentatus cachinnans*), 24 January. Either increasing or previously overlooked. *Per David Whaley.*

**Red-fronted Serin** *Serinus pusillus*. Akrotiri, 18 March. Second confirmed record. *Per David Whaley.*

**Red-tailed Wheatear** *Oenanthe xanthopyryna*. Cape Greco, 14 March. First Cyprus record. *Per David Whaley.*

## Egypt

**Long-tailed Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax africanus*. Abu Simbel, 23-24 October. Second record this century. *S Madge/Birdquest.*

**Yellow-billed Stork** *Mycteria ibis*. Abu Simbel, seven, 13 September; two, 14 September; seven, 23-24 October, were the only reports. *C Gibbins/S Madge/Birdquest.*

**Black-shouldered Kite** *Elanus caeruleus*. Resident with pairs noted in display August to December at Mandara and Montazah, Alexandria. Significant extension of range. *Derek J Evans.*

**Griffon Vulture** *Gyps fulvus*. Valley of Kings, Luxor, 2 December. Scarce winter visitor. *D Farrow.*

**Senegal Thick-knee** *Burhinus senegalensis*. Resident with pairs noted August to December at Roushdie, Mandara and Montazah, Alexandria. Significant extension of range and use of flat roof-tops noted as in Cairo. *Derek J Evans.*

**Greater Black-backed Gull** *Larus marinus*. Hurghada, 12 May. Second record. *M Davies et al.*

**African Collared Dove** *Streptopelia roseogrisea*. Abu Simbel, 23-24 October. Status at this locality remains uncertain. *S Madge/Birdquest.*

**Ring-necked Parakeet** *Psittacula krameri*. Up to 7 from August to December noted at Laurant and Montazah, Alexandria. Few previous records from the Alexandria area. *Derek J Evans.*

**Long-eared Owl** *Asio otus*. Dead bird carried by a boy in Laurant, Alexandria on 18 December. It has been shot locally as it roosted in a tree. Infrequently recorded. *Derek J Evans.*

**Alpine Swift** *Apus melba*. 20, nesting, Sad al Rawafa, Sinai, 10 January 1989. First breeding record (*Courser* 3: 62, *Brit. Birds* 86: 43).

**Wood Lark** *Lullula arborea*. Five, Montazah, Alexandria on 14 November. Rare winter visitor. *Derek J Evans.*

**Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola*. Female, Hurghada, 21 September. *C Gibbins*. Sharm-el-Sheik, 17-18 October. *S Madge/Birdquest*. Fifth and sixth records (cf *Bull* 29: 37).

**Dunnock** *Prunella modularis*. Montazah, Alexandria, 25 December. Rare and irregular winter visitor and apparently the first December record for Egypt. *Derek J Evans*.

**Cyprus Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe cyprica*. Abu Simbel, 23-24 October; first-winter, 31 January. *L J R Boon, S Madge/Birdquest*.

**Red-tailed Wheatear** *Oenanthe xanthopyrma*. Two, West Bank, Luxor, 2 December. Scarce winter visitor. *D Farrow*.



**Mourning Wheatear** *Oenanthe lugens*. West Bank, Luxor, 2 December 1992. Possibly only the second record of the form known colloquially known as 'Strickland's Wheatear'. The previous record was originally identified as *O picata opistoleuca* (cf *Bull* 24: 38). *D Farrow*.

**Blackbird** *Turdus merula*. Resident pairs and song noted August to December in gardens at Laurant, Roushdie and Montazah, Alexandria. Significant extension of range. *Derek J Evans*.

**Aquatic Warbler** *Acrocephalus paludicola*. Hurghada, 20 October. Second record. *S Madge/Birdquest*.

**Hume's Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus mornatus humei*. Sharm-el-

Sheik, 17-18 October. First record of this putative species. *S Madge/Birdquest*.  
**Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus*. Montazah, Alexandria, 9 November; two there, 10 and 14 November and 25 December; at Laurant, Alexandria, two, 18 December. Rare and irregular winter visitor, but perhaps overlooked. *Derek J Evans*.

**Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva*. Abu Simbel, 23-24 October. *S Madge/Birdquest*. Montazah, Alexandria, 23 October. Scarce migrant. *Derek J Evans*.

