

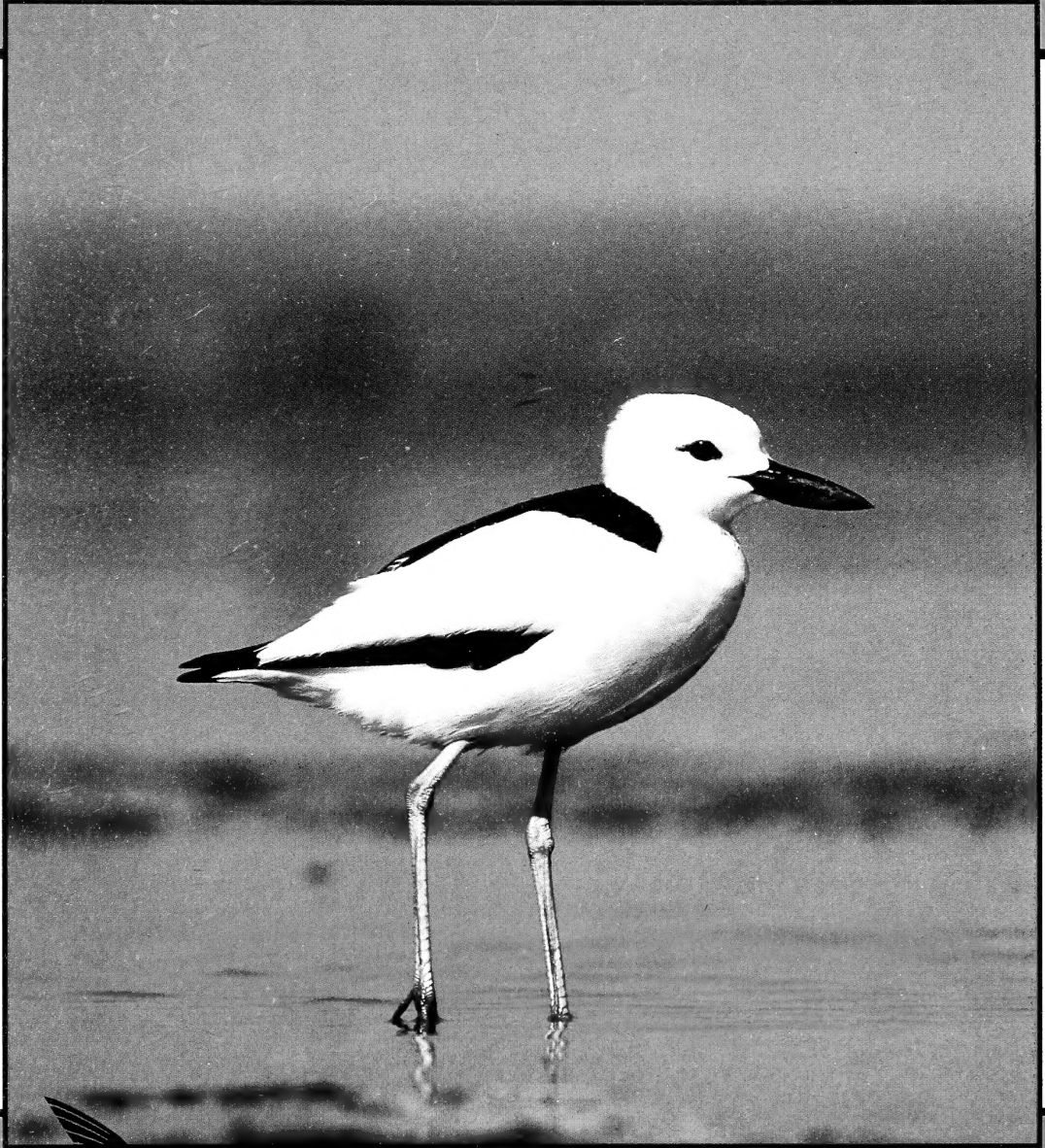
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# SANDGROUSE

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Volume 21 (2)

1999



OSME

ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF  
THE MIDDLE EAST

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OSME

# ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF THE MIDDLE EAST

OSME was founded in 1978 as the successor to the Ornithological Society of Turkey. Its primary aims are:

- To collect, collate, and publish data on all aspects of the birds of the Middle East.
- To promote an interest in ornithology and bird conservation throughout the Middle East.
- To develop productive working relationships with other governmental and non-governmental organisations with an interest in conservation and/or natural history in the region.

## MEMBERSHIP

OSME is open to all, and its membership spans over 40 countries.

## ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

**Individual £12**  
(£15 air mail outside Europe)

**Family £15**  
(£18 air mail) for two, plus £3 for each additional family member.

**Supporting £24**  
Cover the subscription of a national birdwatcher in the region (£27 air mail).

## LIFE MEMBERSHIP

**Individual £225**  
(£100 if 60 or over)

**Family £300**  
for 2 members.

Please add £3 if payment is made in non-sterling currency. For details of payment by banker's order, and for any other information on the Society, write to the Secretary at the address below.

## PUBLICATIONS

OSME publishes a scientific journal, *Sandgrouse*, containing papers, news and features on all aspects of Middle Eastern ornithology. Published twice yearly, it is issued free to members. Further copies are available for sale from OSME.

## MEETINGS

An Annual General Meeting is held in London at which guest speakers provide new perspectives on ornithology in the region. There are also occasional special meetings, some taking place outside the UK.

## PROJECTS

OSME organises field expeditions to collect data on birds in little-known parts of the region and in areas where OSME can assist by teaming up with local groups.

The Conservation & Research Committee grants funds to valuable field projects and desk studies which further knowledge and conservation of birds in the region. Grants have been awarded to over 30 projects since the Conservation & Research Fund was set up in 1982.

## VICE PRESIDENTS:

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## SANDGROUSE

Volume 21 (2)

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**Cover Photograph:**

Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola*,  
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at Barr Al Hikman, Oman.

OSME is grateful for sponsorship  
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colour photographs inside this issue.

# NOSME News



## SUMMER MEETING

There was an excellent turnout for the Summer Meeting that incorporated the 21st AGM. Richard Porter summarised recent news in the region as far as the Society and BirdLife International are concerned, before being presented with a framed print of Tim Loseby's photograph of a male Sinai Rosefinch *Carpodacus synoicus* to mark his retirement from BirdLife. Paul Goriup, from IUCN, then gave an informative talk on bustards in the Middle East and surprised the audience by suggesting that Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata* may not be suffering as much from falconry as popularly thought. The AGM proceeded like clockwork with the Chairman urging members to keep up efforts to increase membership. After an excellent picnic lunch served by Geoff Welch, we returned to be ridiculed by the Chairman's quiz before hearing an outstanding account of the birds of Iran by Derek Scott. Finally Richard Brooks illustrated his talk on Lesbos with a quite outstanding portfolio of slides.

Derek Moore

## SUPPORTING MEMBERSHIP

This membership category carries not only a year's membership for the subscriber but also for a Middle East national. It enables the Society to further its presence within the region. The cost is £24 per year for U. K. members, and £27 for those resident overseas. Those interested in the scheme should contact Owen Roberts, OSME Membership and Recruitment, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Beds SG19 2DL, U. K.

## COUNCIL CHANGES

Recent changes within Council have led to some adjustment of the duties undertaken by the Treasurer, John Warr, and Membership Secretary, Owen Roberts, with the former subsuming much of the latter's previous work. In consequence, Owen will assume a wider role with responsibility for both membership and recruitment. He will search for ways to increase OSME membership and provide Council with information on which to base future recruitment efforts.

Owen Roberts

## SITES MONITORING SCHEME

It is now five years since the publication of *Important Bird Areas of the Middle East* a joint project between OSME and BirdLife International. This was a superb example of how contributions by 100s of birdwatchers could be channelled through an organisation like OSME and used for important ends. The original recording sheets used to collect data for the IBA book are stored in the OSME library, and copies are available to researchers and birdwatchers by contacting the Librarian, Ray Daniel (see *Sandgrouse* 20: 83). It is appropriate to monitor IBA sites and OSME is initiating a Sites Monitoring Scheme specifically to monitor registered IBAs and potential IBAs in the Middle East. If you would like to contribute to this scheme by targeting specific IBAs on a visit to a country in the Middle East, this would be extremely useful. OSME is particularly interested in changes to bird populations and information on globally threatened species, as well as a full list of species present at any IBA. Threats to and changes in habitat also require monitoring and information should also be included on the recording sheets. For further information, recording sheets and copies of the original data, please contact Simon Busuttil at the OSME address.

## CONSERVATION GRANTS

OSME is committed to supporting conservation and research work in the Middle East. As part of this, the society welcomes applications for grants up to £500 from its Conservation Fund to support conservation and research projects in the region. Projects should be directed to one or more of the following subject areas: i) investigating the status of threatened or near-threatened species; ii) attempting to further knowledge

of existing Important Bird Areas (e.g. undertaking breeding censuses, visiting out-of-season to conduct systematic counts); iii) investigating potential new Important Bird Areas or little-known areas; iv) conducting ecological studies of little-known species; and v) educational projects. Priority will be given to projects involving nationals from the region and applicants are required to write up the results of their project for possible publication in *Sandgrouse*. For further information contact Chris Bradshaw at the OSME address or by e-mail: [chris.bradshaw@osme.org](mailto:chris.bradshaw@osme.org).

#### **MIDDLE EAST BIRD NET (MEBirdNet)**

OSME has established an e-mail group for discussion about the birds, their identification, conservation and birding sites of the Middle East. If you have e-mail and would like to join this discussion group then send an empty email to: [MEBirdNet-subscribe@onelist.com](mailto:MEBirdNet-subscribe@onelist.com) and you will receive instructions about joining. You can also join by using your web browser to go to: <http://www.osme.org/ebn/joinmebn.html> and then supplying

your name and e-mail address on the form provided. You can visit the OSME web site at: <http://www.osme.org>, where there is a host of extra features including trip reports, recent reports and a full OSME sales list.

#### **SPONSORSHIP**

OSME, like all small charitable organisations, relies not only on subscriptions from its members to achieve results but on very generous sponsorship by many people and organisations. Without this it would be extremely difficult, for instance, to publish *Sandgrouse* to the high standard that has been achieved in recent years. OSME is extremely grateful to El Al, Julian Francis, Subbuteo, Sunbird and Birdfinders for sponsoring the publication of *Sandgrouse* during 1999 and to Bird Images, NHBS, Subbuteo, WildSounds, BirdGuides, In Focus, Gilleard Bros., the Arabian Breeding Bird Atlas, and Hilary and Geoff Welch for generously sponsoring prizes for the OSME stand at the British Birdwatching Fair. Thank you to all of you from OSME.

*Andrew Grieve, Chairman*

## NEWS & INFORMATION

*The aim of this section is to inform readers about events in the OSME region. It relies on members and others supplying relevant news and information. If you have anything concerning birds, conservation or development issues in the OSME area please send it to News and Information, OSME, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, U. K.*

*This section 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.*

#### **GENERAL**

***Houbara Bustard conservation makes progress*** Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis*

*undulata* inhabits the arid zone belt from north-west Africa through the Middle East to northern China. Its prominence for conservation derives from its value and indeed notoriety as the traditional quarry of Arab falconers. Since the early 1960s, traditional camel-back falconry has been transformed by the development of modern transport and communications, and the increased availability of falcons (both wild-caught and captive-bred hybrids). The efficiency and intensity of hunting has increased considerably to the detriment of local populations of Houbaras, especially in Arabia and the Middle East. As a result, falconers have latterly begun hunting in other countries in Asia and North Africa, much to the alarm of conservationists in the region. While the overall population is today estimated to be at

least 49,000 birds, numbers have declined greatly during this century for a variety of reasons including hunting and trapping, agricultural intensification and other land use changes. The Houbara's future is probably best served by acknowledging the conservation benefits that would accrue from its wise use as a quarry species and establishing a sustainable management system through an Agreement under the Bonn Convention for the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals.

In January 1996, the Species Survival Commission of IUCN—The World Conservation Union, organised a meeting in Muscat, Oman, to discuss the conservation management of the species in Asia and the Middle East. There were over 90 participants from 13 range states: Afghanistan, Bahrain, India, Iran, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Oman, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan and Yemen. A number of recommendations were developed at the meeting including the need to improve protection measures, undertake further research on migration and assisting Saudi Arabia to conclude an international management agreement under the Bonn Convention.

Since that meeting there has been significant progress. On the research front, the National Avian Research Centre in Abu Dhabi, in November 1997, reported the first successful tracking by satellite of a Houbara that moved from Abu Dhabi to northern China, and back again. The bird was released in February 1997, and it covered 6600 km in just 54 days. It crossed Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, to summer in the Chinese province of Xinjiang. Eight months later, the bird returned to Abu Dhabi following almost exactly the same route. NARC is now concentrating further research efforts in this region of China. In addition, there is active cooperation between Pakistan, Uzbekistan and the U.K. to undertake intensive research on the ecology of Central Asian populations.

The confirmation of the integrity of the Houbara population from the Gulf to China has given added impetus to international efforts by range states, led by Saudi Arabia, to complete a legally binding agreement on joint management of the Houbara to ensure that its habitats are properly conserved, and that

hunting is conducted on a sustainable basis. A draft agreement is now ready for distribution, but the Action Plan that is intended to be an integral part of the agreement it is still required. The National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development of Saudi Arabia hosted an expert meeting in October 1998, in Riyadh. The outline of the Action Plan was agreed, together with a timetable for its completion. The Bonn Convention Secretariat was expecting the agreement and Action Plan to be formally distributed in April 1999.

With the situation in Asia and the Middle East improving steadily, the spotlight now increasingly falls on the North African populations. Here, the political situation in Algeria and the far south of Morocco (former Western Sahara) means that pressure from hunting is presently very slight. In Morocco, there have been significant investments in captive breeding centres seeking to restore locally reduced populations. These are now operating at Agadir and near Missour. Perhaps more importantly, King Hassan deserves congratulations for creating a substantial Royal Game Sanctuary on the Tamlelt Plain aimed at conserving wild Houbara populations. More initiatives like this are needed, not only elsewhere in Morocco where significant populations of wild Houbara survive, but also across the whole of North Africa. Perhaps the time has come for the Maghreb Five countries (Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Libya and Tunisia) to follow the example of the Asian range states and consider how the conservation tools of the Bonn Convention can be applied as successfully within their region. (Source: Paul Goriup *in litt.* February 1999).

*An Eleonora's Falcon Falco eleonora workshop* designed to assist in the production of an Action Plan for this restricted-range species, was held on Aegina island, Greece on 27–29 March 1999. Attendees included delegates from Cyprus, Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain and Turkey, and the event generated considerable media attention in Greece. The workshop proved successful and the recommendations of the forthcoming Action Plan are eagerly awaited. (Source: *BirdLife in Europe* 4 (2): 2).

## AZERBAIJAN

**Catastrophic oil pollution in the south Caspian** was evident in mid-June 1999 on the small island of Dashlar Rocks (Kamni) near Cape Alat, 70 km south-west of Baku, and on Zenbil island. Up to 60–70% of these islands were covered by oil. Seven dead seals, two sturgeon and nearly 100 dead birds of several species were found. The number of nesting gulls on Zenbil was 2.5–3 times less than in 1996. Even the water around the islands was heavily oiled. Previously, in May–June 1998, ornithologists discovered that the breeding populations of several species had declined dramatically in recent years. It would appear that oil pollution continues to take its toll on birds, seals and fishes in this region. (Source: Elchin Sultanov *in litt.* June 1999).

## CYPRUS

**North Cyprus 1998 Bird Report & Checklist** is now available. It costs £5.85 inc. p&p and is available from Kuskor (North Cyprus Society for the Protection of Birds), P. O. Box 634, Girne, Mersin 10, Turkey. E-mail: ncsppb@iecnc.org. Alternatively, you may order a copy from OSME Sales. (Source: Peter Flint *in litt.* July 1999).

## EGYPT

**Wadi Digla** on the outskirts of Cairo has been declared a Protected Area following lobbying by local environmental activists and organisations. This wadi has good representative examples of fauna and flora of the Eastern Desert, including a number of desert birds. Islands in the Nile Valley were also recently declared a Protected Area. (Source: Mindy Baha El Din *in litt.*).

## JORDAN

**Rarities assessment in Jordan** In spring 1999 a procedure to assess records of rare birds in Jordan was established. In line with an increasing number of other countries, a rarities committee has been established to assess sightings of species that (in general) have occurred fewer than ten times in Jordan. The Jordan Bird Records Committee (JBRC) currently comprises Ian Andrews (Secretary), Mike Evans, Erik Hirschfeld, Fares Khoury, Derek Moore and Richard Porter. Please note that only records accepted by the JBRC will appear in future Jordan Bird Reports. Records should be submitted to I. J. Andrews (JBRC), 39 Clayknowes Drive, Musselburgh,

Midlothian EH21 6UW, Scotland. E-mail: i.andrews@bgs.ac.uk. Submission by e-mail or on a PC disk is preferred. For more information on the committee, the species being assessed and a Records Form layout (as well as general information on birds in Jordan) visit the Birding in Jordan web site at <http://www.andrewsi.freeserve.co.uk/birding-in-jordan.htm>. (Source: Ian J. Andrews *in litt.* July 1999).

## TURKEY

**A DHKD South-east Turkey bird survey** was undertaken in April 1999 in the ornithologically little-known Tigris region. The survey was conducted in cooperation with the Authority of South-eastern Turkey Project (GAP Authority). One-week fieldwork in the area aimed to assemble baseline information on the biodiversity of the area, including birds. The results of this survey will be used to develop a fullscale biodiversity project in the future. South-eastern Turkey is known for its outstanding importance for several rare species in Europe, whose main ranges are centred in the Afrotropical and Oriental regions. This part of Turkey, particularly its riverine habitats, are threatened by large-scale reservoir projects to be completed within the next decade.

Riverine islands on the Tigris were found to qualify as an Important Bird Area, under currently established criteria, for a number of species. The most significant species recorded during the survey were: Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*, Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*, Black Francolin *Francolinus francolinus*, Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*, Red-wattled Plover *Hoplopterus indicus*, Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus*, Ménétries' Warbler *Sylvia mystacea*, Dead Sea Sparrow *Passer moabiticus* and Desert Finch *Rhodospiza obsoleta*. (Source: G. Eken *in litt.* June 1999).

**DHKD made a preliminary breeding bird survey** in Thrace (European Turkey) during 14–25 June 1999 that included Turkish parts of the Meriç (Evros) Delta and Strandja mountains. The data will be used for DHKDs Biodiversity Atlas Project. On the Meriç river a heronry was discovered that met IBA criteria for Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* and also held breeding Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* and Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*. Other significant bird counts in the Meriç Delta included 2000 White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, a grey morph Little Egret and

3000 Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*. In the Strandja mountains singing Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* were common, indicating that the species may breed in Turkey as previously suspected. Other breeding species of note included Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraeetus fasciatus*, Grey-headed *Picus canus* and White-backed Woodpeckers *Dendrocopos leucotos*. (Source: Bahtiyar Kurt in litt. July 1999).

## YEMEN

**Shark fishing increase** Exploitation of sharks and rays has been increasing off southern Yemen in recent years. A recent study, funded by Fauna & Flora International, has demonstrated that fishing of these groups increased as scientific fisheries monitoring decreased from north to south through the Red Sea. Shark fishing has been banned off the Mediterranean and Red Sea coasts of Israel since 1971 but remains a significant problem elsewhere in this region. (Source: *Oryx* 33 (1)).

## REQUESTS for INFORMATION

### Wanted: yellow-painted Ruff

Birders in Africa and Europe are asked to search for yellow-painted Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*. They are best located in flight, when the yellow-painted underwings are very striking. On the ground, they can be recognized by the yellow-painted breast, belly and tail. These Ruff were painted in North Cameroon, in January 1999, during a joint expedition of the Dutch foundation WIWO, the Waza-Logone Project and the Wildlife School Garoua, and a part of the West African Programme of Wetlands International. It is hoped to discover the migration routes and breeding areas of Ruff wintering along the Logone river, that separates Cameroon and Chad. Negative reports are also welcome. Sighting data should include location, date, total numbers of Ruff and numbers of yellow-painted birds. All observers will be informed personally of the results. Please send your data to: **WIWO Cameroon/Chad 1999, Gerrit Gerritsen & Bert Dijkstra, p/a Veerallee 33, 8019 AD Zwolle, The Netherlands. E-mail: gerritgerritsen@hetnet.nl**

### Great Black-headed Gulls in Cyprus

Bob Frost and Peter Flint are undertaking an analysis of Great Black-headed Gull *Larus ichthyaetus* occurrences in Cyprus. They would be grateful for unpublished records of this species from the island, including date and time, number of birds, location and, if possible, the weather conditions. All records will be acknowledged. These should be sent to **Bob Frost, 14 Chaucer Way, St. Ives, Huntingdon, Cambs PE17 4TY, U. K.**



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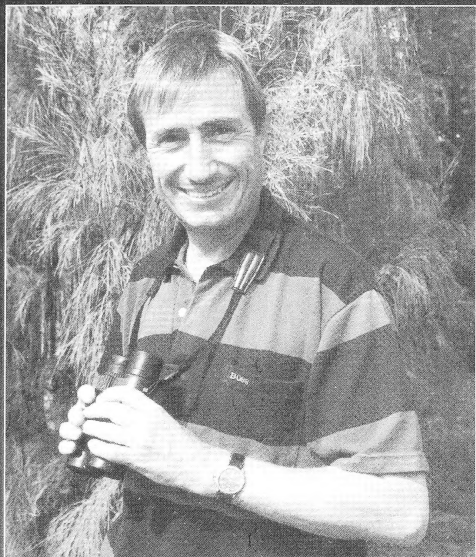
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# PROFILE



*Colin Richardson*

Since his arrival in Dubai in 1976, Colin has seen ornithology and bird ecotourism develop from virtually nothing to become a significant contributor to the Emirates' tourist industry, reflected in the presence, in 1998 and 1999, of a stand at the Rutland Bird Fair, officially promoted by the Dubai Department of Tourism.

This startling development is uniquely linked to Colin, whose interest in the status and distribution of Arabian birds was stimulated early on by correspondence with Effie Warr, and encouraged by Michael Gallagher and Mike Jennings. Subsequently he assumed editorship of the Emirates Bird Report, a post he retains, and has published *The Birds of the United Arab Emirates* (1990) and *The Shell Birdwatching Guide to the UAE* (1998), the latter co-authored with Simon Aspinall.

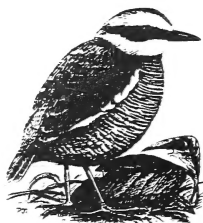
By 1993, with ecotourism expanding—architecture having become an increasingly unattractive proposition—Colin decided to devote himself wholly to birding. He now organises trips for most of the major bird tour companies, is actively involved in the protection of bird habitats in the Dubai area, and contributes expertise to those organisations promoting wildlife conservation throughout the Emirates. Closely involved with the Asian Waterfowl Census, the ABBA project, the Middle East IBA project, and numerous surveys in the Gulf, Colin remains a key player among a small but very knowledgeable group of local birdwatchers. It was therefore wholly appropriate that, in 1995, he was awarded the Sheikh Mubarak bin Mohammed Annual Award for Services to Natural History in UAE.

Colin epitomises those professional ornithologists who have come, via the amateur ranks, to a point where they have changed careers to commit themselves wholly to advancing bird conservation in the Middle East: a group that now, happily, includes an increasing number of indigenous scientists.

*Derek Harvey*

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# PHOTO spot



## Cyprus Pied Wheatear & Cyprus Warbler

Cyprus is unique among Mediterranean islands in having two endemic species and several well-defined endemic subspecies, and is thus the only region of Europe included in the global list of Endemic Bird Areas (Stattersfield *et al.* 1998, *Endemic Bird Areas of the world: priorities for biodiversity conservation*). Although the two species, Cyprus Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe cypriaca* and Cyprus Warbler *Sylvia melanothorax*, breed only in Cyprus, they are migratory, the former entirely and the latter partially so.

Cyprus Pied Wheatear is by far the more obvious and widespread. Its favoured habitats are forested and more open montane areas where it reaches very high breeding densities, and is absent only from areas lacking the prominent high perches it requires as song posts. In the central lowlands, birds sing from almost barren ridges and hilltops, and in towns and cities from lighting masts, pylons, and aerials atop tall buildings. Formerly considered a race of Pied Wheatear *O. pleschanka*, a pioneering field study by Christensen (Notes on the plumage of the female Cyprus Pied Wheatear. *Orn. Scand.* 5 (1974): 47–52) demonstrated it to be very different and species status is now widely accepted. The main differences are that the summer plumage of female Cyprus Pied

closely resembles that of the male (whereas Pied is strongly sexually dimorphic), and that the song of Cyprus Pied is a strange insect-like 'bizz-bizz-bizz' quite unlike Pied Wheatear song. In addition Cyprus Pied has more black on the breast, back and tail, a shorter primary projection and is smaller. Other differences are the wider habitat range of Cyprus Pied, its high breeding density and its almost invariable use of high song posts.

Cyprus Warbler *Sylvia melanothorax* can appear an unremarkable bird with an equally unremarkable song. The species is less widespread than Cyprus Pied Wheatear, not occurring where mean annual precipitation is less than c. 340 mm and is thus largely absent from the central lowlands (Flint & Stewart 1992, *The birds of Cyprus*). It reaches its highest densities where there is a mix of trees and more open areas with scrub and citrus but like the wheatear it also occupies a surprising range of habitats, from montane forests to scrubby hillsides and coasts. In forest, it usually occurs in trees of different ages and heights and especially where some young pines are present. The song is often delivered from near a tree-top, sometimes up to ten metres high.

The affinities of Cyprus Warbler are questionable. Williamson (1968, *Identification for ringers*) and McNeile (in Flint & Stewart 1992) believed it much closer to Rüppell's Warbler *Sylvia rueppelli* than Sardinian Warbler *S. melanocephala*. However Vaurie (1959, *The birds of the Palearctic fauna: passeriformes*) considered it conspecific with Sardinian Warbler, and Roselaar (in Cramp 1992, *The birds of the Western Palearctic* Vol. 6) considers it to form a superspecies with Sardinian and Ménéties's Warblers *S. mystacea*. This being so, it is interesting that Sardinian Warbler was found breeding in Cyprus in 1993 and that a subsequent survey indicates that 'several thousand' pairs now breed in the west of the island (Pomeroy & Walsh in prep.). Cyprus Warbler numbers were apparently reduced in spring 1999 (V. Cozens *in litt.*) and it appears inevitable that rapid colonisation by such a close congener cannot fail to impact on Cyprus Warbler. A long-term study of the interaction between the two is clearly required, especially as this seems a rare opportunity to study a potentially major change in island ecology as it occurs.

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Plate 1. Male Cyprus Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe cyriaca*, Asprokremmos Dam, April 1990. (D. Frost)

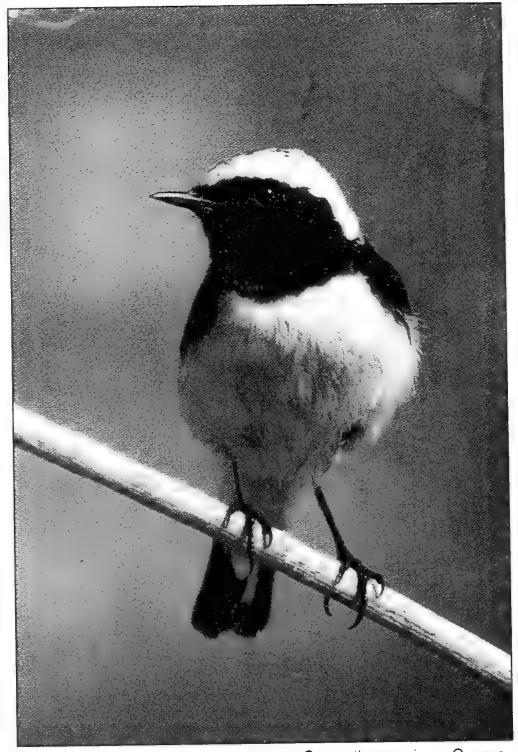


Plate 2. Male Cyprus Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe cyriaca*, Cyprus. (D. Frost)



Plate 3. Juvenile Cyprus Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe cyriaca*, Cyprus. July 1998. (P. Flint)



Plate 4. Male Cyprus Warbler *Sylvia melanothorax*, Cyprus. (L. Christophorou)



Plate 5. Female Cyprus Warbler *Sylvia melanothorax*, Cyprus. (L. Christophorou)



Plate 6. Male Cyprus Warbler *Sylvia melanothorax*, Wadi Schlomo, Israel, March 1990. (R. Pop)



Plate 7. Male Cyprus Warbler *Sylvia melanothorax*, Cyprus, May 1999. (R. Pop)

# Notes on Eastern Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe picata* and Hume's Wheatear *Oenanthe alboniger*, based on observations in eastern Arabia

COLIN RICHARDSON

Eastern Pied (Variable) Wheatear *Oenanthe picata* and Hume's Wheatear *O. alboniger* are two easily confused and little-studied black-and-white wheatears almost confined to the OSME region. It is the nominate *picata* race of Eastern Pied Wheatear that is often confused with Hume's Wheatear in areas where their ranges overlap, particularly in winter, and as *picata* is also a strong migrant, it is the form relevant in the following note.

## RANGE AND STATUS

Hume's Wheatear is a sedentary breeder throughout its range, which extends east from the mountains of east Iraq, through south and central Iran and east Arabia to Pakistan and Afghanistan. In these politically sensitive times, many of these areas are largely out-of-bounds to foreign birders, thus a visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) or Oman provides the best opportunity to see the species. The estimated population in UAE of Hume's Wheatear is 1000–10,000 pairs, all in the narrow Hajar Mountains of the east and north Emirates (Aspinall 1996), and north Oman. Reports of it regularly wandering or migrating any distance outside the breeding season (Cramp 1988) are now suspect. There is no firm evidence (e.g. photographic) to substantiate the occurrence of Hume's Wheatear in the UAE and Oman outside montane areas (EBRC and OBRC records).

While the *capistrata* and *opistholeuca* races of Eastern Pied Wheatear are relatively short-distance migrants, *picata* is strongly migratory. Its breeding range partially overlaps that of Hume's Wheatear in the mountains of south Iran and Pakistan. In Arabia, where Eastern Pied does not breed, *picata* occupies wintering sites in direct competition with Hume's Wheatear. Much confusion has arisen among observers unfamiliar with the plumages of both species, and historical records of Eastern Pied Wheatear in Arabia were logged as female or

immature Hume's Wheatears, despite their occurrence in obviously unsuitable habitat, e.g. in parks and gardens along the Arabian Gulf coast, where tired and hungry migratory passerines are regularly found. It was not until September 1987, when at least two authenticated sightings of Eastern Pied Wheatear were reported almost simultaneously in Oman (Hilary Fry pers. comm.) and UAE (pers. obs.), that the species' occurrence in Arabia was finally proven. In northernmost Oman it is regarded as a regular visitor in small numbers from mid-September–late March (J. Eriksen pers. comm.), and in UAE it is a regular winter visitor and passage migrant in September–March (Richardson & Aspinall 1998). In Pakistan, *picata* is the most widespread wheatear wintering in the plains and regularly occurs in foothills west of the Indus valley. It is the commonest breeding bird in Baluchistan (Roberts 1992), departing its breeding grounds in August and arriving in eastern Arabia during September.

## HABITAT

Hume's Wheatear is almost exclusively found in steep, rocky ravines and on barren, boulder-strewn hillsides, a habitat with ample song posts in the breeding season and lookout posts and shade throughout the year (Cramp 1988). It occasionally wanders to lower foothills and wider wadi bottoms to feed.

Eastern Pied Wheatear favours vegetated stony plains and will also frequent hillsides (Richardson & Aspinall 1998) but, unlike Hume's Wheatear, is not so dependent on montane habitat. In UAE, *picata* also occurs on waste ground, including rubbish dumps, where discarded rubble resembles boulder country. It spends much time foraging on the ground for small insects, followed by short periods of perching. Perches include *Acacia* trees, either on the very top or on twigs near the base, on low scrub or even on small rocks on the ground.

### JIZZ AND IDENTIFICATION

These two wheatears are usually straightforward to separate in the field by plumage and behaviour. Hume's Wheatear is a bold bird, often easy to approach, when its domed head, bull neck and comparatively long bill are apparent. In both sexes the head, wings and upper mantle is a jet, glossy black with a deep bluish tinge to the black throat sometimes visible in bright sunlight, while juveniles can appear matt blackish brown (Porter *et al.* 1996, Harrap & Rose in prep.). In summer, juveniles assume the appearance of adults and are difficult to distinguish from moulting adults (see Plate 4). However, these subtle plumage features are not always easy to observe. Even post-breeding and during moult Hume's Wheatear retains its pied appearance. The underparts, back and tail base are always brilliant white and the black bib and white belly are sharply demarcated. There is neither geographical variation in its appearance nor sexual dimorphism. This should be borne in mind when considering its separation from *picata* Eastern Pied Wheatear.

The *picata* race of Eastern Pied Wheatear is sexually dimorphic, with males closest in appearance to Hume's Wheatear. It is a less confiding species, typically flying, on close approach, to another perch up to 200 metres away, or circling the perceptible triangular boundary of its winter territory until it has completely eluded the observer. However, with patience, good views can be obtained when *picata* appears smaller, weaker billed and has more black on the back—the black lacking the gloss of Hume's (Clement 1987). In UAE *picata* has been regularly monitored in winter at Qarn Nazwa, a rocky outcrop c. 50 km south-east of Dubai. The species' earliest arrival was on 23 August (1990), when two males were singing, displaying and

chasing—behaviour also noted when males first arrive on the Sind Plains of Pakistan (Roberts 1992). Similar territorial behaviour was noted on 12 September 1991 and 2 September 1992—subsequent first-noted arrivals in UAE in late autumn—prior to overwintering. Most occurrences in Oman have been on a stony plain with scattered *Acacia* trees on the Batinah coast adjacent to the UAE border and from similar areas in Musandam, with one record from Masirah Island.

Most birds observed in UAE appear to be in first-winter plumage (S. C. Harrap pers. comm.), possessing sooty black plumage and a creamy off-white belly giving them rather an untidy appearance compared to Hume's Wheatear. A well-studied individual, probably male, arrived at Qarn Nazwa on 30 September 1996. It had a dark brown cap and nape, but with darker (possibly black) lores and cheeks, giving it the appearance of having a slight supercilium. The throat, back and closed wings were sooty black, contrasting with a creamy, finely streaked breast, becoming pure white only on the undertail-coverts. The demarcation at the upper breast was diffuse and curved upward from the wing bend to the centre of the breast. The demarcation on Hume's Wheatear is higher on the throat and straight. Female *picata* are also regular in their plumage characteristics, closely resembling published descriptions (e.g. Clement 1987) and can be confused only with Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* in late autumn.

However, observers still appear divided as to how to identify Eastern Pied Wheatear in UAE. There may be some variation in the plumage of male *picata*, possibly due to intergradation. For example, 20% of males (of a sample of 102) near Gilgit in north-west Pakistan were *picata* x *capistrata* hybrids (Roberts 1992), an extraordinarily high percentage. These resultant intergrades have variable amounts of black and white on the crown and nape only, a feature not noted by observers in UAE. On the contrary, adult males appearing extremely similar to Hume's Wheatear do occur in UAE, albeit infrequently. One particular example was a male *picata* that overwintered on an *Acacia* plain near Khatt lake, Ras al Khaimah in 1997–98. It was believed by most local observers (who are familiar with both



Plate 1. Hume's Wheatear *Oenanthe alboniger*. Al Ansab dump, Oman. (Hanne & Jens Eriksen)

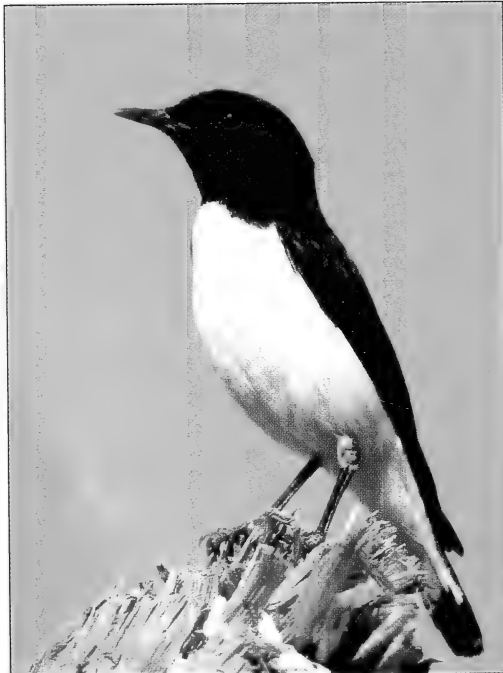


Plate 2. Hume's Wheatear *Oenanthe alboniger*. Sunub dump, Oman. (Hanne & Jens Eriksen)



Plate 3. Hume's Wheatear *Oenanthe alboniger*. Al Ansab dump, Oman. (Hanne & Jens Eriksen)





Plate 4. Juvenile Hume's Wheatear *Oenanthe alboniger*, Hatta, United Arab Emirates, 9 June 1989. (Colin Richardson)



Plate 5. Male Eastern Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe picata*, Khatmat Malalah, Oman. (Hanne & Jens Eriksen)



Plate 6. Eastern Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe picata*, Qarn Nazwa, United Arab Emirates, February. (Hanne & Jens Eriksen)



Plate 7. Eastern Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe picata*, Qarn Nazwa, United Arab Emirates, February 1993. (Colin Richardson)

species) to be a Hume's Wheatear, but close inspection by a visiting tour group, further discussion and a visit to the Natural History Museum (Tring) finally established its identity as an adult male *picata* (S. C. Harrap pers. comm.). In UAE all of the old and uncertain records of Hume's Wheatear away from the mountains have been re-examined and considered to probably relate to *picata* (F. E. Warr pers. comm.). It would therefore be wise for Gulf States recorders to reassess all records of Hume's Wheatear away from montane areas and for all observers to take great care when identifying black-and-white wheatears.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Eriksen who advised on the status of these wheatears in Oman and provided a number of the photographs that accompany this article.

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## Akamas, Cyprus: migrants and endemics

OWEN ROBERTS

Akamas, the extreme north-western peninsula of Cyprus, is properly confined to the area known as Forest of Akamas (see Map 1). The area has long been known as a staging post for 1000s of migrants journeying between Africa and Eurasia. Despite this reputation its ornithological importance remained unquantified until 1995 when the Royal Air Force Ornithological Society (RAFOS) mounted the first of two spring expeditions that confirmed the importance of Akamas to migrants, but outside this season much remains to be learned about an area under increasing threat from tourism and development.