**Avadavat** *Amandava amandava*. Two, Luxor, 22 October. Most southerly record. *S Madge/Birdquest*.

**Chaffinch** *Fringilla coelebs*. Montazah, Alexandria, 23 October to year end, with maximum of 19 on 23 December. Scarce winter visitor. *Derek J Evans*.

**Siskin** *Carduelis spinus*. Montazah, Alexandria, 14 November; 13 there on 25 December. Scarce winter visitor. *Derek J Evans*.

## Israel

**Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus*. Two pairs breeding at Golan Heights reservoirs, 10 June. First breeding in Israel for 21 years. *B Shai/IWRG*.

**Streaked Shearwater** *Calonectris leucomelas*. Individual previously reported (*Bull* 29: 39) remained, and was joined by one, perhaps two others, 21 June-mid September. First record for Western Palearctic. *W Fletcher, J Morgan, H Shirihai* (see also *Birding World* 5: 344-347).

**Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster*. Eilat, 14-19 December. *L Boone, K Van Dijken, Z Ecsedi*.

**Pygmy Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax pygmaeus*. Five pairs breeding, Kinnaret Valley (Sea of Galilee), May 1992. First breeding record since 1940. At least 39 reported wintering from December onwards in two areas; En Afreq and Kfar Rupin. *B Shai/IWRG, J P Smith*.

**White Pelican** *Pelecanus onocrotalus*. 45,000. Ein Afreq, 1-20 November. *B Shai/IWRG*.



Velvet Scoter *Melanitta fusca*. Fourth record for Israel. (Photograph: J P Smith)

**Greater Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus ruber*. Eight, Atlit salt pans, May-September. First over-summering record. *B Shai/IWRG*.

**Scaup** *Aythya marila*. Female, Tishlovit Reservoir, Afula, 10 October. *J P Smith et al.*

**Velvet Scoter** *Melanitta fusca*. Two females, Kfar Ruppin, 4 and 8 December. *J P Smith, D Gosney*.

**Black Vulture** *Aegyptius monachus*. Two, Eilat, 5 November. Occasional and scarce passage migrant (cf *Birding World* 2: 88). *K Mullarney (Sunbirder)*.

**Golden Eagle** *Aquila chrysaetos*. Wintering on the northern coastal plain. Unusually far south in winter. *B Shai/IWRG*.

**Houbara Bustard** *Chlamydotis undulata*. Total of 350, western Negev, 30 January. *B Shai/IWRG*.

**Black-winged Pratincole** *Glaucola nordmanni*. Yotvata, 6-10 November. Scarce passage migrant. *K Mullarney (Sunbirder)*. Up to 35 (3 October), Kfar Ruppin, 12 September-17 October. *J P Smith*.

**Kittlitz's Plover** *Charadrius pecuarius*. Ma'agan Michael, 11-29 November. Regular in winter since 1989. *B Shai/IWRG*.

**Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva*. Adult winter, Kfar Ruppin, 11-12 October. *J P Smith, P Knaus*.

**Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus*. Eilat, 1-7 November. Rather late record. *K Mullarney (Sunbirder)*.

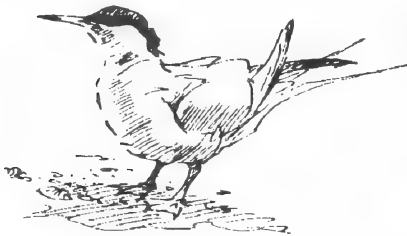
**South Polar Skua** *Stercorarius maccormicki*. Exact date was 28 June (*Bull* 29: 40).

**Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus argentatus*. Of nominate race (or possibly 'omissus'), Eilat, 2-5 January. Second record for Israel (this bird also seen as first record for Jordan). *L Boon, K Van Dijken, Z Ecsedi*.

**White-eyed Gull** *Larus leucophthalmus*. Maximum 57, Eilat, October, decreased to 50, start of November; 40, mid November; just two, 9 December; another, 26-27 December. *P Berry, L Boon, K Van Dijken, K Mullarney et al.*

**Sooty Gull** *Larus hemprichii*. First-winter, Eilat, 26 October, again 1-3 November. L Boon, K Van Dijken, K Mullarney (Sunbirder).

**Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla* First-winter, Eilat, 30 December. L Boon, K Van Dijken.



**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo*. Total of 575 breeding pairs, mainly in central coastal plain, in 1992, compared with 300 in 1991. B Shai.

**Striated Scop's Owl** *Otus brucei*. Eilat, 10 December-12 January. Rare winter visitor. L Boon, K Van Dijken.

**Small Skylark** *Alauda gulgula*. Four, Eilat and Yotvata, 12 November-4 December at least. L Boon, K Van Dijken, K Mullarney (Sunbirder).

**Buff-bellied Pipit** *Anthus rubescens*. Eilat, 17 December; perhaps another there, 20-31 December at least. L Boon, K Van Dijken, Z Ecsedi. At least two other winter records (Bull 29: 40).

**Finsch's Wheatear** *Oenanthe finschii*. Male, dead, Kfar Ruppim, 19 September. Early winter migrant. P Engstrom, M G Prince, J P Smith.

**Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola*. Trapped, Eilat, 22-30 October. Fourth record, most recent in November 1991 (Bull 29: 41). L Boon, K Van Dijken.

**Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus*. Yotvata, 7 November. K Mullarney (Sunbirder). Eilat, 4 January. L Boon, K Van Dijken. Rare migrant and occasional winter visitor (cf Bull 25: 44).

**Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus*. Neve Ytive, Golan Heights, 6 December. D Gosney, J P Smith.

**Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus*. Up to eight, Eilat and Yotvata area, 24 October-12 November. L Boon, K Van Dijken, Z Ecsedi, K Mullarney (Sunbirder); Kfar Ruppim, 1 October. J P Smith et al. **Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla*. First winter, Kfar Ruppim, 10 October. P Knaus, J P Smith.

## Kuwait

**Velvet Scoter** *M fusca*. Two, locality unknown, 10 January. C W T Pilcher, Mashhab.

## Oman

**Cory's Shearwater** *Colonectris diomedea*. Salalah (S Oman), 5 September. Seventh record, all previous records were in 1984-1985 (Hirschfeld in press). E Hirschfeld.

**Audubon's Shearwater** *Puffinus lherminieri*. 344, Salalah, 4 September. high count. E Hirschfeld.

**Masked Booby** *Sula dactylatra*. 634, Salalah, 5 September. Significant numbers (cf Bundy 1986). E Hirschfeld.

**Common Noddy** *Anous stolidus*. Off Salalah, 3 September; four, 4 September. Scarce and local breeding bird (Gallagher and Woodcock 1980). E Hirschfeld.

**Jacobin Cuckoo** *Clamator jacobinus*. Salalah, 6 September. Scarce passage migrant. E Hirschfeld.

## Pakistan

**Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula*. 60, Clifton Beach, 27 October, with 102 there, 28 October; 20, Mauripur, 29 October. Regarded as a scarce winter visitor, but probably regular, in Sind. C Bradshaw, G Kirwan.

**Great Knot** *Calidris tenuirostris*. 230, Clifton Beach, 27 October. A rare, but increasingly regular winter visitor (Roberts 1991). C Bradshaw, G Kirwan.

**Red-necked phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus*. Mauripur, 29 October. Unusually late, most birds have moved

offshore by this date (cf Roberts 1991).  
C Bradshaw, G Kirwan.

## Saudi Arabia

**Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus*. Five, Red Sea, 50km north of Umm Lajj, 11 December. Only seen once previously along this sector of Red sea (Al Wedj-rabigh). B S Meadows.

**Cory's Shearwater** *Calonectris diomedea*. Dead, Karan, N W Province, 17 July. First for Arabian Gulf and second for Saudi Arabia. G Keijl, P Symens.

**Bald Ibis** *Geronticus eremita*. Three, including a juvenile, Ta'if, late December-January 1993 (cf Yemen, Bull 29: 43, Newton 1992). P Symens.

**Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea*. Six, Yanbu al-Sinaiyah, 10 January. Scarce winter visitor - previous records have only involved 1-2 birds. B S Meadows.

**Red-crested Pochard** *Netta rufina*. Male, Yanbu al-Bahr salt-pans, 28 January. First since 1984. B S Meadows.

**Bateleur** *Terathopius ecaudatus*. Immature, Jeddah, spring 1992 (cf Phoenix 9: 8). H Millar.

**Imperial Eagle** *Aquila heliaca*. Two (both sub-adults) near Khaybar, 14 January. Few dated records from N W Arabia. B S Meadows.