### TOPOGRAPHY, VEGETATION AND CLIMATE

A c. 400 metres-high ridge that runs north-west–south-east divides the peninsula. Several streams flowing west have formed a number of small deep valleys and gorges ending in narrow marine terraces along which runs an earth road. The eastern slope is dominated by garrigue and maquis, with a small grassy plain (occasionally cultivated) to the west and an area of parkland (dominated by a dilapidated caravan site and goatsheds) to the east. The tip of the promontory, Cape Arnauti, is barren rock with juniper scrub. On the higher ground Aleppo Pine *Pinus halepensis* dominates with an understorey of juniper *Juniperus phoenicia*. Lower down there are many olive *Olea europaea* and carob *Ceratonia siliqua* groves interspersed with cultivation and parkland. Mean annual rainfall is 490 mm, most of which falls in November–March. Winters are mild (12°C January mean) and summers hot (27°C July mean). Summer temperatures and lack of rainfall, combined with the area's relative inaccessibility pose the threat of a disastrous forest fire.

### ACCESS

There are no paved roads on Akamas and until recently the area was one of the most pristine and inaccessible regions of Cyprus. Now, with four-wheel-drives commonplace, much of the area can be

accessed in such vehicles. This is not an option for the environmentally concerned. Vehicles should be left at the Baths of Aphrodite (ample free parking) or beyond the village of Neo Khorion; a good earth road reaches Ayios Minas church (limited roadside parking). From the former, the eastern peninsula can be accessed along the coastal path (eight km to Cape Arnauti) or the nature trail that runs for some distance along the hillside above it. The latter accesses the western slope, including Smyies picnic site and the various trails that radiate from it.

### BIRDS

For the casual visitor, undoubtedly the best time to visit Akamas is spring. Migration commences in February with a trickle of hirundines, Common Swift *Apus apus*, and early Isabelline *Oenanthe isabellina* and Northern Wheatears *O. oenanthe*. By mid-March migration is in full flow with both Subalpine *Sylvia cantillans* and Rüppell's Warblers *S. rueppelli* peaking at the month's end. April is the month to see and compare *Ficedula* flycatchers. Pied *F. hypoleuca* and Collared Flycatchers *F. albicollis* can be positively common, and Semi-collared Flycatcher *F. semitorquata* is proving more regular than previously thought. Both Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* and Thrush Nightingale *L. luscinia* occur, the former in large numbers, but many of the latter may be overlooked as grey morphs of the commoner bird? Early



Plate 1. Male Semi-collared Flycatcher *Ficedula semitorquata*. (Dave Nye)



Plate 2. Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*. (Dave Nye)

April sees Eastern Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus (bonelli) orientalis*, Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus*, Ortolan *Emberiza hortulana* and Cretzschmar's Buntings *E. caesia* on the move, while later Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida*, Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* and Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* dominate. Overhead there is an almost constant stream of European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* and offshore Night *Nycticorax nycticorax*, Squacco *Ardeola ralloides*, Grey *Ardea cinerea* and Purple Herons *A. purpurea*, Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* and Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* move east. Mid-May produces a rapid fall-off in both numbers and variety of migrants.

Interesting residents include Chukar *Alectoris chukar*, Black Francolin *Francolinus francolinus*, the endemic race of European Scops Owl *Otus scops cyprius* (easily distinguished in the field from the migrant nominate form) and Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*. In summer they are joined by breeding Hoopoe *Upupa epops*, Masked Shrike, Cretzschmar's and Black-headed Buntings. Both Cyprus Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe cypriaca* and Cyprus Warbler *Sylvia melanothorax* are widespread and easily found, although the latter is perhaps becoming less common.

The main feature of autumn is the large flocks of ducks (especially Garganey



Plate 3. Male Rüppell's Warbler *Sylvia rueppelli*. (Dave Nye)



Plate 4. Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus*. (Dave Nye)

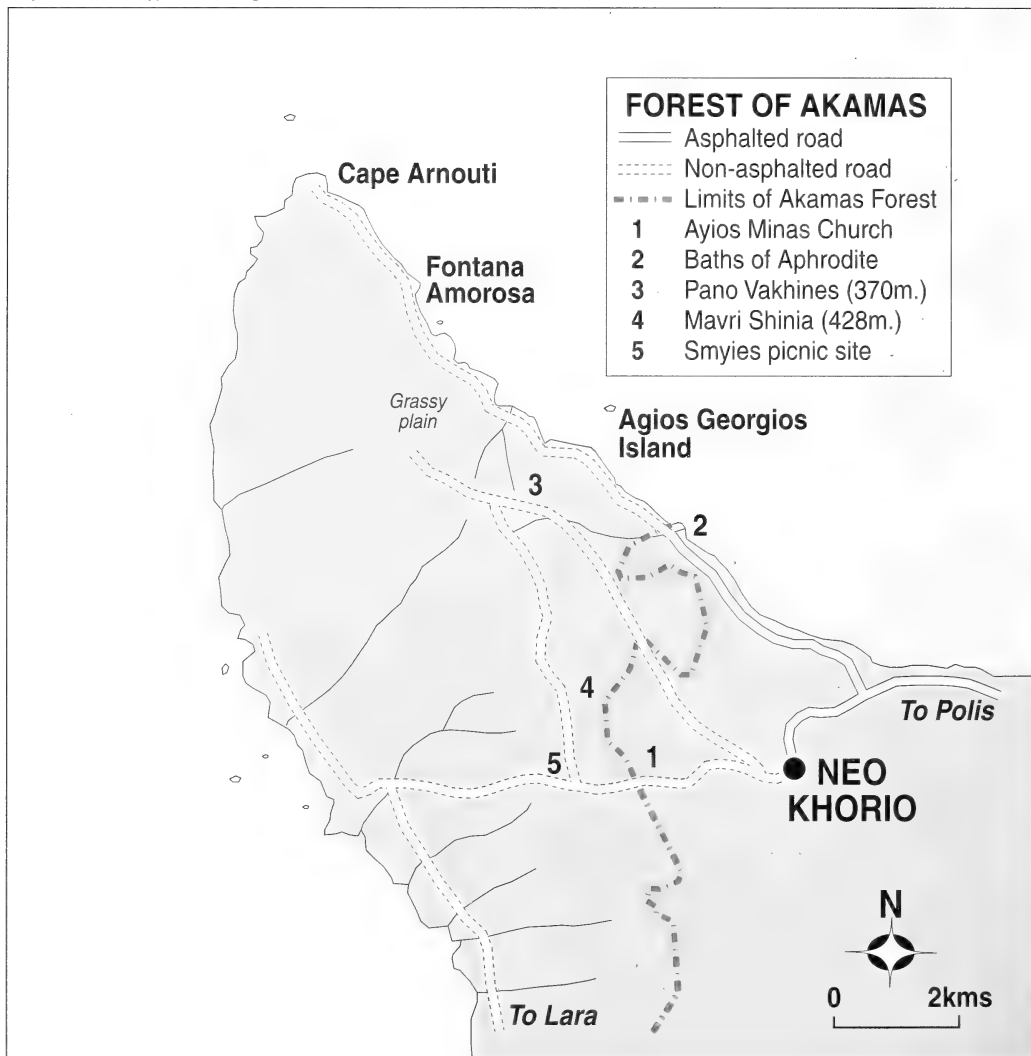
*Anas querquedula*), herons and egrets and Glossy Ibis. Passage occurs from August–early November, peaking in late August and the first half of September. Many ducks rest offshore in Khrysokhou Bay and are thought to fly south through the Troodos passes at dusk. There is some raptor passage in September–early October principally involving Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*, Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* and Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*. Passerines appear fewer than in spring with very few *Ficedula* flycatchers, virtually no Subalpine, Rüppell’s or Eastern Bonelli’s

Warblers, and tiny numbers of Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica*. Winter is notable for large numbers of Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* (mainly *rubicola* but further investigation of the races involved would be interesting), Robin *Erithacus rubecula*, Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*, Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* and large mixed finch flocks.

### SARDINIAN WARBLER ON AKAMAS

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* was previously known as a winter visitor to Cyprus, although a singing male was seen at the Baths of Aphrodite on 29 April 1988. Definite breeding was reported in

Map 1. Akamas, Cyprus showing the main localities mentioned in the text.



1992, when at least ten males held territory at one locality in mid-April and two adults were seen feeding young on 23 April. Cyprus Warbler had been a common, but not abundant, breeder on Akamas. It was remarkable, therefore, when in spring 1995, RAFOS recorded 134 Sardinian Warbler to 16 Cyprus Warbler. By 1998, Sardinian Warbler had spread south to Coral Bay, east to Polis and even many miles inland to Evretou Dam. For further details see the RAFOS report, but the spread of Sardinian Warbler, and at what cost to its endemic relative, is yet to be documented.

### **BIRDING THE AREA**

The entire area is worthy of exploration but the time-constrained visitor should park at either the Baths of Aphrodite or Ayios Minas church (see above).

### **BATHS OF APHRODITE**

From the car park, take the lower track through a *Eucalyptus* stand (breeding Olivaceous and Cetti's Warblers *Cettia cetti*) until the caravan site comes into view. The numerous olive and carob trees, together with the insects attracted to the goats, and the site's dripping taps make the area irresistible to migrants. In spring it is excellent for Collared and Pied Flycatchers. Overhead there are often Pallid *Apus pallidus* and Alpine Swifts *A. melba* moving. Both island endemics, Chukar, Black Francolin, European Scops and Little Owls *Athene noctua* can be found in this area.

### **AYIOS MINAS CHURCH**

Using your vehicle as a hide, park by the stream that runs beside the track just before the church. This can provide stunning views of the wide variety of species that visit to drink. Park by the church and explore the many paths that run among the attractive mixture of orchards, cultivation and Aleppo Pine woodland. Masked Shrike breeds and Woodchat *Lanius senator* and Red-backed Shrikes can be numerous migrants. The black-and-white flycatchers are much in

evidence in spring, and this area is productive for such colourful species as Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius*, Hoopoe and Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*.

### **THREATS TO THE AREA**

Until recently, the only threats to Akamas were uncontrolled grazing by goats; the cutting of timber for winter fuel (now much reduced); and its use as a firing range by the Cyprus military for up to 70 days a year (on balance the disturbance factor is probably outweighed by their contribution in keeping the area inviolate). Recent years, however, have seen the advent of the four-wheel-drive-vehicle and with it the arrival of largely uncontrolled 'adventure' safari companies whose vehicles roam throughout the area causing much disturbance and damage to the surface structure of the peninsula. Even worse are the tourist developments that creep ever nearer. A huge, controversial eyesore of a development has recently been completed above the beach between Lachi and Baths of Aphrodite on the boundary of the Forest of Akamas.

### **THE FUTURE**

In spring 1995, RAFOS completed the first comprehensive ornithological survey of Akamas and their findings endorsed the view that the area is of huge importance for 1000s of migrants. For years environmentalists have proposed that Akamas should be designated a National Park, but many Cypriots, including most of those living in the area, believe that ecotourism will not improve living standards and that only the big hotels, characteristic of the island's south coast, will guarantee increased incomes. A final decision as to the long-term future of Akamas is awaited.

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# An updated checklist of the birds of Lebanon

GHASSAN RAMADAN-JARADI AND MONA RAMADAN-JARADI



The results of ornithological observations covering c. 70% of the Lebanon, during 1 April 1995–31 October 1997, are presented, together with additional information from the literature, in annotated checklist form. Three-hundred and sixty-nine species are treated. Major recent changes in occurrence and breeding are highlighted. Status and distribution within Lebanon, abundance and, where available, breeding data are all presented. A total of 110 species breed, five may do so (*Cream-coloured Courser* *Cursorius cursor*, *Brown Fish Owl* *Ketupa zeylonensis*, *Mourning Wheatear* *Oenanthe lugens*, *Chough* *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* and *Raven* *Corvus corax*), 19 formerly bred, 246 are regular migrants and/or winter in the country, 80 are vagrants (36 unrecorded since 1972) and two are extinct breeders (*Lesser Crested Tern* *Sterna bengalensis* and *Blue-cheeked Bee-eater* *Merops persicus*).

## INTRODUCTION

IN RECENT DECADES, ornithological studies in Lebanon have been limited by the civil war of 1975–1991. This paper summarises the status and distribution of birds in Lebanon, highlighting the most significant changes since the publication of Benson (1970), Macfarlane (1978) and Tohmé & Tohmé (1986), seeks to establish Lebanon's ornithological importance by examining the country's most important geographical features and bird habitats, and presents, in checklist form, the status and distribution of all species occurring in Lebanon.

We present the results of an intensive survey of birds in Lebanon, based on data collected in most habitats (including remote montane areas), in April 1995–October 1997 by GRJ for the National Council for Scientific Research, and by both authors for an updated book on Lebanese birds (Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi in prep.). Additional information has been taken from the relevant literature.

## THE COUNTRY

Situated at the east end of the Mediterranean, Lebanon comprises 10,451 km<sup>2</sup> of mountainous territory. It is densely populated, the total population is c. 3.5 million.

Geologically, Lebanon consists almost exclusively of limestones. Most are of Cretaceous origin, with Jurassic limestones in some areas, principally in the south. Only in a few places, especially in the north at Akkar, do basaltic rocks appear.

The topography consists of a narrow coastal plain and two imposing mountain ranges (Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon) separated by the Beqaa Valley (at 800–1000 metres), part of the African Rift complex, which is composed of eroded material from the mountains. The Lebanon range mostly rises from the sea, reaching 3150 metres and gradually decreases in altitude to the south. The southernmost point of the Anti-Lebanon is the highest part of the range, at almost 3000 metres on the Hermon. Further north, the Anti-Lebanon mountains gradually decrease in altitude.

The climate is subject to considerable variation according to altitude and locality. Generally it can be described as Mediterranean, with a few particularities. Predominantly westerly winds bring abundant rain—principally in winter—while the summers are mainly dry. Coastal areas receive over 800 mm of rain p.a., and most montane areas over 1000 mm. Most rain falls on the western slopes of the Lebanon range, with the summits receiving less than lower areas. The Beqaa valley and Anti-

Lebanon generally receive less than 700 mm and the Hermel semi-desert in the northern Beqaa less than 250 mm.

In coastal areas, the mean temperature during the year is c. 20°C while above 1800 metres it is c. 10°C. Most high mountains in both ranges are snow-covered until July or August and on the peaks, isolated pockets of permanent snow occur in shaded places.

On the western slopes of the Lebanon range, the main phytogeographical zones are easy to define. They range from the lower Mediterranean zone (0–500 metres) to the alpine zone (above 2500 metres) successively through the middle Mediterranean zone (500–1000 metres), upper Mediterranean zone (1000–1500 metres), cedar zone (1500–2000 metres) and subalpine zone (2000–2500 metres). On the east slope of the Lebanon, the Beqaa valley and the Anti-Lebanon there is a gradual change to continental Mediterranean and subdesert conditions. Most will not be readily apparent to an ornithologist, but the emphasis on these broad vegetation communities is certainly relevant.

## STUDY AREA

The study area encompassed the entire country (with the exception of the southern areas occupied by Israel) and covered an area of c. 7000 km<sup>2</sup>. It contains the following habitats:

**Islands:** three protected islets (Ramkine, Sanani and Palm) 5.5 km off Tripoli, in the north of the country. They occupy five km<sup>2</sup> and consist of rocky shores and sand beaches, with scattered low bushes, scrub and annual herbs.

**Coasts:** the continental shore extends for c. 200 km, and we also include estuaries and coastal mudflats in this habitat type. Cliffs and sandy or shingle beaches are frequent on all coasts. Heavy demographic pressure has resulted in the disappearance of most breeding seabirds.

**Urban areas:** we include parks and private gardens within this habitat type. One of the chief characteristics of urban habitat is the large number of exotic plants such as *Casuarina*, *Opuntia ficus-indica*, palms, *Agaves* and many species of *Acacia*.

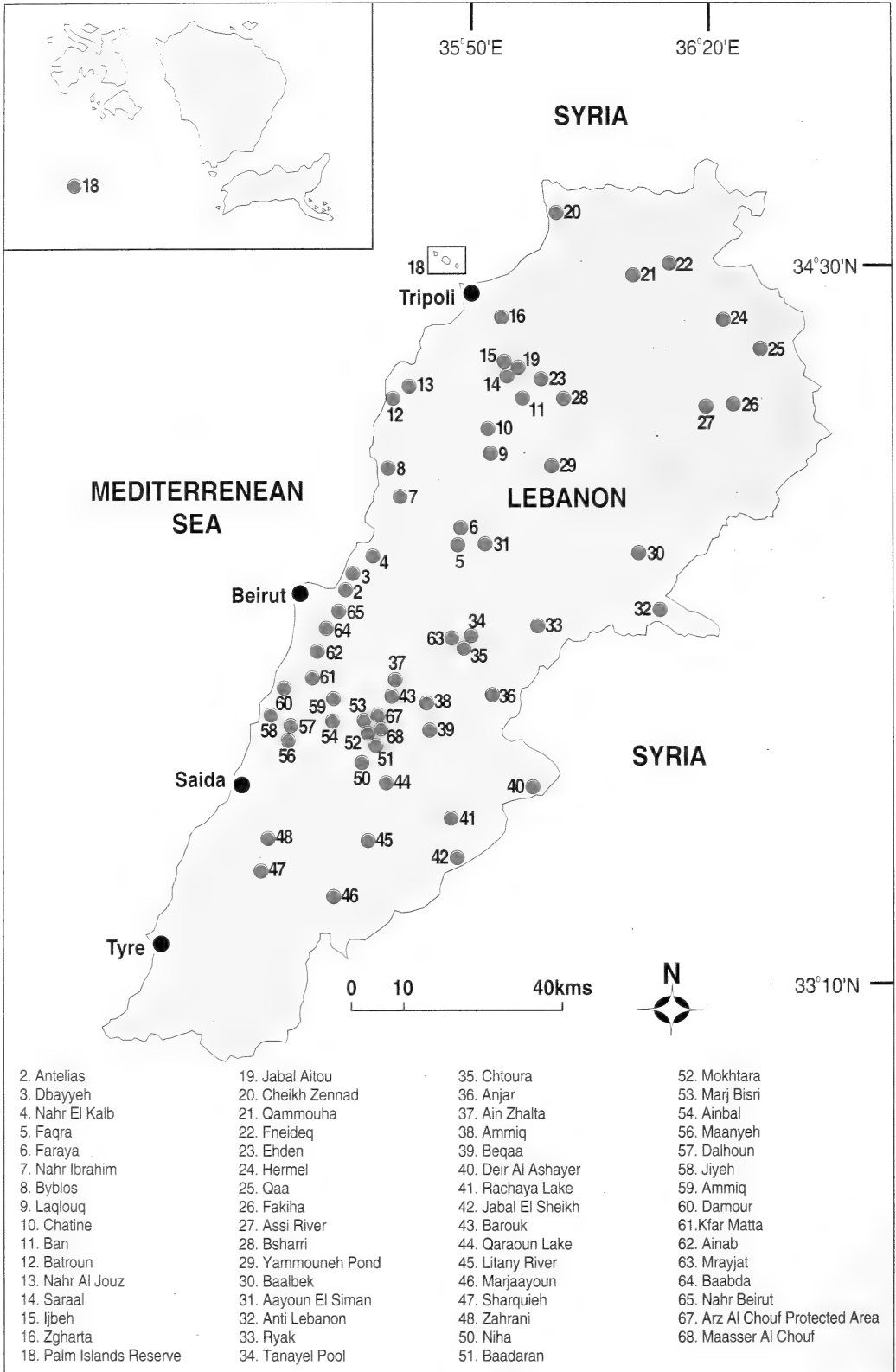
**Coastal plain:** usually narrow, but non-existent in places where the mountains rise directly from the sea. Only the Akkar plain, north of Tripoli, and Tyre plain in the south possess the characteristics of a wild plain, ie. little-grazed grassland. In most areas there is cultivation, *Eucalyptus* woodland, fruit orchards and pine plantations.

**Maquis:** the climax vegetation of the lower Mediterranean zone is maquis with *Quercus*, *Poterium*, *Terebinthus*, *Ceratonia*, *Laurus* and other low trees, with stands of *Clematis*, *Smilax*, *Lonicera* and *Asparagus*. It is still found locally, principally in inaccessible areas e.g. ravines.

**Garrigue:** excepting the coastal plain, much of the lower Mediterranean zone is semi-open to open garrigue woodland.

**Olive groves:** usually on terraced slopes in the lower Mediterranean and lower parts of the middle Mediterranean zones.

Map 1. Lebanon showing the main localities mentioned in the text.





**Pine forests:** forest blocks—principally of *Pinus brutia* and *Pinus pinea*—extend throughout the lower, middle and upper Mediterranean zones.

**Oak forests:** these comprise *Quercus calliprinos* in the lower Mediterranean zone; *Q. calliprinos* and *Q. infectoria* in the middle Mediterranean zone; *Q. calliprinos*, *Q. infectoria* and *Q. cerris* in the upper Mediterranean zone; and some *Q. cedorum* and *Q. brantii* in the cedar zone.

**Cedar forests:** this habitat—consisting of *Cedrus libani* trees—is now known from just 12 limited stands from north Lebanon to Arz Maasser Al Chouf, and totals only 1700 ha.

**Fir forests:** *Abies cilicica* also occurs in the cedar zone in north Lebanon, from Qammouha to its southern limit at Ehden.

**Tragacanth:** represented by stony and rocky hills in the subalpine and alpine zones with scattered low, rounded or flat spiny semi-shrubs such as *Vicia*, *Erodium*, *Astragalus*, *Onobrychis* and *Acantholimon*, interspersed at lower levels with stands of *Berberis* and *Phlomis*. Scattered stands of *Juniperus excelsa* still occur in subalpine areas.

**Anti-Lebanon hills:** relatively arid uplands which receive considerably less rainfall than corresponding altitudes in west Lebanon.

**River valleys:** the Lebanon range, particularly on its west side, and the Beqaa are bisected by rivers and streams with their own peculiar vegetation: *Nerium oleander*, *Platanus orientalis*, *Rhododendron ponticum* and *Drosera rotundifolia* among others. The softness of the limestone has allowed even small rivers to create impressive valleys, in some places with near-vertical sides.



Plate 1. Ramkine island, north Lebanon.  
(Ghassan Ramadan-Jaradi)

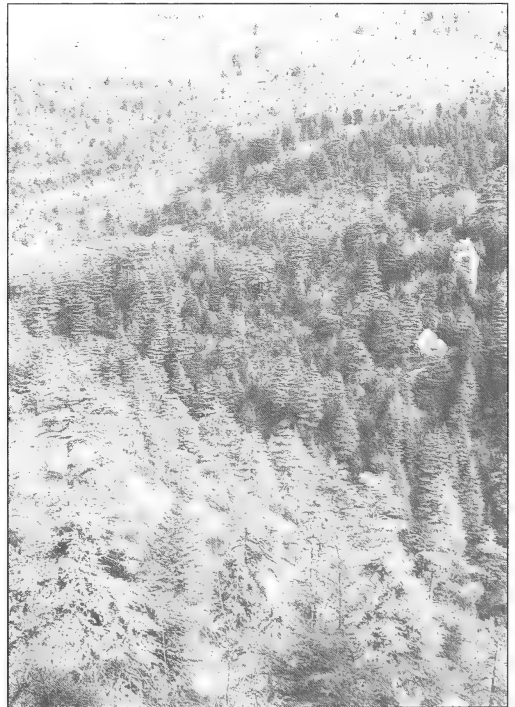
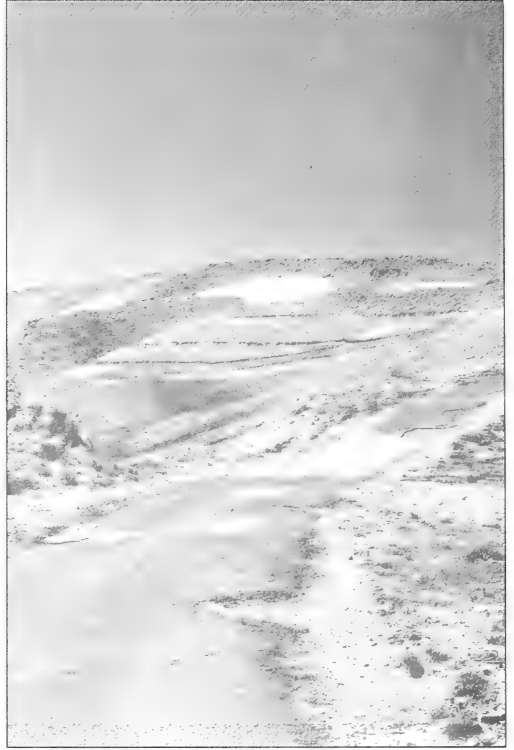


Plate 2. Horj Ehden, north Lebanon.  
(Ghassan Ramadan-Jaradi)



**Plate 3.** Ammiq swamp. Beqaa, Lebanon.  
(*Ghassan Ramadan-Jaradi*)



**Plate 4.** Tragacanth vegetation and snow pockets, upper Mount Lebanon (Aayoun El Siman). (*Ghassan Ramadan-Jaradi*)



**Plate 5.** Cedar forest. Maasser Al Chouf, Lebanon.  
(*Ghassan Ramadan-Jaradi*)



**Plate 6.** Maquis. Maanysh, Lebanon.  
(*Ghassan Ramadan-Jaradi*)

**Orchards:** found throughout the country; on the coast bananas, loquat *Eriobotrya japonica* and citrus are the most frequent; below 800 metres, the hills have extensive olive groves (treated separately), mid-altitudes have peaches and apricots, and higher areas cherry, apple and pear plantations.

**Cultivation:** cereals are farmed in Akkar and Tyre plains, and vegetable cultivation is practised throughout the country, particularly in the Beqaa valley and its fringes.

**Semi-desert:** limited to a small area of the Hermel, north Beqaa, where rainfall—partially inhibited by the high mountains—is just 250 mm pa. It is a direct extension of the Syrian desert via the Homs depression. Among the typical plants are *Artemisia*, *Haloxylon*, *Salsola*, *Achillea*, *Scorzonera* and *Gymnarrhenea*.

**Ammiq wetland:** Ammiq wetland (280 ha), seven km south-west of Qabb Elias in the Beqaa valley, at c. 860 metres, lies on one of the most important bird migration routes in the Middle East. Most of the area is inundated in winter, but in summer only two small areas of open water remain. The wettest area is composed of a mosaic of *Juncus* and *Phragmites-Typha* reedbeds. The area is traversed by Riachi stream, which on its raised banks, supports an avenue of *Fraxinus ornus*.

**Inland waters:** with the exception of Ammiq (see above), the following are included within this habitat type: Qaraoun lake, Tanayel and Yammouneh ponds, Anjar channels, and springs, streams, rivers and fishponds, which are usually fringed with riverine or marshy vegetation.

## METHODS

To census birds, we used the 20-minute point-count method, whereby all species noted during this time period are recorded at different places and different times of year in the most characteristic habitats of a given area (Blondel 1975, Blondel *et al.* 1981). This method is semi-quantitative and changes in abundance of a species are estimated by changes in the frequency of this species over a series of point counts.

On days of heaviest raptor or stork movement, it was necessary, on occasion, to estimate the number of birds passing. At other times, birds were individually counted. In addition, some birds were identified through capture in single-shelf mist-nets, during several diurnal and nocturnal surveys, particularly of Ammiq swamp.

Continuous recording in the habitats, described above, were continued—often daily—between early April 1995 and late October 1997. Our records have provided sufficient data to warrant an updated checklist of birds recorded in Lebanon.

## ORNITHOLOGICAL HISTORY

In May–August 1824, W. F. Hemprich and C. G. Ehrenberg collected birds and other wildlife in Lebanon. Eight years later, in 1832, a few bird skins were collected by P. E. Botta, and from 1858–1881, H. B. Tristram visited the country several times and made many observations on Lebanese birds. The earliest museum specimens from Lebanon are the 100s of bird skins taken in the Beirut area by W. T. Van Dyck in 1873–1878 and 1881–82. Many of these are now in the American University in Beirut Museum. During the same period (1878–79), G. Schrader collected eggs and many birds from Beirut (and probably elsewhere in Lebanon). E. Festa collected some birds in Lebanon, on behalf of the Zoological Museum of Torino, in 1893. During sojourns in Tripoli, J. H. Stenhouse visited Nakl (Palm) island in 1893 and 1895. Subsequently, A. E. Day

became interested in the Lebanese flora and fauna, and collected birds, other animals and plants. In the 1920s and 1930s, J. Aharoni and R. Meinertzhagen made ornithological observations in Lebanon, and Chavigny collected eggs, skins and nests in 1933–1939. During the Second World War, E. M. Cawkell, D. R. Mackintosh, J. G. Williams and A. Leavesley, among others, in the Allied Forces visited Lebanon and made notes on the birds they saw.

Tornielli (1957), Bourne (1959), Flach (1959) and Hollom (1959) all made valuable contributions to Lebanese ornithology, but it was Kumerloeve who recapitulated all previous ornithological data on Lebanon in list form (Kumerloeve 1962). This was followed by a number of papers and books on birds of Lebanon: Benson (1970), Tohmé & Neuschwander (1974, 1978), Macfarlane (1978), Wallace (1984), Tohmé & Tohmé (1986), Khairallah (1991), Evans (1994), Ramadan-Jaradi (1996a, 1996b), Busuttil & Flumm (1998a,b), Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi (1997) and Bara (1998).

## SYSTEMATIC LIST

Dates, localities and names of observers are given for vagrants where available. Data on egg-laying and other breeding information are provided where known. The following abbreviations are used to indicate the species status. A question mark indicates uncertain status. Lower case abbreviations, e.g. r, sb, s, wv and pm indicate that the species is uncommon or rare at the relevant season.

<b>R</b>	Resident with definite breeding records
<b>SB</b>	Breeding summer visitor
<b>S</b>	Non-breeding summer visitor
<b>WV</b>	Winter visitor
<b>PM</b>	Passage migrant
<b>FB</b>	Formerly bred ( no records within the last 20 years)
<b>v</b>	Vagrant
<b>e</b>	Extinct in Lebanon

- Tachybaptus ruficollis* **Little Grebe** **R, pm, wv**  
Localised resident population of c. 64 pairs at Ammiq and Anjar (eggs late February–mid-July), augmented by wintering birds, principally from November–late February Scarce passage migrant in Beqaa and other wetlands from early September–late November and mid-March–late April, usually on estuaries.
- Podiceps cristatus* **Great Crested Grebe** **wv, pm, s**  
Small numbers regularly winter at Qaraoun lake, Tanayel pool, Yammouneh pond, and other areas of freshwater, December–early March. Non-breeders occasionally summer in May–mid-August. Single migrants mainly near coast mid-September–early November and March–early May.
- Podiceps grisegena* **Red-necked Grebe** **v**  
One record: one in Beirut harbour on 18 January 1942 (Cawkell 1944).
- Podiceps auritus* **Slavonian Grebe** **v**  
One record: one Damour estuary on 20 December 1996 (GRJ).
- Podiceps nigricollis* **Black-necked Grebe** **wv, pm**  
Scarce: small numbers at Qaraoun and Tanayel from December–March. Few passage records in March–early May (principally April) and mid-September–early November (principally October) over much of the country.

- Calonectris diomedea* **Cory's Shearwater** **PM, wv**  
Common on passage March–April and mid-August–late September and recorded irregularly in large flocks offshore and near Palm island in January–February.
- Puffinus gravis* **Great Shearwater** **v**  
Two records: singles at Ras Beirut on 29 December 1974 and 1 January 1975 (Macfarlane 1978).
- Puffinus griseus* **Sooty Shearwater** **v**  
One record: two north of Beirut on 16 March 1981 (Khairallah 1986).
- Puffinus yelkouan* **Mediterranean Shearwater** **PM, wv**  
Common on passage, usually in small numbers from early August–early September (200 reported off Tripoli in late September) and March–April. Few winter records, November–February.
- Hydrobates pelagicus* **European Storm-petrel** **v**  
Two records: singles off Ras Beirut on 18 September 1996 (GRJ) and 10 May 1997 (Busuttill & Flumm 1998a).
- Oceanodroma leucorhoa* **Leach's Storm-petrel** **v**  
Two records: singles off Damour on 20 December 1995 and near Ramkine island on 12 October 1996 (GRJ).
- Sula bassanus* **Gannet** **wv**  
Rare in winter, late November–mid-April, principally off the Batroun and Tripoli coasts, and even rarer off Beirut.
- Phalacrocorax carbo* **Cormorant** **wv, pm, s**  
Uncommon but regular, along coasts and to a lesser extent at Ammiq and Qaraoun in October–early April. Occasionally oversummers (May–August), usually on Sanani and Ramkine islands.
- Phalacrocorax pygmeus* **Pygmy Cormorant** **wv, pm, s**  
Occasional passage in November and March, and scarce winterer, December–February, principally in the south of the country and at Ammiq. Three records off Tripoli, in June, July and September 1997 (GRJ).
- Pelecanus onocrotalus* **White Pelican** **pm**  
Scarce but regular passage migrant at both seasons with flocks of up to 400 birds near coasts, at Ammiq and Qaraoun, and over mountains up to 1800 metres. Occurs mid-February–early June and early September–late November.
- Pelecanus crispus* **Dalmatian Pelican** **pm**  
Very scarce: small flocks principally in March–April and November, in the Beqaa, off Tripoli and on Palm island. Largest flock was c. 45 on 3 April 1975 (Macfarlane 1978). Prior to this, only one record: one near Tyre with White Pelicans (Tristram 1882).
- Pelecanus rufescens* **Pink-backed Pelican** **v**  
One record: one at Beirut on 25 March 1876 (Kumerloeve 1962, Benson 1970).
- Botaurus stellaris* **Bittern** **wv, pm**  
Singles overwinter November–March, principally at Ammiq, Anjar, and Nahr El Kalb and Damour estuaries. Scarce mid-September–November and mid-March–mid-May on coast and at inland waters.

- Ixobrychus minutus* **Little Bittern** **SB, pm, wv**  
 Locally common migrant breeder at Ammiq, Anjar and Khaldeh pool, arriving April (eggs May). Most depart in August; small numbers September–mid-November Very scarce in winter, December–mid-March.
- Nycticorax nycticorax* **Night Heron** **sb, PM**  
 Breeds at Ammiq (Evans 1994). Common passage migrant in small numbers at most wetlands from late March–mid-June (most May) and early August–early November. A migrant flock of c. 60 birds over Palm island on 26 May 1996 was exceptional.
- Ardeola ralloides* **Squacco Heron** **pm, wv**  
 Recorded in small numbers on coasts, estuaries and at Ammiq, Tanayel, Yammouneh and Anjar, mid-March–early June and mid-August–mid-September. Small numbers regularly overwinter, November–early March, on coast and at inland waters.
- Bubulcus ibis* **Cattle Egret** **pm**  
 Scarce on coasts and at inland waters, March–April. Very scarce August–September. Two other records: one found dead Beirut on 27 October 1995 (GRJ) and one at the mouth of Nahr Beirut on 15 June 1996 (T. Bara).
- Egretta garzetta* **Little Egret** **PM, wv**  
 Regular passage on coasts, cultivated fields in lower montane areas and at inland waters, in small flocks (up to 15), from March–early June (most April–May), and August–late October. Scarce November–late February.
- Egretta alba* **Great White Egret** **pm, wv, s**  
 Scarce and irregular on coasts and at inland waters in groups of up to five birds. Six records in September–November and eight records in March–mid-May. Also recorded on five occasions in December–February, with occasional non-breeding birds in June–August.
- Ardea cinerea* **Grey Heron** **PM, wv**  
 Common on passage on islands, coasts, estuaries and at inland waters, most frequent at Palm island, Cheikh Zennad, Ammiq and Tanayel, in late February–late May and late August–early November. In 1988, 19–21 birds overwintered on Palm island (GRJ).
- Ardea purpurea* **Purple Heron** **pm**  
 Passage migrant on coasts, islands and at inland waters in mid-March–mid-June and, in larger numbers, early August–late November.
- Ciconia nigra* **Black Stork** **pm**  
 Uncommon passage migrant near coasts, over mountains and in the Beqaa valley, including Ammiq where over 200 on 2 April 1997 (S. Busuttill *et al.*), often with flocks of White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*, principally early March–mid-June and mid-August–late October.
- Ciconia ciconia* **White Stork** **PM**  
 Abundant and regular on both passages, over the whole country, but principally over coastal plains in spring in early March–late June (with a single day maximum of 6000 recorded on 14 April 1996), and over Beqaa valley in autumn, early August–late October. Largest flocks usually appear following periods of hot easterly winds.
- Plegadis falcinellus* **Glossy Ibis** **pm, s**  
 Very scarce on passage, principally in April and August–early October. Recorded mainly at Ammiq, Anjar, Qaraoun, more rarely in coastal areas. Singles occasionally oversummer (June–July) at coastal and inland waters.

- Platalea leucorodia* **Spoonbill** **pm**  
Very scarce: singles or pairs on coasts in September–mid-November; exceptionally a flock of nine on Palm island on 17 March 1995 (GRJ).
- Phoenicopterus ruber* **Greater Flamingo** **v, ?pm**  
Vagrant or very rare and irregular passage migrant, always in small numbers. Records from Palm island in late March–mid-June 1986, 1989 and 1995. Singles on Sanani island on 12 August 1995 and over Batroun coast on 11 October 1995 (GRJ). Formerly recorded in December and April at Beirut and Nahr El Kalb (Kumerloeve 1972).
- Cygnus olor* **Mute Swan** **v**  
Two records: six off Beirut on 20 December 1995 and 11 off Jiyeh on 17 March 1996 (GRJ).
- Anser fabalis* **Bean Goose** **v**  
Considered a vagrant by Benson (1970).
- Anser albifrons* **White-fronted Goose** **wv, pm**  
Scarce and irregular winter visitor, mid-November–early March. Very scarce on passage in November and March, when probably overlooked as migrates offshore.
- Tadorna ferruginea* **Ruddy Shelduck** **v**  
One record: Flach (1959) recorded that one was shot at Beirut on 17 November 1958.
- Tadorna tadorna* **Shelduck** **pm, wv**  
Small numbers on passage in September–late November and March–early May. Scarce winter visitor in small groups to most wetlands and coasts in late November–late March.
- Anas penelope* **Wigeon** **PM, wv**  
Relatively common passage migrant in mid-February–mid-May and September–early December, over most of the country. Occasional winter visitor in small numbers to Beqaa valley wetlands, December–early March.
- Anas strepera* **Gadwall** **wv**  
Very scarce and irregular at Ammiq, Tanayel, Qaraoun and Beqaa fishponds in late October–mid-March
- Anas crecca* **Teal** **PM, WV**  
Widespread and common passage migrant in March–early May and mid-August–late November, and winter visitor from December–March in Beqaa wetlands; less common further west and on the coast.
- Anas platyrhynchos* **Mallard** **PM, WV**  
Widespread in large numbers, September–early April at Ammiq, Tanayel, Qaraoun and the Litany river; with smaller numbers on coast, islands and other inland waters.
- Anas acuta* **Pintail** **PM, WV, s**  
Relatively common on inland waters (rare on coast) from late October–late April with peak numbers in January–February. Occasionally oversummers in late May–mid August.
- Anas querquedula* **Garganey** **PM**  
Widespread and common passage migrant through most wetlands in March–April, but much rarer in August–September. Four on Palm island on 21 February 1998 (T. Bara).
- Anas clypeata* **Shoveler** **PM, wv**  
Usually scarce, but occasionally flocks of up to 200, in most wetlands from mid-February–early April and mid-September–early November. Small numbers overwinter at Qaraoun, Tanayel and Ammiq, in late October–early March. Probably more common than records suggest.