**Sooty Falcon** *Falco concolor*. Jebel Bard, central Arabia, 1 May 1992. M C Jennings. Jubayl, 5 October. P Symens. Unusual records (cf Phoenix 9: 8). Yanbu al-Sinaiyah, along Red Sea over mangrovestands, 29 September. Twice previously at Yanbu (possibly nesting on local offshore islets). B S Meadows.

**Saker** *Falco cherrug*. Near Umm al Birak, 23 October. Three previous records from Central Hejaz. B S Meadows.

**Crab Plover** *Dromas ardeola*. 139, Abu Ali, NW Province, 21 August, 150 there 18 September. G Keijl, P Symens.

**Great Knot** *Calidris tenuirostris*. 7, Tarut, October. Fifth record (Bull 28: 57), see also records in Bahrain and UAE. P Symens.

**Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva*. Yanbu al Sinaiyah, along the shoreline, 7 January. Only one previous record along Red Sea mouth of Jeddah. B S Meadows.

**Great Snipe** *Gallinago media*. Yanbu, 2 October. First since 1987. B S Meadows.

**Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia*. First breeding in the Saudi Arabian Gulf area was recorded in Dee. P Symens.

**Saunders's Little Tern** *Sterna saundersi*. 15,000, near Jubayl, late September-6 October. P Symens.

**African Collared Dove** *Streptopelia roseogrisea*. Pair on 14-15 January. Madaiw Salih (see Bull 26: 23, 28: 56). B S Meadows.

**Hume's Tawny Owl** *Strix butleri*. Al Muwaylih, 27 November. New locality. B S Meadows.

**Plain Nightjar** *Caprimulgus inornatus*. Two seen, and another dead, south westhighlands, 6 June. Status in Arabia remains uncertain. A Stagg.

**Egyptian Nightjar** *Caprimulgus aegyptius*. Nominata race, 16 October. Yanbu al-Sinaiyah. One previous spring record at Yanbu. B S Meadows.

**Mountain Nightjar** *Caprimulgus poliocephalus*. Mistnetted, Asir, exact date unavailable. Final confirmation of the identity of the unknown species of nightjars present in S W Saudi Arabia since 1982 (cf Dutch Birding 14: 188, Phoenix 9: 5). S Newton, P Symens.

**Arabian Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos dora*. In acacia woodland, 9 October. Near Al-Hamra (about 75km east of Yanbu), new locality. B S Meadows.

**Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva*. Three, Yanbu al-Sinaiyah, 3 November; one, 6 November; one 18-21 November with second individual on 19 November. Only three previous records (all singletons) known from Co Arabia. B S Meadows.

**Rüppell's Weaver** *Ploceus galbula*. Three freshly-constructed nests in palms. Wadi Qudah (near Masturah) (see Bull 27: 46). The most northerly site known in Arabia. B S Meadows.

## Turkey

**Goldeneye** *Bucephala clangula*. Bendimahi, 12 May 1992. *E and N McMahon*. Female there, 21 July 1992. *G Magnin, L Nauta*. Both perhaps same as that previously reported (*Bull* 29: 44). **Great Bustard** *Otis tarda*. 68, Bulanik, 13 May. Significant numbers. *E and N McMahon*.

**Great Snipe** *Gallinago media*. Six, Cildir Gölü, 5 June. A comparatively late group (see Kirwan 1992). *G Anderson, M Klann, G Sandve, B O Tveit*.

**Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica*. Ercek Gölü, 31 May. Scarce passage migrant. *G Anderson, M Klann, G Sandve, B O Tveit*.

**Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus*. Two immatures, Igneada, 17 September. Second record for Thrace. *G Kirwan*.

**Desert Lark** *Ammomanes deserti*. One, 25 km northwest of Iğdir, 6 August. First record away from the Birecik area. *R Frost, J Hornbuckle*.

**Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka*. Family party, 25 km northwest of Iğdir, 6 August. Breeding records remain rare (cf *Bull* 25: 46). *R Frost, J Hornbuckle*.

**Fieldfare** *Turdus pilaris*. 30, north of Yenice, 17 September. Unusually early record. *G Kirwan*.

**Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola*. Six, Ercek Gölü, 11 May. First published record away from the Van marshes. *E and N McMahon*.

**Mongolian Trumpeter Finch** *Bucanetes mongolicus*. 11, 30 km west of Tuzluca, 3 June, 52 km south of Kars, 4 June. This brings the total number of records in Turkey to 11 (cf *Limicola* 6: 265-286, *Bull* 29: 45). *G Anderson, M Klann, G Sandve, B O Tveit*.

**Snow Bunting** *Plectrophenax nivalis*. 46, Kizilirmak Delta, 7 November. Second record since 1966, at a potentially regular wintering locality (cf *Bull* 29: 21). *S Baris*.

## United Arab Emirates

**White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia*. 51, various localities, 19 September onwards. First major autumn influx since 1984. *C Richardson*.

**Greylag Goose** *Anser anser*. Saffa Park, Dubai, 12 December. *C Richardson*.

**Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea*. Two, Sharjah, 2-19 November; 3, Ramtha, 6-7 December. Eighth and ninth records, most recent in 1991 (cf *Bull* 27: 46). *C Richardson, C Cedderoth*.

**Ferruginous Duck** *Agthya nyroca*. Sharjah, 12 November. *C Richardson*.

**Black-winged Kite** *Elanus caeruleus*. Rasal Khaimah, 6 November. Second record, first was in 1984. *C Richardson*.

**Spotted Eagle** *Aquila clanga*. Ramtha lagoons, Sharjah, 30 July. Unusually early. *C Richardson*.

**White-breasted Waterhen** *Amauornis phoenicurus*. Ramtha tip, 12 November-6 December. First record. *C Richardson*.

**Purple Gallinule** *Porphyrio porphyrio*. Ramtha lagoons, 24 November-2 December. Third record, first was in 1984. *C Richardson*.

**Oriental Pratincole** *Glareola maldivarum*. Emirates golf course, 23-27 November. First record for UAE and the Middle East. *C Richardson, S Rodebrand*.

**Sociable Plover** *Chettusia gregaria*. Three, Rasal Khaimah, 6 November. Seventh record, that previously mentioned (*Bull* 29: 46) becomes sixth. *C Richardson*.

**White-tailed Plover** *Chettusia leucura*. Ramtha tip, 17 September. Emirates golf course, 27 September and 16 October. Uncommon passage migrant. *C Richardson*.

**Great Knot** *Calidris tenuirostris*. 21, Umm al Quwain, 18 November, had increased to 90 on 26 December. Only fourth record (cf *Bull* 29: 46). *C Richardson, J Bannon*.

**Pintail Snipe** *Gallinago stenura*. Two, Emirates golf course, 3 September at least, then four, 3-10 December. Five, Ras al Khaimah and Dubai, late



November-late December. Fifth and sixth records (cf *Bull* 29: 46 and recent records in Bahrain). C *Cedderoth*, C *Richardson*.

**White-breasted Kingfisher** *Halcyon smyrnensis*. The individual previously reported at Ramtha tip remained until 17 September (cf *Bull* 29: 46). C *Richardson*.

**Small Skylark** *Alauda gulgula*. Ramtha, 6 December. Third record (cf *Bull* 29: 47). C *Cedderoth*.

**Richard's Pipit** *Anthus novaeseelandiae*. Nine between 1 and 30 November. Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor. C *Richardson*.

**Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni*. Near Dubai, 6-8 November; another in Abu Dhabi in early November. Fifth and sixth records (cf *Bull* 27: 46). C *Richardson*.

**Buff-bellied Pipit** *Anthus rubescens*. Abu Dhabi, 20 December. First record for UAE and Arabia. C *Richardson*.

**White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba personata*. Dhaid, 26 November. See also Bahrain. C *Richardson*.

**Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola*. Dubai, 7, 20, 29 August. Unusually early series of records. C *Richardson*.

**Forest Wagtail** *Dendronanthus indicus*. Abu Dhabi, late October. Fourth record, previous records were in November 1987 and November-December 1989. C *Richardson*.