- Marmaronetta angustirostris*      **Marbled Teal**      **v**  
Regarded as "accidental" in Lebanon by Cramp & Simmons (1977), with one dated record since: one at Qaraoun in September 1978 (Tohmé & Tohmé 1986).
- Netta rufina*      **Red-crested Pochard**      **v**  
One record: a male at Tyre beach on 12 March 1995 (GRJ).
- Aythya ferina*      **Pochard**      **pm, wv**  
Uncommon on passage in October–November and even rarer in March–April at inland waters, coasts and Palm island. A local winter visitor in relatively small numbers to Ammiq in December–February.
- Aythya nyroca*      **Ferruginous Duck**      **pm, wv, s**  
Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor, principally at Ammiq and Qaraoun, in relatively small numbers in September–late March. Non-breeders occasionally oversummer (June–early August) at Qaraoun.
- Aythya fuligula*      **Tufted Duck**      **pm, wv**  
Uncommon passage migrant in Beqaa valley wetlands, principally March–late April and mid-September–late November. Few overwinter, December–early March, at Anjar, Ammiq and Qaraoun.
- Melanitta fusca*      **Velvet Scoter**      **v**  
One record: one at the Nahr El Kalb estuary on 10 December 1960 (Kumerloeve 1972).
- Bucephala clangula*      **Common Goldeneye**      **v**  
One record: one off Beirut on 20 February 1943 (Cawkell 1944).
- Mergus merganser*      **Goosander**      **v**  
One record: a male and six females on an islet off Tripoli on 7 March 1998 (T. Bara).
- Pernis apivorus*      **Honey Buzzard**      **PM**  
Widespread and common passage migrant over the whole country, early August–late October (most September) with maximum daily count of c. 4500 in September 1995. Spring passage is also considerable, from early April–early June, peaking in the first half of May.
- Elanus caeruleus*      **Black-winged Kite**      **v**  
Two records: singles at Tyre on 4 December 1863 (Tristram 1882) and at Cedars on 21 September 1954 (Kumerloeve 1972).
- Milvus migrans*      **Black Kite**      **PM, wv**  
Common spring passage migrant throughout the country, mid-March–late April. Few records of autumn migrants in recent years, most mid-September–mid-November (T. Bara). Occasional overwintering in December–February in south Lebanon and central Anti-Lebanon.
- Milvus milvus*      **Red Kite**      **pm**  
Extremely rare passage migrant, early April and mid-September–mid-November, principally over the Beqaa valley with other migrant raptors.
- Haliaeetus albicilla*      **White-tailed Eagle**      **v**  
Four records: singles at Rachaya Lake in Anti-Lebanon on 2 and 8 January 1955 (Kumerloeve 1972), an immature at Bifkaya on 15 September 1974 (Macfarlane 1977), and an adult on Palm island on 11 October 1996 (GRJ).
- Gypaetus barbatus*      **Lammergeier**      **v**  
Listed as an accidental in Lebanon (Cramp & Simmons 1980). No recent records, probably due to lack of surveys of suitable areas in the south of the country.



- Neophron percnopterus* **Egyptian Vulture** **FB, PM**  
Formerly bred (Benson 1970) but no recent proof (Tohmé & Neuschwander 1974, GRJ). Common passage migrant, March–early June (most mid-March–mid-April) and early September–late October, principally over the Beqaa valley and Lebanon mountain range.
- Gyps fulvus* **Griffon Vulture** **FB, pm, ?r, ?b**  
Formerly bred in south Lebanon (Tristram 1864, 1882). Modern-day status uncertain; probably a rare and local resident near the Israeli border and perhaps elsewhere; and a scarce passage migrant in mid-March–mid-May (over mountains and the Beqaa) and extremely rare in autumn from mid-September–early October (over Jabal Sannine, Barouk and Toumat Niha).
- Aegypius monachus* **Black Vulture** **pm**  
Extremely rare passage migrant over Beqaa and montane areas where singles recorded, usually with other raptors, in March–April and October. An adult captured at Faraya on 6 May 1993 is now in Dbayeh Zoo.
- Circaetus gallicus* **Short-toed Eagle** **sb, PM**  
Local summer visitor, breeding in small numbers in montane areas of south Lebanon. Two fledglings collected from tree nest near Sharquieh on 22 May 1996 were hand-reared. Common passage migrant over much of the country, early March–late April (most first half of April) and early September–late October.
- Circus aeruginosus* **Marsh Harrier** **?FB, PM, wv**  
Bred or attempted to breed at Ammiq (Kumerloev 1962, Benson 1970, Tohmé & Neuschwander 1978) but no recent evidence. Fairly common on passage late February–late May (peak in March) and early September–mid-November (most mid-September–early October). Local winter visitor (December–February) in small numbers to Beqaa wetlands.
- Circus cyaneus* **Hen Harrier** **pm, wv**  
Irregular and scarce on passage at most wetlands in March–April and October–early November with very small numbers remaining to winter from December–late February. Most frequently recorded in the Beqaa valley, particularly at Ammiq.
- Circus macrourus* **Pallid Harrier** **pm**  
Uncommon but regular on passage, principally from early March–early May and early September–mid-November over most of the country, with most at Ammiq.
- Circus pygargus* **Montagu's Harrier** **pm**  
Rare passage migrant in mid-March–mid-May (most first half April) and late August–late November over most of the country, especially the Beqaa valley.
- Accipiter gentilis* **Goshawk** **pm, wv**  
Scarce passage migrant across Lebanon in March–April and early September–November, and a rare winter visitor in December–February, mainly in pine and cedar groves.
- Accipiter nisus* **Sparrowhawk** **?FB, PM, wv**  
Probably nested formerly (Benson 1970). A common passage migrant over most of the country in March–early May and September–early November, with a few overwintering in November–late February in montane areas and the Beqaa valley.
- Accipiter brevipes* **Levant Sparrowhawk** **FB, PM**  
Formerly bred (Benson 1970). A widespread and common passage migrant across Lebanon, in variable numbers, from March–mid-May and September–October.
- Buteo buteo* **Common Buzzard** **PM, WV**  
Widespread and common passage migrant on a broad front from late February–late April and October–November, and a common winter visitor in November–mid-March, with most in the Beqaa valley.

- Buteo rufinus* **Long-legged Buzzard** **R, pm, wv**  
Breeding confirmed in spring 1995 and 1996 (Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi 1997), and spring 1997 (GRJ). Present year-round with largest numbers in spring (March–April) and to a lesser extent in autumn (September–November). Uncommon in winter from November–early March in most of the country, being most frequent in central Beqaa.
- Buteo lagopus* **Rough-legged Buzzard** **v**  
Three records: singles at Ryak on 26–28 March 1958, over Ainab in September 1960 (Kumerloeve 1962, Tohmé & Neschwander 1974) and at Ammiq on 28 March 1998 (GRJ).
- Aquila pomarina* **Lesser Spotted Eagle** **PM, wv**  
Widespread and common on passage over most of the country in March–late May and mid-August–late October. Very small numbers overwinter in Beqaa and nearby in December–late February.
- Aquila clanga* **Greater Spotted Eagle** **pm**  
Irregular and scarce passage migrant over most of the country, with most recorded on the main migration routes, in March–April and September–October. One over Palm island on 16 November 1996.
- Aquila nipalensis* **Steppe Eagle** **PM, wv**  
Not uncommon passage migrant over most of the country, in small flocks from mid-February–early May and late September–mid-November. Scarce winter visitor to the northern Beqaa and Anti-Lebanon range.
- Aquila heliaca* **Imperial Eagle** **?FB, pm**  
Reportedly once bred (Benson 1970) but no recent evidence. Extremely rare passage migrant in early March–early April and October along main migration routes.
- Aquila chrysaetos* **Golden Eagle** **FB, pm, ?r**  
Tristram (1882) noted that in summer, this species is only found in north Lebanon and Hermon. Subsequent spring records suggestive of breeding come from Beirut valley on 24 April 1955, Ammiq swamp on 31 March 1957 and Krak des Chevaliers on 6 May 1956 (Kumerloeve 1962). Currently a scarce passage migrant in mid-March–mid-April and mid-September–mid-October, usually in small groups of 4–5 along main migration routes.
- Aquila verreauxii* **Verreaux's Eagle** **v**  
One record: an adult seen soaring high over Tyre on 6 June 1996 (GRJ).
- Hieraaetus pennatus* **Booted Eagle** **sb, pm**  
Breeding confirmed in April 1996 at Maanyeh (Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi 1997). An uncommon passage migrant over most of the country, mostly in mid-March–late April and, to lesser extent, September–October.
- Hieraaetus fasciatus* **Bonelli's Eagle** **r, pm, wv**  
Breeding confirmed in March 1996 at Ijbeh of Jabal Aitou (Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi 1997). A scarce passage migrant and winter visitor from mid-September–late April throughout the country.
- Pandion haliaetus* **Osprey** **pm**  
Uncommon passage migrant throughout the country from late March–late April and early September–early November.
- Falco naumanni* **Lesser Kestrel** **FB, pm, s**  
Formerly bred (Benson 1970). Uncommon passage migrant over most of the country in late March–late April and early September–late October. Probably more common than records suggest due to possible confusion of females with female Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*. Some non-breeding individuals regularly oversummer in May–mid-August.

- Falco tinnunculus* **Kestrel** **R, PM, WV**  
The most common and widespread resident raptor breeding in Lebanon (Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi 1997). Found in a wide variety of habitats from sea-level to 2600 metres. Also a common passage migrant in early March–mid-May and late August–early November, and widespread in winter from November–late February.
- Falco vespertinus* **Red-footed Falcon** **pm**  
Uncommon passage migrant in September–October and rare in April–May. Principally recorded on Palm island, along coasts and at Ammiq.
- Falco columbarius* **Merlin** **pm, wv**  
Small numbers on passage in March–mid-April and October–November over most of the country. Scarce winter visitor from November–February, principally to the Beqaa valley.
- Falco subbuteo* **Hobby** **SB, PM**  
Fairly common passage migrant over most areas of the country, but principally to the Beqaa valley, from early September–early November and April–mid-May. Some breed in high montane areas, e.g. Arz Al Chouf Protected Area, where at least 10–15 pairs nest in cedar and pine groves.
- Falco eleonorae* **Eleonora's Falcon** **pm**  
Extremely rare passage migrant. Five recent records: singles at Jabal Barouk on 4 April 1995, near Wadi El Zeina on 21 September 1995, over Bjiro pine forest on 17 October 1995, shot and discarded amongst rubbish at Tanayel on 12 October 1996 and at Dalhoun on 11 April 1997 (GRJ). Formely, at least six records in April, May, August and October (Kumerloeve 1962, Ristow & Wink 1994).
- Falco biarmicus* **Lanner Falcon** **pm, wv, ?sb**  
Perhaps breeds (Benson 1970) but no evidence. Uncommon or rare passage migrant and winter visitor in September–February in the Beqaa, and over mountains and coasts.
- Falco cherrug* **Saker Falcon** **pm, wv**  
Scarce passage migrant along main raptor migration routes in September–October and even rarer in March–April. Very scarce winter visitor in November–February, with most in the northern Beqaa at Baalbek, Hermel and Qaa.
- Falco peregrinus* **Peregrine Falcon** **?FB, pm, wv**  
Perhaps formerly bred (Benson 1970) but no specific evidence (Kumerloeve 1968, Tohmé & Neuschwander 1974) and no recent evidence of overwintering (GRJ). Scarce passage migrant in late March–late April and late August–late October over many areas including Beirut. Very scarce winter visitor from mid-November–late February to the Beqaa valley, low mountains and the coastal strip.
- Falco pelegrinoides* **Barbary Falcon** **v**  
One record: reported, perhaps erroneously, from Palm island (Evans 1994).
- Alectoris chukar* **Chukar** **R**  
Common and widespread resident breeder principally at 1500–2000 metres. The country's population was estimated at over 6400 pairs in 1995–1997 (eggs early March–mid-August). Maximum density is at Arz Al Chouf Protected Area (more than 800 pairs in 450 km<sup>2</sup>), especially in rocky highlands among and above cedar groves.
- Alectoris graecae* **Rock Partridge** **r**  
Introduced in 1994–1995 and breeding confirmed, near cedar of Maasser Al Chouf, in very small numbers (Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi 1997).
- Ammoperdix heyi* **Sand Partridge** **v**  
One record: between Baalbek and the Lebanon Range on 30 April 1946 (Kumerloeve 1962).

- Francolinus francolinus* **Black Francolin** **v**  
 One record: at Anjar in 1958 (Tohmé & Neuschwander 1974).
- Coturnix coturnix* **Quail** **sb, PM, wv**  
 Uncommon and localised migrant breeder in Beqaa, on Palm island and elsewhere. Common passage migrant over most of the country from mid-February–late May and early August–late November, with peaks in March and September. Few overwinter in December–February, mainly in the Beqaa valley.
- Phasianus colchicus* **Pheasant** **r**  
 Escapes or introduced birds are recorded irregularly. One record of breeding, at Darayya in April 1995 (Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi 1997).
- Rallus aquaticus* **Water Rail** **R, PM, WV**  
 Local resident at Ammiq and Anjar (eggs March–May), augmented by wintering birds in early November–late February. Common and widespread passage migrant in early March–early May and early September–late October, mainly at inland waters and estuaries.
- Porzana porzana* **Spotted Crake** **PM, wv**  
 Common spring passage migrant in March–mid-May (peak in April), at estuaries, inland waters and, to a lesser extent, Palm island. Scarce on autumn passage in September–October and rare in winter from mid-November–late February at Ammiq and Anjar.
- Porzana parva* **Little Crake** **pm**  
 Scarce in spring, when almost exclusively seen at Ammiq in March–late April. Even smaller numbers in late August–early September at Palm island, Ammiq and Anjar.
- Porzana pusilla* **Baillon's Crake** **pm**  
 Scarce spring migrant: singles at inland waters, particularly Ammiq, in March–April. One autumn record, at Ammiq on 19 September 1996 (GRJ).
- Crex crex* **Corncrake** **pm**  
 Uncommon passage migrant throughout the country in early September–late October and early March–late May. Regular in May on Palm island, with peaks of up to six birds.
- Gallinula chloropus* **Moorhen** **R, PM, wv**  
 Common resident breeder (eggs March–late June) at Ammiq and Anjar. Numbers increase due to immigration in mid-August–late April.
- Porphyrio porphyrio* **Purple Gallinule** **v**  
 One record: one in the Anti-Lebanon in 1945 (Kumerloeve 1962).
- Fulica atra* **Coot** **R, PM, WV**  
 Fairly common resident breeder (chicks from late April) at Ammiq and the Litany estuary. Very common on passage and in winter, principally September–late May, in most suitable habitats.
- Grus grus* **Common Crane** **pm**  
 Scarce and irregular passage migrant, March–April and mid-September–November, over most areas but particularly coastal areas and the Beqaa valley, with usually 2–3 birds at each, but occasionally peaks of 12–65 birds.
- Anthropoides virgo* **Demoiselle Crane** **pm**  
 Very scarce and irregular passage migrant in March and October–November, through coastal areas and the Beqaa valley. The most recent record was of six at Mokhtara in Al Chouf on 4 April 1997 (GRJ).
- Tetrax tetrax* **Little Bustard** **v**  
 One record: one south-east of Saida on 17 October 1958 (Flach 1959).

- Chlamydotis undulata* **Houbara Bustard** **v**  
Two records in 1958: singles at Ain Baal on 12 October and south of Baalbek on 30 October (Flach 1959).
- Otis tarda* **Great Bustard** **v**  
Considered "accidental" by Cramp & Simmons (1980), presumably on the basis of a specimen found by Cawkell (1944) at Nahr El Kalb café.
- Haematopus ostralegus* **Oystercatcher** **v**  
Four records of singles: Khaldeh Pool south of Beirut on 2 April 1955 (Kumerloeve 1962), Cheikh Zennad on 8 April 1996 (Bara 1998), and Palm island on 5 May 1996 and 15 February 1998 (GRJ).
- Himantopus himantopus* **Black-winged Stilt** **PM**  
Common passage migrant in early March–mid-May and mid-June–late October on islands (most on Palm island), coasts (principally at Cheikh Zennad) and inland waters (most at Ammiq).
- Recurvirostra avosetta* **Avocet** **pm**  
Scarce passage migrant in mid-March–mid-May and early August–mid-September on coasts and islands.
- Dromas ardeola* **Crab Plover** **v**  
One record: Hüe & Etchécopar (1970) mention a record of five birds from the Lebanese/Syrian border in 1885 that appears to have been overlooked by most subsequent authors.
- Burhinus oedicnemus* **Stone Curlew** **pm, ?sb**  
Very rare and irregular passage migrant in mid-March–late April and October on the coast and in the Beqaa valley. Probably a scarce migrant breeder to south Lebanon, although no proof of nesting available.
- Cursorius cursor* **Cream-coloured Courser** **?r**  
Status uncertain. Very rare and irregular at Qaa and Hermel (north Beqaa) where suitable habitat for breeding exists. Recorded March, June, August–September and November. A juvenile caught and photographed on 2 July 1996 at Sharkieh, south Lebanon also suggests breeding (GRJ).
- Glareola pratincola* **Collared Pratincole** **pm**  
Uncommon passage migrant in April–May and mid-August–early November, mostly on coasts and islands.
- Glareola nordmanni* **Black-winged Pratincole** **pm**  
Uncommon to rare passage migrant in April–May and mid-September–early October on islands, coasts, low montane areas (Dalhoun) and at Ammiq.
- Charadrius dubius* **Little Ringed Plover** **PM, s**  
Relatively common in spring, from late March–early May, and scarce autumn migrant, from mid-August–early October, on coasts and at inland waters (Beqaa). Also a rare non-breeding summer visitor in June–late July, mainly on Palm island.
- Charadrius hiaticula* **Ringed Plover** **PM, wv, s**  
Relatively common passage migrant in late March–early June and mid-August–late October on coasts, fishponds and inland waters. Few overwinter in November–March on coasts and islands. Very small numbers of non-breeders oversummer from June–July at Tyre, Cheikh Zennad and Palm island.