**Eversmann's Redstart** *Phoenicurus erythronotus*. Female, Masafi, 17-20 November. Eleventh record, last were in 1990 (cf *Bull* 26: 65). C *Richardson*.

**Eastern Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe picata*. Four, Qarn Nazwa, near Dubai, 13 October. Usual wintering site. C *Richardson*.

**Hooded Wheatear** *Oenanthe monacha*. Male, near Hatta, 23 October. Status unclear. C *Richardson*.

**Radde's Warbler** *Phylloscopus schwarzi*. Emirates golf course, Dubai, 19 October. First record for UAE and Arabia. C *Richardson*.

**Dusky Warbler** *Phylloscopus fuscatus*. Abu Dhabi, 6-20 December. Second

record, first was in 1990 (cf *Bull* 26: 65). C *Richardson*.

**Rose-coloured Starling** *Sturnus roseus*. Two immatures, Dubai, 26 August. C *Richardson*.

**White-capped Bunting** *Emberiza stewarti*. Two, Emirates golf course, Dubai, 5-6 November. First record for UAE and Arabia. J *Bannon*, C *Richardson*.

## Yemen

**Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris*. Marib Dam, 20 November. Apparently a scarce winter visitor, perhaps regular. M *Ullmann et al.*

**Abdim's Stork** *Ciconia abdimii*. Three, Ta'izz sewage lagoons, 17-18 October; Ta'izz sewage lagoons, 11 November. Late records, although there is one December record. R *P Morris*, M *Ullmann et al.*

**Bald Ibis** *Geronticus eremita*. Three, including first-calendar-year bird, Ta'izz sewage lagoons, 17-18 October, again 11 November and 2 December. Further proof of undiscovered breeding site in SW Arabia (cf Saudi Arabia). J *Dunn*, R *P Martins* (*Sunbird*), R *P Morris*, M *Ullman et al.*

**Sacred Ibis** *Threskiornis aethiopicus*. Three adults, 2 km north of Hodeidah, 20 October. R *P Morris*. Two, 5 km north of Hodeidah, 7-8 December. J *Dunn/RP Martins* (*Sunbird*). Sixth and seventh records.

**Lesser Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus minor*. 61, including 32 sub-adults, 5 km north of Hodeidah, 7 December. Third record, previous have involved singletons. Regularly recorded however on Gulf of Aden coastline. J *Dunn/R P Martins* (*Sunbird*).

**Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea*. Eight, Hodeidah sewage lagoons, 6-7 December. Fourth record, all previous records have come from the same area. J *Dunn/R P Martins*.

**Gabar Goshawk** *Micronisus gabar*. Near Al Midman, 6 December. Under fifteen records, although an apparently resident breeder. J *Dunn/R P Martins* (*Sunbird*).

**Saker Falco cherrug.** Near Ta'izz rubbish dump, 3 December. Only 15-20 records. Seldom recorded. Apparently a scarce winter visitor. J Dunn/R P Martins (*Sunbird*).

**Harlequin Quail Coturnix delegorguei.** 2-3 males, base of Jebal Bura, 22 October. R P Morris.

**Spotted Crake Porzana porzana.** Amria, 11 November; Maribdam, 20 November. Very scarce migrant. M Ullman et al.

**Demoiselle Crane Anthropoides virgo.** Four, including three juveniles, 5 km north of Hodeidah, 7 December. Fifth record but should perhaps be a regular passage migrant (cf recent status in Saudi Arabia, Newton 1992). J Dunn/R P Martins (*Sunbird*).

**Cream-coloured Courser Cursorius cursor.** Between Ma'bar and Dhamar, 1 December. Ninth record, apparently winter visitor. J Dunn/R P Martins (*Sunbird*).

**Broad-billed Sandpiper Limicola falcinellus.** 56, 2 km north of Hodeidah, 20 October. Unusually large flock. R P Morris.

**Pintail Snipe Gallinago stenura.** Ta'izz sewage lagoons, 17-18 October. Very few previous records from western Arabia. R P Morris.

**Pomarine Skua Stercorarius pomarinus.** Al Khawkhah, 14 November. First published record. M Ullmann et al.

**Olive Pigeon Columba arquatrix.** Al Mahwit, 8 October. R P Morris.

**Jacobin Cuckoo Clamator jacobinus.** 5 km south of Sumarah pass, 13 October; Jebal Bura, 21 October. Scarce passage migrant. R P Morris.