- Charadrius alexandrinus*                      **Kentish Plover**    **pm, s**  
Rare to scarce passage migrant from early February–late May and early August–late December on coasts, estuaries and inland waters. Few non-breeders occasionally in June–July, mainly on coasts, Ammiq and Qaraoun lake.
- Charadrius leschenaulti*                      **Greater Sand Plover**    **pm**  
Rare passage migrant from March–late April and occasional in July–September on coasts, fishponds and at Ramkine and Palm islands.
- Charadrius asiaticus*                      **Caspian Plover**    **v**  
Two records: adult male at Beirut on 21 March 1904 (Carruthers 1910) and one at the mouth of the Damour river on 26 April 1975 (Macfarlane 1978).
- Charadrius morinellus*                      **Dotterel**    **pm, wv**  
Scarce in October–November and only one spring record, of three at Tyre on 17 March 1995 (GRJ). Most records from coasts and the Beqaa valley. Very small numbers occasionally winter in January–February at Qaraoun lake and the Litany river.
- Pluvialis fulva*                      **Pacific Golden Plover**    **v**  
One record: one at Cheikh Zennad on 12 October 1996 is briefly described (Bara 1998).
- Pluvialis apricaria*                      **European Golden Plover**    **pm, wv**  
Scarce passage migrant in March–April and uncommon in October–mid-November, mostly on coasts and in the Beqaa; extremely rare elsewhere. Few overwinter (December–February) in south Beqaa.
- Pluvialis squatarola*                      **Grey Plover**    **pm, wv**  
Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor to coasts and islands in mid-August–late May.
- Hoplopterus spinosus*                      **Spur-winged Plover**    **pm**  
Extremely rare passage migrant in mid-March–mid-June (most mid-April–mid-May) and early August–late October. Most on Palm island, on coast, or at Ammiq and Qaraoun.
- Chettusia gregaria*                      **Sociable Plover**    **v**  
One record: a small flock in the Beqaa on 30 October 1958 (Flach 1959).
- Vanellus vanellus*                      **Lapwing**    **PM, WV**  
Widespread and abundant passage migrant over most of the country (including Palm island) and a common winter visitor to the Beqaa valley. Recorded mid-August–mid-May.
- Calidris canutus*                      **Knot**    **v**  
One record: one at Khaldeh pool on 2 April 1955 (Kumerloeve 1962).
- Calidris alba*                      **Sanderling**    **v**  
Three records: one at Beirut in late spring 1876 (Kumerloeve 1962); four at Cheikh Zennad on 15 September 1996 and eight there on 29 September 1996 (Bara 1998).
- Calidris minuta*                      **Little Stint**    **PM**  
Common passage migrant in flocks of up to several 100s in early March–late May and early August–late October on coasts, islands, and wetlands throughout the country.
- Calidris temminckii*                      **Temminck's Stint**    **pm**  
Scarce but regular passage migrant in late April–late May and mid-August–late October, mainly in Beqaa and to a lesser extent on coast, fishponds and estuaries.
- Calidris ferruginea*                      **Curlew Sandpiper**    **pm, s**  
Scarce but regular passage migrant in late April–May and August–October on coasts and wetlands throughout Lebanon. Very small numbers overwinter in June–July on Palm island. Perhaps more common than observations suggest.

- Calidris alpina* **Dunlin** **PM, WV**  
Common passage migrant in August–mid-November and to a lesser extent April–May on coasts, islands and inland wetlands. Regularly recorded in December–February on Palm island and occasionally or locally in smaller numbers elsewhere.
- Limicola falcinellus* **Broad-billed Sandpiper** **pm**  
Scarce passage migrant: one at Yammouné in autumn 1964 (Benson 1970) and seven records at Cheikh Zennad from late April–late May and early August–early September 1996–1997, with a maximum of 18 on 1 September 1996 (Bara 1998).
- Philomachus pugnax* **Ruff** **PM, wv, s**  
Common to abundant passage migrant in mid-February–late May and early August–mid-November, chiefly in the Beqaa valley, coast and estuaries. Very scarce winter visitor, in late November–early February, to the Ammiq area. Very small numbers overwinter at Cheikh Zennad in June–July (T. Bara).
- Lymnocyptes minimus* **Jack Snipe** **pm, wv**  
Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor from mid-October–late April, with most at Ammiq and the Litany river. Perhaps more common than records suggest.
- Gallinago gallinago* **Common Snipe** **pm, wv**  
Uncommon but regular passage migrant from mid-August–late November and in much smaller numbers from early February–early May. Occurs over most of the country but favours the Ammiq area. Few overwinter in the Beqaa valley in December–February.
- Gallinago media* **Great Snipe** **pm**  
Rare passage migrant mainly recorded in the Beqaa valley and on Palm island in late March–mid-May. Once in autumn: one trapped at Ammiq on 14 September 1996 (GRJ).
- Scolopax rusticola* **Woodcock** **PM, WV**  
Not uncommon passage migrant across most of the country, mainly in mid-October–late December and late February–mid-April. Overwinters in moderate numbers from December–February, chiefly in the Beqaa area.
- Limosa limosa* **Black-tailed Godwit** **pm**  
Scarce passage migrant. Two records at Ammiq: two on 17 March 1975 (Macfarlane 1978) and one on 20 March 1997 (S. Busuttill *et al.*). Six records at Cheikh Zennad in April, August–September and November with a maximum of five on 5 April 1997 (Bara 1998). Recorded in Syria near the Lebanese border (Kumerloeve 1972).
- Limosa lapponica* **Bar-tailed Godwit** **v**  
One record: one at Cheikh Zennad on 12 May 1996 (Bara 1998).
- Numenius phaeopus* **Whimbrel** **pm**  
Rare passage migrant in April and early August–mid-October on coasts and islands.
- Numenius arquata* **Curlew** **v, ?pm**  
Three records: one at Cheikh Zennad on 21 April 1996 and two there on 30 April 1996 (Bara 1998), and three at Damour on 4 September 1996 (GRJ).
- Tringa erythropus* **Spotted Redshank** **v, ?pm**  
Vagrant or extremely rare passage migrant. One at Ammiq on 3 April 1975 (Macfarlane 1978), seven records at Cheikh Zennad in 1996–1997 with a maximum of six on 12 May 1996 (Bara 1998), one near Khaldeh on 25 August 1996 (GRJ) and one at Ammiq on 20 March 1997 (S. Busuttill *et al.*). Recorded from Syria near the Lebanese border in autumn (Kumerloeve 1972).

- Tringa totanus* **Redshank** **pm, wv**  
 Uncommon but regular passage migrant in March–April and commoner from early August–late December. Regular on Palm island and coasts, much less so at inland waters. Small numbers (4–6) overwintered during January–February 1999 at Cheikh Zennad.
- Tringa stagnatilis* **Marsh Sandpiper** **pm, ?wv**  
 Scarce passage migrant in early March–late April and early August–late October on coasts, estuaries and inland waters. One winter record: at Al Ain near Tyre on 12 December 1996 (GRJ).
- Tringa nebularia* **Greenshank** **PM, wv**  
 Relatively common passage migrant in March–April and late July–late October over much of the country, with most at Ammiq, Qaraoun, Anjar, Tanayel, on coasts and Palm and Ramkine islands. Very few in winter, from January–mid-February, in the Beqaa, principally at Ammiq and the Litany river.
- Tringa ochropus* **Green Sandpiper** **PM, wv**  
 Fairly common passage migrant in late February–late June (most mid-March–mid-April) and early August–late October. Scarce winter visitor in November–February. Most at inland waters and Palm island; very few coastal records.
- Tringa glareola* **Wood Sandpiper** **PM**  
 Common passage migrant from mid-February–late May and late July–early November, on islands, coasts and inland wetlands.
- Xenus cinereus* **Terek Sandpiper** **v**  
 One record: one at Cheikh Zennad on 18 August 1996 (Bara 1998).
- Actitis hypoleucos* **Common Sandpiper** **PM, wv, s**  
 Common passage migrant and scarce winter visitor. Recorded year-round at inland waters, less frequently on islands and coasts.
- Arenaria interpres* **Turnstone** **pm**  
 Very scarce but regular passage migrant, in August and May (1995–1997) on coast between Saida and Tyre (GRJ), and in October and May (1996–1997) at Cheikh Zennad (T. Bara).
- Phalaropus lobatus* **Red-necked Phalarope** **v**  
 One record: one on the coast near Zahrani on 3 August 1996 (GRJ).
- Stercorarius pomarinus* **Pomarine Skua** **v, ?pm**  
 Status uncertain: vagrant or extremely rare passage migrant. Twelve records at Ras Beirut in February, August–September and December 1974–1976 (Macfarlane 1978) and six there during 8–11 April 1997 (Busuttill & Flumm 1998a).
- Stercorarius parasiticus* **Arctic Skua** **v, ?pm**  
 Status uncertain: vagrant or extremely rare passage migrant. Recorded off Ras Beirut and Tripoli on 11 May, 21–28 August and 6 September 1974–1976 (Macfarlane 1978) and four at Ras Beirut on 10 April 1997 (Busuttill & Flumm 1998a). Four birds off Ras Beirut during 8–11 April 1997 were either this species or Pomarine Skua.
- Larus hemprichii* **Sooty Gull** **v**  
 One record: one near Tyre on 22 October 1958 (Flach 1959).
- Larus ichthyaetus* **Great Black-headed Gull** **v**  
 Four records: two at Ras Beirut on 5 March 1975 and five there on 15 March 1975 (Macfarlane 1978), one at Cheikh Zennad on 15 December 1996 (Bara 1998) and one at Palm islands reserve on 23 February and 1–4 April 1998 (GRJ). One uncertain record of one near Saida on 11 October 1958 (Flach 1959).



- Larus melanocephalus* **Mediterranean Gull** **pm, wv**  
Scarce and irregular passage migrant and winter visitor. Not uncommon offshore in autumn and winter (Benson 1970); recorded on six dates in January, seven in February, five in March and one in December by Macfarlane (1978); and one recent record of two at Ras Beirut on 8–11 April 1997 (S. Busuttill *et al.*).
- Larus minutus* **Little Gull** **pm, wv**  
Uncommon to scarce passage migrant and commoner winter visitor in early September–mid-May on islands, coasts, estuaries and rarely at inland waters (Qaraoun and Yammouné).
- Larus ridibundus* **Black-headed Gull** **PM, WV**  
Abundant passage migrant and winter visitor from late August–late April with a peak in November–December when flocks of several 100s are present. Recorded on islands, coasts, fishponds, estuaries and irregularly at inland waters where usually less than ten at any site.
- Larus genei* **Slender-billed Gull** **pm, wv**  
Irregular spring passage migrant and winter visitor. Benson (1970) lists very few records. Recently: two off Tripoli on 13 December 1995, one on Palm island on 2 February 1997 and 1–7 birds there on 22 March–25 April 1998 (GRJ); four records involving 13 individuals at Cheikh Zennad in April–May 1996, March–April 1997 (Bara 1998); and 14 at Ras Beirut on 10 April 1997 (Busuttill & Flumm 1998a).
- Larus audouini* **Audouin's Gull** **FB, v, ?pm**  
Bred on Palm island in 1895 (Stenhouse 1904); three there on 3 October 1958 (Flach 1959); and 18 in the same place but apparently not breeding on 3 April 1973 (Tohmé & Neuschwander 1974). Five at Cheikh Zennad on 25 August 1996 (Bara 1998) and one caught and photographed, among tens seen on Palm, Ramkine and Sanani islands on 23 August 1997 (GRJ).
- Larus canus* **Common Gull** **WV, pm, s**  
Scarce passage migrant in March and early November–late December, and widespread and common winter visitor in December–late February, with small numbers overwintering in June–July off Tripoli. Recorded on islands and coasts.
- Larus fuscus* **Lesser Black-backed Gull** **PM, WV, s**  
Abundant passage migrant in early March–late May and mid-August–early November, and common winter visitor in mid-November–mid-March. Very small numbers regularly overwinter in coastal areas, particularly at Palm, Ramkine and Sanani islands.
- Larus cachinnans* **Yellow-legged Gull** **R, PM, WV, S**  
Resident breeder (eggs late April) in small numbers on Palm, Ramkine and Sanani islands, off Tripoli (Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi 1997). Fairly common passage migrant in March–mid-May and mid-August–early November, a relatively common winter visitor in mid-November–late February, and not uncommon non-breeding summer visitor in May–July.
- Larus armenicus* **Armenian Gull** **v**  
Status uncertain as interest, principally in the identification, of this taxon which has been afforded specific status by many authors, has only developed recently. Four at Tyre on 11 October 1996 (GRJ) and eight at Cheikh Zennad on 22 March 1997 with one there on 5 April 1997 (Bara 1998).
- Larus marinus* **Great Black-backed Gull** **pm, wv**  
Extremely rare passage migrant and winter visitor. The first part of Benson's (1970) statement that "a few are seen offshore here in most seasons, chiefly immature birds in autumn and winter" appears unlikely given the pattern of records elsewhere in this part of

the Middle East. Singles off Antelias on 7 April and 12 December 1995, off Beirut on 15 March 1996 and Palm island on 5 May 1996 (GRJ).

- Rissa tridactyla* **Kittiwake** **v**  
Recorded only from Ras Beirut: records in January (three), November (five) and December (eight) in 1974–1975 (Macfarlane 1978), and at Palm island reserve on 15 February 1998 (GRJ).
- Gelochelidon nilotica* **Gull-billed Tern** **v**  
Tristram's late 19th century report that the species was found on sand-spits and lagoons near Tyre and Beirut cannot be confirmed (see Kumerloeve 1962). Recently, one at Qaraoun lake on 15 August 1996 and two at Cheikh Zennad on 17 April 1997 (Bara 1998).
- Sterna bengalensis* **Lesser Crested Tern** **FB, e**  
Bred on Palm island in 1895 (Stenhouse 1904). No subsequent records.
- Sterna sandwicensis* **Sandwich Tern** **pm, wv**  
Observations in 1995–1997 suggest the species is an extremely rare passage migrant and winter visitor in early August–mid-April to coasts (GRJ). Recorded at Byblos on 18 February 1975 (Macfarlane 1978) and once previously (see Kumerloeve 1962).
- Sterna hirundo* **Common Tern** **FB, PM**  
Formerly bred on Palm island (Stenhouse 1904), but considered a vagrant by Cramp (1985). Observations in 1995–1997 demonstrate it to be a common passage migrant in early April–late May and early August–early October, on coasts and islands. One record outside this period: five on Palm island on 21 February 1998 (T. Bara).
- Sterna albifrons* **Little Tern** **FB, v**  
Status uncertain. Bred on Palm island at the end of the 19th century (Stenhouse 1904) but no subsequent records until 11 at Cheikh Zennad on 14 June 1996, three there on 8 September 1996 and eight on 16 May 1997 (T. Bara), with one at Sanani island on 4 April 1998.
- Chlidonias hybridus* **Whiskered Tern** **sb, pm**  
Breeding recently confirmed: c.12 pairs nested on the Assi river in May 1995 and 1996 (Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi 1997). Scarce on passage in April–mid-May and late August–late September at inland waters and on coasts.
- Chlidonias niger* **Black Tern** **v**  
Tristram mentioned coastal records but did not provide details. Eight recent records: singles at Qaraoun on 4 and 29 August, and 8 September 1974 (Macfarlane 1978), and 15 August 1996; singles at Cheikh Zennad on 8 September and 12 October 1996 (Bara 1998); one over Beirut on 17 September 1996 (T. Bara); and one at Ras Beirut on 8 April 1997 (Busuttill & Flumm 1998a).
- Chlidonias leucopterus* **White-winged Black Tern** **PM**  
Recorded occasionally offshore (Benson 1970). Observations in 1995–1997 have demonstrated it to be a not uncommon passage migrant in mid-March–mid-May and early August–late October at Qaraoun, Yammouné, Tanayel and coastal waters.
- Pterocles orientalis* **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** **v**  
One record: 18 at Cheikh Zennad on 16 November 1996 (Bara 1998).
- Pterocles alchata* **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse** **v**  
Two records: one at Ammiq on 15 August 1975 (Macfarlane 1978) and two there on 4 October 1997 (C. Walley).
- Columba livia* **Rock Dove** **R**  
Breeding recently confirmed: a small colony nesting at c. 1500 metres near Yammouné in March 1995 (Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi 1997). A common resident in montane areas, particularly at Arz Al Chouf Protected Area.

- Columba oenas* **Stock Dove** **v**  
Three records: four near Baalbek on 23 March 1945 (Kumerloeve 1972), a flock south-east of Damour on 18 November 1958 (Flach 1959) and one in winter 1958–59 (Kumerloeve 1962). No subsequent records but perhaps overlooked.
- Columba palumbus* **Woodpigeon** **?FB, pm, wv**  
Perhaps formerly bred but no proof (Kumerloeve 1968). Scarce passage migrant in March and November, and an uncommon to scarce winter visitor in late November–late February, mainly in the Beqaa valley and, to a lesser extent, in montane areas, principally Ehden and Arz Al Chouf Protected Areas.
- Streptopelia decaocto* **Collared Dove** **R**  
Considered extinct by Tohmé & Neuschwander (1974) and a former breeder (Cramp 1985) but reappearance and breeding recently confirmed (Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi 1997). A common resident breeder in pine groves and the wooded garden of the American University in Beirut.
- Streptopelia turtur* **Turtle Dove** **sb, PM**  
Not uncommon migrant breeder (April–August) in montane areas to 1800 metres, in the Beqaa valley (mainly Hermel and Qaa), and probably on Palm island. Common passage migrant across most of the country in late March–early June (peak early April–mid-May) and early August–late November (peak late August–late September).
- Streptopelia senegalensis* **Laughing Dove** **R**  
Abundant resident breeder in Beirut. Scarce in coastal towns and the Chtoura of Beqaa.
- Psittacula krameri* **Ring-necked Parakeet** **r**  
Recently established feral breeding population in the wooded garden of the American University of Beirut. Copulation observed mid-April–early May (Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi 1997).
- Clamator glandarius* **Great Spotted Cuckoo** **FB, pm, ?sb**  
Bred in 1954, but no recent records (Cramp 1985). Recent observations demonstrate it to be an uncommon passage migrant in most areas from late February–late April and mid-August–late September, and a scarce winter visitor to the Beqaa valley and lower montane areas in December–January.
- Cuculus canorus* **Common Cuckoo** **sb, PM**  
Uncommon and localised migrant breeder, principally to northern Beqaa and montane south Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon range. Relatively common on passage across the country from early March–mid-May (most early April) and late August–late September.
- Tyto alba* **Barn Owl** **r**  
Widespread but local resident in small numbers, breeding from sea-level to high mountains and the Beqaa valley (chicks from mid-April). Perhaps more widespread than records suggest.
- Otus scops* **European Scops Owl** **SB, pm, wv**  
Common and widespread migrant breeder to most areas; usually recorded from 300–1800 metres in ravines, valleys and near rural settlements, with an especially high concentration in the Beqaa. Scarce on passage and in winter, from early September–mid-May, in most areas.
- Bubo bubo* **Eagle Owl** **v, ?r, ?wv**  
Status uncertain. Two or three records in February 1959 and March 1953 (Kumerloeve 1962) and one at Ammiq on 15 June 1997 (C. Walley).

- Ketupa zeylonensis* **Brown Fish Owl** ?v  
 Status uncertain: one undated specimen in the American University of Beirut collection. Considered accidental in Lebanon by Cramp (1985) but Shirihai (1996) states that it was recorded in Lebanon up to the 1970s. No further information or more recent records.
- Athene noctua* **Little Owl** R  
 Common breeding resident (a juvenile with partial down trapped near Dalhoun on 17 May 1997) in most montane areas and the Beqaa. Calling most frequently noted in March–June (GRJ). Formerly bred in Beirut (Kumerloeve 1962).
- Strix aluco* **Tawny Owl** r  
 Uncommon breeding resident in montane areas, mainly in cedar, pine and oak groves, and in rocky crevices at Faqra and Ammiq. Rarely recorded outside breeding season, in early August–early March.
- Asio otus* **Long-eared Owl** wv, pm, ?r  
 Probably breeds but no proof (Cramp 1985). In recent years occasionally recorded in cedars at Ain Zhalta and Maasser Al Chouf, in mid-August–early April. Perhaps more common than records suggest.
- Asio flammeus* **Short-eared Owl** wv, ?pm  
 Extremely rare winter visitor in early December–late February, mainly in the Beqaa and river valleys in coastal areas. There are a few older records from March, April and September–November (Kumerloeve 1962).
- Caprimulgus europaeus* **European Nightjar** FB, PM, ?sb  
 Formerly bred (Cramp 1985) but no recent evidence ((Tohmé & Neuschwander 1974). In recent years, a common passage migrant in early March–late May and much less frequent in early September–mid-October. Recorded in gardens in Beirut, the Beqaa valley and montane areas up to 1950 metres.
- Apus apus* **Common Swift** SB, PM  
 Abundant migrant breeder over most of the country. Nests from March–June in holes in buildings (usually damaged during the civil war) and occasionally on cliffs. Colonies of 5–6 to several tens of pairs from sea-level to high altitude (including the Anti-Lebanon). Common on passage in late February–late April and early June–late November.
- Apus pallidus* **Pallid Swift** sb, pm  
 Locally common migrant breeder (Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi 1997). Three colonies found in 1995–1996: eight pairs in an abandoned building in Beirut, seven pairs in the ceiling of a school near Beirut airport and 6–7 pairs on Ramkine island, off Tripoli. Twenty birds regularly recorded in late April–mid-June 1995–1996 feeding over a palm grove by Tripoli. Only one previous uncertain breeding record, in 1956 (Kumerloeve 1962). Uncommon on passage in February–May and June–September over most of the country.
- Apus melba* **Alpine Swift** sb, pm  
 Localised migrant breeder (mid-February–early July) to cliffs in most montane areas at mid- to high altitudes. Formerly bred in Beirut (Tohmé & Neuschwander 1974). Uncommon on passage over much of the country in mid-February–early April and early August–late September.
- Apus affinis* **Little Swift** FB, pm, ?sb  
 Formerly an occasional breeder (Cramp 1985), but no recent evidence, although small flocks have been recorded in April–June and August of recent years. Scarce on passage in mid-February–mid-April and late September–late November.

- Halcyon smyrnensis* **White-breasted Kingfisher** ?FB, pm, wv  
Probable former breeder but no recent evidence (Kumerloeve 1968). Breeding in south Lebanon (Shirihai 1996) unproven. Recorded in March and early August 1974 at Jabal Barouk and Nahr El Kalb (Tohmé & Neuschwander 1978). Three winter records: singles at Nahr El Kalb on 11 December 1995, Beirut on 3 January 1996 and Al Ain pond, Tyre on 29 January 1996 (GRJ).
- Alcedo atthis* **Common Kingfisher** PM, wv, s, ?r  
Small numbers occur year-round on islands, estuaries, coastal mudflats, rivers, fishponds of Beqaa, Anjar, Yammouné, and, more regularly, in reedbeds at Ammiq. Numbers augmented by migrants in early March–mid-May and mid-August–late November, and in winter (December–March).
- Ceryle rudis* **Pied Kingfisher** FB, wv, ?pm  
Bred at Anjar (Tohmé & Neuschwander 1974) but no recent evidence. The few available records are from late November–late February on coasts and at inland waters, and suggest it is an uncommon or rare winter visitor. Late records involve singles at Manara, Beirut on 14 March 1995 (GRJ) and at Cheikh Zennad on 8 April 1996 (Bara 1998).
- Merops persicus* **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** FB, e  
Small colony in 1945 near Beirut, but no subsequent evidence of breeding (Kumerloeve 1962) or records.
- Merops apiaster* **European Bee-eater** ?FB, PM, ?sb  
Perhaps formerly bred (Tohmé & Neuschwander 1974), but only recent evidence is a failed attempt at Ehden in May 1996 (Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi 1997). Very common and widespread on passage from early April–early June and mid-August–early November.
- Coracias garrulus* **European Roller** ?FB, PM, ?sb  
Perhaps formerly bred but no recent evidence (Tohmé & Neuschwander 1974). Common passage migrant in late March–late May and early August–late October, principally in cedar groves and the Beqaa valley. Very scarce on the coast.
- Upupa epops* **Hoopoe** R, sb, PM, wv  
Common breeding resident in *Abies cilicica* forest at Qammouha, *Quercus pseudocerris* forest at Fneideq and most *Cedrus libani* forests (Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi 1997). A common migrant breeder at Hermel, Qaa and Palm island. Numbers are augmented by migrants in late February–early May and mid-August–early November, and, to much lesser extent, by wintering birds in December–February.
- Jynx torquilla* **Wryneck** pm  
Scarce to rare passage migrant in early March–late April and mid-August–late October. Singles, occasionally up to seven, recorded in a variety of habitats (city gardens, coasts, montane areas and, most frequently, the Beqaa valley).
- Dendrocopos syriacus* **Syrian Woodpecker** R  
Considered extirpated in Lebanon by Tohmé & Neuschwander (1974) but in fact a local resident breeder (juveniles with some down on 26 May) in fir groves at Qammouha and *Quercus pseudocerris* forest at Fneideq (Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi 1997). Recently found nesting in hills at Hermon, above Ammiq and at Qaraoun. Dispersing individuals recorded at Ammiq and the Litany river.
- Eremalauda dunni* **Dunn's Lark** v  
One record in Lebanon (Harrison 1962).
- Ammomanes deserti* **Desert Lark** v  
Considered accidental in Lebanon (Kumerloeve 1962, Cramp 1988).

- Alaemon alaudipes* **Hoopoe Lark** v  
One record: two collected in Beqaa in autumn 1958 (Flach 1959).
- Melanocorypha calandra* **Calandra Lark** r, PM, wv  
Scarce and local breeding resident (eggs from early March) in relatively small numbers in the Beqaa valley, principally in cultivated fields, but also on low hillsides of the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon ranges bordering the valley. Abundant on passage in late September–late November and, less commonly, mid-February–mid-April through the Beqaa and Marjaayoun valleys, and low hills of south Lebanon. Very small numbers overwinter in December–February in the Beqaa, particularly in the Ammiq area.
- Melanocorypha bimaculata* **Bimaculated Lark** sb, pm, wv  
Scarce migrant breeder in high montane areas, chiefly in Arz Al Chouf Protected area and Hermon, and very scarce in Beqaa. Formerly considered an abundant breeder (Benson 1970). Uncommon but regular passage migrant in September–October and extremely rare in early March–mid-April over most of the country. Overwinters in small numbers in Beqaa during December–February.
- Melanocorypha yeltoniensis* **Black Lark** v  
One autumn record (Benson 1970).
- Calandrella brachydactyla* **Short-toed Lark** sb, PM, wv  
Scarce migrant breeder from early March–mid-July in Beqaa and most montane areas. Relatively common on passage in early September–late November and March–April, through coastal areas and Beqaa. Scarce in winter from mid-November–late February, usually in breeding areas.
- Calandrella rufescens* **Lesser Short-toed Lark** sb, pm, wv  
Localised migrant breeder from early March–late June in small numbers at Qaa and Hermel (north Beqaa), low hills of the Anti-Lebanon range, Akkar plain and probably elsewhere. Uncommon passage migrant throughout the country and a scarce winter visitor to Beqaa in late September–late April.
- Galerida cristata* **Crested Lark** R  
Common breeding resident (eggs from late March) in cultivated coastal areas, Beqaa and montane areas to c. 1300 metres, often in low, sparse vegetation near habitation.
- Lullula arborea* **Woodlark** R  
Common breeding resident (eggs from early April) in open rocky and grassy areas in the montane zone where it usually replaces Crested Lark. Most often recorded at Qammouha, Bcharri, Ain Zhalta, Barouk, Maasser Al Chouf and high plateaux of the Anti-Lebanon. Altitudinal movements to lower areas are undertaken in winter.
- Alauda arvensis* **Skylark** FB, PM, WV, s  
Formerly bred in Beqaa (Tohmé & Neuschwander 1974) but no recent proof. Common on passage in early March–mid-April and abundant in early October–late November in most areas, particularly the coast and Beqaa valley. Very small numbers overwinter in Beqaa in December–late January. A few non-breeding individuals oversummer in May–June.
- Eremophila alpestris* **Shore Lark** R  
Very common breeding resident (most are double-brooded, with eggs from the third week of April to late July) in grassy or stony areas at, or above, the tree-line. Often recorded in the same areas as Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia* and Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* on the crests of the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon ranges. Flocks from mid-August and may winter at lower elevations.
- Eremophila bilopha* **Temminck's Horned Lark** v  
Two records: one near the Chtoura–Damascus road on 29 October 1958 (Flach 1959) and a specimen, apparently taken in Lebanon, is held in the American University of Beirut collection.

- Riparia riparia* **Sand Martin** **PM, wv, s, ?sb**  
Suspected to breed, from May–mid-July, in the Assi river valley (north Beqaa). Common and widespread on passage in mid-February–late May and late August–early November on coast, montane areas and Beqaa. Very scarce in winter from December–February in Beqaa and near coast.
- Ptyonoprogne rupestris* **Crag Martin** **sb, PM, wv, ?r**  
Present year-round but whether some birds are resident is uncertain. Small numbers of summer visitors regularly nest on Palm island and at Nahr Ibrahim, Nahr Al Jouz, Moltqaq Al Nahrein, Farayya, Faqra, Arz Al Chouf Protected Area and probably elsewhere from mid-April–early July. Common on passage in late February–late April and late September–late November through most areas. Small flocks rarely winter in November–February along coasts, rocky river valleys of low mountains and Beqaa.
- Hirundo rustica* **Barn Swallow** **SB, PM, wv**  
Abundant migrant breeder (late March–mid-July) to most areas, from sea-level to high plateaux but preferring areas near habitation. Uncommon in winter in December–February, but very common and widespread on passage in mid-February–mid-June and early July–mid-November throughout the country.
- Hirundo daurica* **Red-rumped Swallow** **sb, pm**  
Uncommon migrant breeder (early March–early August) principally to river valleys near coasts and Beqaa. Elsewhere, uncommon or scarce on passage in early March–late April and early September–early October.
- Delichon urbica* **House Martin** **SB, PM**  
Relatively common migrant breeder in March–mid-July in open habitats, but most often found in hilly and montane areas near habitation or on cliffs. Relatively widespread and not uncommon on passage in early February–late May and early September–early November throughout the country.
- Anthus richardi* **Richard's Pipit** **v**  
One record: one near Bcharri on 12 November 1958 (Flach 1959).
- Anthus campestris* **Tawny Pipit** **sb, PM, wv**  
Scarce migrant breeder from early April–mid-August; usually in sparse, low grassy vegetation, from foothills to c. 1800 metres, and on Palm island. Common on passage in mid-February–mid-May and mid-August–early November over much of the country. Few overwinter in late November–late February.
- Anthus similis* **Long-billed Pipit** **r**  
Uncommon breeding resident in open areas with low vegetation, from foothills to c. 1650 metres. Most frequently recorded at Faqra, Ain Zhalta, Barouk and Baadaran. Recorded on Palm island in winter.
- Anthus trivialis* **Tree Pipit** **PM, wv**  
Scarce passage migrant in March–late April and early October–late November, with apparently fewer in spring. Uncommon in winter from mid-December–mid-February. Occurs from coasts to high areas, principally in cultivation and the Beqaa (most spring records are from Ammiq).
- Anthus pratensis* **Meadow Pipit** **WV, pm**  
Common winter visitor and uncommon passage migrant over most of the country. Regularly recorded in small numbers in mid-November–early March, mostly in coastal areas and the Beqaa.

- Anthus cervinus* **Red-throated Pipit** **PM**  
 Abundant passage migrant from sea-level to c. 1800 metres, mainly in damp or cultivated areas. Apparently more common in spring (early March–early May) than autumn (September–mid-November). Most recorded near coast and in Beqaa, particularly Ammiq.
- Anthus spinoletta* **Water Pipit** **PM, wv**  
 Widespread passage migrant in mid-February–early May and mid-September–late November through most areas. Scarce and local in winter in marshy parts of Beqaa, principally Ammiq.
- Motacilla flava* **Yellow Wagtail** **sb, PM**  
 Relatively common migrant breeder (Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi 1997). Mixed pairs of *M. f. flava* × *M. f. feldegg* breed in small numbers in early May–late June at Joueet stream near Ehden. The race *feldegg* is a common breeder in early April–early July near water, chiefly at Bcharri streams, Ammiq and the Litany river. Common on passage in early March–early June and late August–early November across the country, with particularly large concentrations at Ammiq in mid-March–mid-April.
- Motacilla citreola* **Citrine Wagtail** **v, ?pm**  
 Four records: at Cheikh Zennad, one on 8 April and two on 21 April 1996 (Bara 1998) and, at Ammiq, two adult males on 1 April and one on 6 April 1997 (S. Busuttill *et al.*).
- Motacilla cinerea* **Grey Wagtail** **sb, pm, wv**  
 Scarce migrant breeder in mid-May–late June at Joueet spring near Ehden (Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi 1997). Uncommon passage migrant and scarce winter visitor in mid-September–early April. Most often encountered near freshwater, e.g. streams, pools and marshes, in montane areas and the Beqaa valley. Apparently more numerous in autumn than on spring passage.
- Motacilla alba* **White Wagtail** **sb, PM, WV**  
 Relatively scarce migrant breeder to inland waters of the Lebanon range, Palm island and Beqaa valley. More common on passage and in winter from early September–late May in most areas, principally at Ammiq and Palm island.
- Pycnonotus xanthopygos* **Yellow-vented Bulbul** **R**  
 Very common and widespread breeding resident in most scrub and wooded habitats, from sea-level to c. 1000 metres, and locally in Beqaa; most frequently recorded in gardens, orchards, ravines, river valleys, olive groves and around habitation.
- Cinclus cinclus* **Dipper** **R**  
 Locally common breeding resident on streams and rivers of the western slopes (600–1800 metres). The subspecies occurring in Lebanon, *rufiventris*, is endemic to the country.
- Troglodytes troglodytes* **Wren** **R**  
 Common breeding resident in most areas, from sea-level to c. 1900 metres, and in Beqaa, chiefly at Ammiq and the Litany river areas. Mainly recorded in thickets with highest densities in cedar forest, but generally absent from garrigue.
- Prunella modularis* **Dunnock** **PM, WV**  
 Relatively common passage migrant in late October–early December and uncommon in late February–late March. Fairly common in winter, December–February, on low, bushy slopes.
- Prunella montanella* **Siberian Accentor** **v**  
 One record: one taken by a birdcatcher near Khaldeh on 18 November 1958 (Flach 1959).
- Prunella collaris* **Alpine Accentor** **v**  
 Three records: singles at Faraya on 17 November 1995 and Laqlouq on 6 March 1996 (GRJ), and three at Faqra on 25 January 1997 (C. Walley).



- Cercotrichas galactotes*                      **Rufous Bush Robin**                      **SB, PM**  
Common migrant breeder to most areas from late April–mid-July, from coast to Anti-Lebanon and Beqaa. Mainly recorded in field edges, orchards, olive groves, maquis, garrigue and oak forest edge. Reaches c. 1450 metres at Horj Ehden Protected Area. Common on passage across the country in early April–mid-May and less frequent in early August–late September.
- Erithacus rubecula*                              **Robin**    **pm, WV**  
Scarce passage migrant from early March–early April and rare in early October–late November, and a relatively common winter visitor in late October–late February. Recorded from sea-level to 1850 metres at Qammouha and in Beqaa. Usually recorded in woodland undergrowth, ravines, river valleys, maquis, orchards, gardens and inhabited garrigue.
- Luscinia luscinia*                              **Thrush Nightingale**                              **pm**  
Scarce spring migrant in mid-April–mid-May and rare in autumn in early September–mid-October across the country, chiefly on coasts and in Beqaa. Regular in undergrowth bordering drainage canals at Ammiq.
- Luscinia megarhynchos*                      **Nightingale**                                      **SB, pm**  
Breeding confirmed (Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi 1997). Common and widespread migrant breeder from early April–early July at low elevations, especially in maquis, garrigue and degraded garrigue. On passage, uncommon in spring (early March–early May) and very scarce in autumn (early September–late October) over much of the country.
- Luscinia svecica*                              **Bluethroat**    **PM, wv**  
Common passage migrant across the country in early March–mid-April and even more frequent in mid-September–late November; also a local and generally uncommon winter visitor to Ammiq swamp and other suitable areas of Beqaa, December–late February. Perhaps more widespread and common in winter than records suggest.
- Tarsiger cyanurus*                              **Red-flanked Bluetail**                              **v**  
One record: a male collected at El Hajje near Saida on 15 October 1958 (Kumerloeve 1962).
- Irania gutturalis*                              **White-throated Robin**                              **FB, pm, ?sb**  
Formerly bred (Kumerloeve 1969) but no recent proof (Cramp 1988), although may still nest in the southern mountains. A rare passage migrant, recorded on five occasions by GRJ in the south of the country: singles at Ammiq on 17 August 1995, Dalhoun on 12 September 1995, Tyre on 11 April 1996, Ammiq on 24 June 1997 and Baadaran on 3 September 1997. The latest record was one north of Saida on 3 October 1958 (Flach 1959).
- Phoenicurus ochruros*                              **Black Redstart**                                      **R, sb, PM, wv**  
Common breeding resident in highlands (mainly 800–2000 metres) on rocky slopes with sparse bushes and scattered trees or on forest edges, particularly of cedar. A nest with chicks found in a building at Faraya on 21 May 1996. Found at lower altitudes in winter, mostly at 300–1450 metres. In south Lebanon, it is a migrant breeder to the high slopes of Jabal Al Cheikh. Common and widespread on migration in late February–late April and mid-October–early December.
- Phoenicurus phoenicurus*                              **Common Redstart**                                      **sb, PM**  
Scarce migrant breeder from late March–early July in open woodland and orchards, mainly on terraced slopes of the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon ranges. Fairly common on passage across the country, from sea-level to c. 1850 metres, in early March–late May and mid-September–late November.
- Saxicola rubetra*                              **Whinchat**    **PM**  
Relatively common on passage in late March–late May and very common in early September–late October, chiefly in open montane habitats and cultivated areas of Beqaa (e.g. Ammiq).