**Didric Cuckoo Chrysococcyx caprius.** Juvenile being fed by a pair of Rüppell's Weavers, near Al Mahwit, 7 October. Possibly first definite breeding record. R P Morris.

**Barn Owl Tyto alba.** Heard, Al Khawkhah, 12 November. M Ullmann et al.

**Blue-cheeked Bee-eater Merops superciliosus.** Five, Al Mansuriyah, 15

November. Uncommon passage migrant. M Ullmann et al.

**Bimaculated Lark Melanocorypha bimaculata.** Al Qutay, 16 November. M Ullmann et al. Two, Al Kaybaniyah, 6 December. Second and third records for the former North Yemen, one or two historical records from South Yemen. J Dunn/R P Martins (*Sunbird*).

**Black-eared Wheatear Oenanthe hispanica.** Male, 12 km northwest of Ta'izz, 16 October. R P Morris. Ta'izz, 11 November, Sana'a, 20 November. M Ullmann et al. Male, Ta'izz sewage lagoons, 2 December. J Dunn/R P Martins (*Sunbird*). Rare autumn passage migrant and winter visitor.

**Song Thrush Turdus philomelos.** Two, Al Mahwit, 10 December. Scarce winter visitor. J Dunn/R P Martins (*Sunbird*).

**Orphean Warbler Sylvia hortensis.** Near Al Ajlaniyah, 8 December. Fourth record, most recent in 1979. J Dunn/R P Martins (*Sunbird*).

**Pale Rock Sparrow Petronia trachydactyla.** Seven, 4 km east of Al Qutay, mid October. One historical record from Aden, and one recent record (January 1990) (cf *Alauda* 60: 273) both lack detailed evidence. R P Morris.

**Cinereous Bunting Emberiza cineracea.** Near Al Bishari, 10 December. Seventh (but only third in past 25 years) record. Further evidence that the species may winter in the SW Arabian highlands (cf de Knijff 1991). J Dunn/R P Martins (*Sunbird*).

I should like to thank the following for their assistance in producing this review: Duncan Brooks, Arnoud van den Berg (Dutch Birding), Steve Gantlett (Birding World), Rod Martins and Magnus Ullmann.

---

**Correction:** Around the Region in *Bulletin* 29 referred mainly to records in 1992, not 1993 as stated.

# 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. Membership subscriptions are: £10 individual, £15 family; airmail supplement £1.50 Europe, £3 rest of the world. Life membership £200.

**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:**

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

*Charitable registration number 282938.*

**Advertising rates:** Full page £60; half page £40; quarter page £25. Inserts from £75.

---

---

## Contents

---

---

- 1 OSME in Yemen: news from the field *Rod Martins*  
2 Goodbye ICBP – welcome, BirdLife International  
3 Priority bird species in the Republic of Yemen  
– a provisional assessment *Richard Porter*  
10 Bird sites in Turkey requiring research  
during 1993 *Murat Yarar and Gernant Magnin*  
17 Ahlat Marsh, eastern Turkey *Mark Cocker and John Temple-Lang*  
20 The birds of Gezira, Egypt *Derek J Evans and Klaas Douwe Dijkstra*  
26 Diet of the Desert Eagle Owl in Harrat al Harrah reserve,  
northern Saudi Arabia *Mike Evans and Paul Bates*  
27 A large breeding colony of Citrine Wagtails in eastern Turkey  
*Geir S Andersen, Magne Klann, Gunnar Sandve and Bjorn Olav Tveit*  
28 "Cinnamon-browed" white-eyes in Sana'a, Yemen *Derek Harvey*  
29 A change in the nut-cracking technique used by Hooded Crows  
in Kibbutz Netzer Sereni, Israel *Henk K Mienis*  
30 OSME News  
OSME AGM 1993  
Progress with Important Bird Areas in the Middle East *Mike Evans*  
31 News and Information *Compiled by Simon Albrecht and Tom Nightingale*  
36 Reviews  
Putting Biodiversity on the Map  
The Birds of Cyprus  
The Birds of Africa vol IV  
39 Around the region *Compiled by Guy Kirwan*