- Saxicola torquata* Stonechat PM, WV  
Common passage migrant and winter visitor from mid-September–late April in open montane habitats and the Ammiq area.
- Oenanthe isabellina* Isabelline Wheatear SB, PM  
Breeding reconfirmed (Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi 1997). Not uncommon migrant breeder around cedar of Bcharri (c. 1850 metres), and very common in the semi-desert of northern Beqaa (Qaa, Fakiha, hills near the Assi river) where breeding density is c. 25–30 pairs per 1 km<sup>2</sup> and 5–10 pairs per 1 km<sup>2</sup> in the Anti-Lebanon range (to 1450 metres). Fairly common on passage across most of the country, from sea-level to 1900 metres and the Beqaa, in mid-February–early May and early August–late November.
- Oenanthe oenanthe* Northern Wheatear SB, PM, wv  
Very common migrant breeder, principally at 1500–2500 metres, with highest densities above the tree-line, in habitat shared with Shore Lark and Rock Sparrow. Common and widespread on autumn passage in early August–late November and uncommon in late February–mid-May. Relatively scarce in winter from December–late February, from sea-level to highlands of the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon ranges (including Beqaa).
- Oenanthe pleschanka* Pied Wheatear ?FB, pm  
Reportedly bred near Beirut but proof unknown (Kumerloeve 1969). Recent observations demonstrate it to be uncommon on passage in late March–early May and mid-August–late October, usually below 1500 metres and most frequent at Arz Al Chouf Protected Area.
- Oenanthe cypriaca* Cyprus Pied Wheatear v, ?pm  
Three records, all single males, at: Hadath near Beirut on 3 October 1995, Dalhoun on 28 October 1996 and Palm island on 14 March 1997 (GRJ).
- Oenanthe hispanica* Black-eared Wheatear SB, PM  
Very common migrant breeder from early April–mid-July in rocky and hilly areas of the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon ranges, mainly at 1000–1600 metres. Very common on passage in early August–mid-October and early March–early May, from sea-level to c. 1900 metres.
- Oenanthe deserti* Desert Wheatear pm  
Scarce and irregular on passage in mid-September–early November and rare in mid-March–mid-April. Most frequently recorded at Hermel, Fakiha, Qaa, in north Beqaa and the foothills of the northern and central Anti-Lebanon.
- Oenanthe finschii* Finsch's Wheatear sb, pm, wv  
Scarce migrant breeder from late April–late July on rocky mountain slopes and degraded slopes above Ammiq, Arz Al Chouf Protected Area and probably elsewhere. Uncommon on passage and in winter from early October–late March across much of the country when relatively more frequent in Beqaa.
- Oenanthe lugens* Mourning Wheatear ?FB, ?v, ?r  
Status uncertain. Reportedly bred in south Lebanon (Benson 1970) and Aharoni (1926, 1931) states that it bred commonly in the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon but no additional data exist (Kumerloeve 1962). Only recent report is of one at Niha, in the southernmost part of Arz Al Chouf Protected Area, on 27 May 1996 (GRJ).
- Monticola saxatilis* Rock Thrush SB, pm  
Common migrant breeder from mid-April–mid-July in mountainous rocky areas with sparse vegetation. Uncommon on passage from late March–early May and early September–early October over much of the country.

- Monticola solitarius* **Blue Rock Thrush** **R, pm, wv**  
Widespread breeding resident in small numbers, chiefly in mountainous and rocky areas with sparse vegetation. Freshly hatched chicks found above Joueet spring at Ehden on 16 May 1996 (GRJ). Uncommon on passage and in winter from mid-September–late April in a variety of habitats.
- Turdus torquatus* **Ring Ouzel** **pm, wv**  
Scarce on passage in early November–early December and a scarce winter visitor from December–late February. No records from spring passage.
- Turdus merula* **Blackbird** **R, pm, wv**  
Common breeding resident in a wide variety of habitats, e.g. cedar, oak and olive forests; orchards, maquis and gardens. Scarce to uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor from mid-October–mid-March.
- Turdus pilaris* **Fieldfare** **pm, wv**  
Uncommon passage migrant and winter visitor from early November–early March in most montane areas; chiefly in orchards, cultivated areas, river valleys, open areas with trees and mixed woodland. Mainly recorded at Qammouha, Ehden, Nahr Ibrahim, Ain Zhalta, Barouk, Niha and, to a lesser extent, Beqaa.
- Turdus philomelos* **Song Thrush** **PM, wv**  
Very common passage migrant in early October–late November and mid-February–early April and an uncommon to scarce winter visitor, late November–late February. Recorded in orchards, olive groves, open cedar groves, cultivation, maquis, isolated trees and around Ammiq swamp. Rare on the coast.
- Turdus iliacus* **Redwing** **pm, WV**  
Scarce passage migrant in mid-February–late March and early November–mid-December and commoner in winter from early December–early February. Most frequently recorded in montane orchards, olive groves, open cedar groves, open mixed woodland, open country and cultivation. Rare in Beqaa and on the coast.
- Turdus viscivorus* **Mistle Thrush** **sb, pm, WV**  
Very scarce and local migrant breeder to remote areas of the north, mainly in wooded parkland of fir at Qammouha, *Quercus cilicica* at Fneideq and cedar at Karm Al Mohr, near Ehden. Uncommon to scarce on passage and common in winter from late October–late March in open montane woodland.
- Cettia cetti* **Cetti's Warbler** **R**  
Common breeding resident (eggs from mid-March at Tanayel) in thickets or thorny vegetation bordering inland waters. Found at Ammiq, Anjar, and the Litany river in Beqaa and the south; elsewhere in thickets along edges of montane rivers below the cedar zone.
- Cisticola juncidis* **Fan-tailed Cisticola** **r**  
Uncommon and local breeding resident in coastal strip, Beqaa, cultivated grassland in low montane valleys, and perhaps elsewhere. A recent increase is apparent.
- Prinia gracilis* **Graceful Prinia** **R**  
Very common breeding resident (eggs from early March), from sea-level to c. 1000 metres and in Beqaa, principally in gardens, orchards, cultivation, dunes, inhabited garrigue and olive groves, usually with bushes, shrubs or prickly vegetation. Breeds on Palm island.
- Locustella naevia* **Grasshopper Warbler** **v**  
One record: one near Tyre on 17 October 1958 (Flach 1959).
- Locustella fluviatilis* **River Warbler** **v**  
Listed as a vagrant by Benson (1970).

- Locustella luscinioides*                      **Savi's Warbler**                      **sb, pm**  
Scarce and local migrant breeder from late March–mid-July to wetlands in most areas, although most common at Ammiq and the Litany river. Very scarce on passage, mainly from early March–early May and late August–early October.
- Acrocephalus melanopogon*                      **Moustached Warbler**                      **SB, pm**  
Relatively common but local migrant breeder (food-carrying early April) at Ammiq, estuaries and areas with waterside reeds and low vegetation. Scarce on passage in March–April and October–November over most of the country.
- Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*                      **Sedge Warbler**                      **PM, wv**  
Fairly common passage migrant in mid-February–early June (peak April) and scarcer in late August–early November. Very scarce in winter from early December–late February. Mostly recorded at Ammiq, Anjar and river mouths.
- Acrocephalus palustris*                      **Marsh Warbler**                      **PM**  
Common passage migrant in late March–early June (peak late March–mid-April) and early September–mid-November, particularly at Anjar, Ammiq and Tanayel.
- Acrocephalus scirpaceus*                      **European Reed Warbler**                      **sb, PM, wv**  
Uncommon and local migrant breeder from mid-April–late July at Ammiq and Anjar. Common on passage in mid-March–late May and mid-August–early November, and scarce in winter from late November–late February, mostly at Ammiq and river mouths.
- Acrocephalus arundinaceus*                      **Great Reed Warbler**                      **SB, PM**  
Common migrant breeder from late April–early June at Ammiq, the Litany river and probably elsewhere. Common on passage in mid-March–mid-May and scarcer in mid-August–mid-November over much of the country, particularly at estuaries and inland waters in Beqaa.
- Hippolais pallida*                      **Olivaceous Warbler**                      **SB, PM**  
Not uncommon migrant breeder from late April–early August to damp fields, gardens, orchards, riverine scrub and other bushy areas. Widespread on passage in early March–mid-May and early August–early November.
- Hippolais caligata*                      **Booted Warbler**                      **v**  
One record: recorded in 1964 (Benson 1970).
- Hippolais languida*                      **Upcher's Warbler**                      **SB, pm**  
Common migrant breeder from late April–late July, mainly in montane garrigue, ravines and olive groves and orchards. Scarce to uncommon on passage in late April–early June and early August–late October.
- Hippolais olivetorum*                      **Olive-tree Warbler**                      **sb, pm**  
Very scarce migrant breeder from mid-April–early July. Evidence of breeding obtained at Maanyah ravine (c. 300 metres), in maquis at Dibbyah and hills above Ammiq, but probably also occurs elsewhere. Scarce and irregular on passage in mid-April–late May and early August–late September over much of the country.
- Hippolais icterina*                      **Icterine Warbler**                      **pm**  
Very scarce passage migrant in mid-April–late May and late August–late October, in a wide variety of habitats.
- Sylvia conspicillata*                      **Spectacled Warbler**                      **R, ?pm**  
Breeding resident (eggs mid-May at high altitude) in small numbers, mainly in garrigue and degraded garrigue in both mountain ranges, apparently to upper tree-line wherever there are bushes. An apparent but slight increase in numbers in March and September may reflect passage.

- Sylvia cantillans* Subalpine Warbler pm  
Uncommon to scarce passage migrant in early March–late April but no autumn records. Recorded almost exclusively in open montane bushland in both ranges.
- Sylvia mystacea* Ménétries's Warbler ?FB, pm  
Apparently a former breeder in the Anti-Lebanon (Kumerloeve 1962). Very scarce passage migrant in April and September–mid-October, in degraded garrigue and coastal areas.
- Sylvia melanocephala* Sardinian Warbler R, PM, WV  
Very common breeding resident (late March–late July) in most habitats (from sea-level to 1600 metres in north Lebanon). Principally recorded in garrigue, maquis, olive groves, pine and oak forests, orchards, gardens and open mixed woodland. Common on passage and in winter from mid-September–late April.
- Sylvia melanothorax* Cyprus Warbler pm, wv  
Scarce passage migrant in early March–early April and extremely rare winter visitor in December–February. Usually found in garrigue interspersed with olive groves or cultivation and gardens.
- Sylvia rueppelli* Rüppell's Warbler ?sb, pm  
Status uncertain: no recent records of breeding (Benson 1970), although nesting recorded by Tohmé & Neuschwander (1974). Recent observations suggest it is a scarce migrant in early March–late April and occasional in September. Mainly observed in maquis, wooded ravines, hillsides and on Palm island.
- Sylvia hortensis* Orphean Warbler SB, PM  
Relatively common migrant breeder from mid-March–mid-July in a wide range of habitats (including Beqaa), at c. 450–1800 metres. Recorded in olive groves, orchards, oak and open cedar forests, and maquis. Common on passage from early March–mid-May and late July–early October.
- Sylvia nisoria* Barred Warbler pm  
Uncommon passage migrant in mid-April–late May and even less numerous in mid-August–mid-October. Usually found in lightly wooded montane areas, but also on the coast and in the Beqaa valley.
- Sylvia curruca* Lesser Whitethroat SB, PM, ?wv  
Common migrant breeder from mid-March–late July in most montane areas, from low garrigue to cedar forest, mainly in open bushy areas with scattered trees. Common migrant in early March–early May and less frequent in early August–mid-November. One winter record: at Dalhoun on 2 December 1995 (GRJ).
- Sylvia communis* Whitethroat SB, PM  
Common and widespread migrant breeder from late March–early August in a wide variety of habitats, from sea-level to c. 1950 metres. Breeds in wooded gardens at Beirut, maquis, orchards, thickets and bushes bordering swamps of Beqaa, olive groves, pine, oak and cedar forests. Absent from the semi-desert of north Beqaa. Common on passage in late February–late May and late July–early November.
- Sylvia borin* Garden Warbler pm  
Uncommon but regular passage migrant in early April–late May and scarce in late August–early November. Occurs throughout the country from sea-level to above the tree-line.
- Sylvia atricapilla* Blackcap SB, PM, WV  
Common and widespread migrant breeder from early March–mid-July at low and mid-altitudes, in various habitats including Palm island (Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi 1997). Very common on passage and common in winter from late July–late May, from sea-level to c. 1900 metres.

- Phylloscopus nitidus*                      **Green Warbler**                      **v**  
Two records: one in late September 1964 seen by two observers (Benson 1970) and three (one a first-winter) photographed in Beirut on 28 September 1997 (GRJ & MRJ).
- Phylloscopus bonelli*                      **Bonelli's Warbler**                      **sb, pm**  
Scarce migrant breeder from mid-March-late July in montane groves (including cedar) and orchards. Uncommon on migration over much of the country from early March-late May and scarce in early August-mid-October.
- Phylloscopus sibilatrix*                      **Wood Warbler**                      **FB, PM**  
Breeding was apparently confirmed near the Litany river in 1881 by Tristram (Kumerloeve 1962). Modern records suggest it is a migrant in small numbers in late March-late May and mid-August-late October from sea-level to the tree-line.
- Phylloscopus neglectus*                      **Plain Leaf Warbler**                      **v**  
One record: four at Qammouha on 28 October 1996 were hunting large numbers of flying insects from the trees (GRJ).
- Phylloscopus collybita*                      **Chiffchaff**                      **PM, WV**  
Common and widespread on passage and a winter visitor from mid-September-late May, over much of the country (principally coastal areas).
- Phylloscopus trochilus*                      **Willow Warbler**                      **PM**  
Common passage migrant in early March-late May (most late March-early May) and even commoner in mid-August-late November, in a wide range of habitats from sea-level to c. 1800 metres.
- Regulus regulus*                      **Goldcrest**                      **wv**  
Very rare and irregular in December-January in cedar, pine and fir groves at Barouk, Ehden and Qammouha.
- Regulus ignicapillus*                      **Firecrest**                      **v**  
One record: some in cedars near Bsharri on 13 October and 12 November 1958 (Flach 1959).
- Muscicapa striata*                      **Spotted Flycatcher**                      **SB, PM**  
Relatively common and widespread migrant breeder (Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi 1997) in various habitats, e.g. light undergrowth in pine forest, orchards, light mixed woodland and cultivated areas with trees. Found at Kfar Matta, Bjiro, Ainbal, Marj Bisri, Saraal, Horj Ehden, with highest density in olive groves at Zgharta. Common on passage in mid-April-mid-May and less frequent in late August-late November.
- Ficedula parva*                      **Red-breasted Flycatcher**                      **pm**  
Extremely rare but regular passage migrant in April-May and October-November, in orchards and gardens, principally in the coastal strip.
- Ficedula semitorquata*                      **Semi-collared Flycatcher**                      **v, ?pm**  
Four spring records: singles at Ammiq on 7 April 1997, Beirut on 10-12 and 15 April 1997 (Bussuttill & Flumm 1998b) and at Byblos on 12 April 1997 (T. Bara). One autumn record: one at Horj Ehden on 22 September 1998 (GRJ).
- Ficedula albicollis*                      **Collared Flycatcher**                      **PM**  
Relatively common on spring passage in late March-late May and much less frequent in late August-early November. Recorded in most areas with trees, particularly gardens and orchards, from sea-level to high altitude, and in Beqaa.

- Ficedula hypoleuca* **Pied Flycatcher** **PM**  
Relatively common passage migrant in mid-March–late May and late August–late October. Occurs in a wide variety of habitats, from sea-level to cedar forest, and in Beqaa, but prefers gardens and orchards.
- Panurus biarmicus* **Bearded Tit** **v**  
One record: six at Ammiq on 30 March 1996 (C. Naylor).
- Parus lugubris* **Sombre Tit** **r**  
Very scarce and local breeding resident in a variety of open wooded habitats, at mid- and high altitudes. Chiefly recorded in Arz Al Chouf Protected Area, the east slope of the Lebanon range and on Jabal El Sheikh.
- Parus ater* **Coal Tit** **R**  
Very common breeding resident (early April–late July) in montane areas, from low ravines in maquis (350 metres) to woodland at c. 1850 metres. Prefers river valleys and mixed woodland, but most regularly found in cedar forests. In winter, may descend to sea-level.
- Parus caeruleus* **Blue Tit** **wv**  
Extremely scarce winter visitor from mid-November–late February, in river valleys and ravines. Most regular in the Nahr Ibrahim valley. Recorded on three dates at Horj Ehden in March–April 1996, and at Chabine and Jaj on 8 and 15 September 1996 (T. Bara).
- Parus major* **Great Tit** **R**  
Very common breeding resident (late March–late July) in montane areas, from c. 300 metres to the tree-line. Recorded in a wide variety of habitats.
- Sitta europea* **Nuthatch** **v**  
Tristram reported it to be resident throughout Lebanon, but there appears to have been no further records (Kumerloeve 1962, GRJ), although it was listed as a vagrant by Benson (1970). It appears likely that Tristram confused this species with Rock Nuthatch *S. neumayer*.
- Sitta neumayer* **Western Rock Nuthatch** **R**  
Common and widespread breeding resident (mid-March–late July) in montane areas with sparse tree cover or groves. Common in cedar and *Quercus pseudocerris* forests. Mainly recorded at 850–2000 metres. In winter, descends to lower areas.
- Tichodroma muraria* **Wallcreeper** **wv, ?r**  
Regarded as probably a scarce breeding resident by Benson (1970), but no evidence of either. Extremely rare but regular at Richmayya and Ammiq Al Chouf in December–January.
- Remiz pendulinus* **Penduline Tit** **wv, pm**  
Scarce or rare in winter from early December–late February and rare on passage in early March–mid-April and late October–late November. Mainly recorded in Beqaa, particularly at Ammiq, Anjar and Yammouné.
- Nectarinia osea* **Palestine Sunbird** **R, wv**  
Common breeding resident (late February–mid-August) in south Lebanon, principally around Tyre. One nesting record in Beirut, in May 1947 or 1948 (Kumerloeve 1962) and attempted to breed at Aaramoun in late April 1974 (G. Tohmé). Scarce winter visitor in early November–late January in the southern coastal strip (from Dbayyeh south).
- Oriolus oriolus* **Golden Oriole** **sb, PM**  
Very scarce migrant breeder (mid-April–mid-July) in south Lebanon, mainly south of Zahrani. Common on passage in early April–late May and late August–late October across much of the country (including Beirut).

- Lanius isabellinus* **Isabelline Shrike** **pm, wv**  
Very scarce passage migrant in early April–late May and more regular in mid-September–late November. Very scarce in winter from early December–mid-February.
- Lanius collurio* **Red-backed Shrike** **SB, PM**  
Common breeding summer visitor, arriving mainly in April (peak late April) and breeding in mid-May–early August at mid- and high altitudes, from Saïda-Toumat Niha northward. Most common at 600–1950 metres with high concentrations at Fneideq, Qammouha, Arbat Kozhaya, Ijbeh, Ehden, Horj Ehden and Ban (Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi 1997). Very common and widespread on passage from sea-level to c. 2000 metres in early April–late May and early August–late November.
- Lanius minor* **Lesser Grey Shrike** **PM, s**  
Common passage migrant in early August–late October and much less frequent in late April–late May. Very small numbers of non-breeding birds linger in June–July. Occurs from sea-level to c. 1500 metres.
- Lanius excubitor* **Great Grey Shrike** **FB, pm, ?r**  
Breeding reported occasionally (Benson 1970) but no recent evidence. Scarce or rare on passage in early October–mid-November and extremely rare in early March–early April, from sea-level to c. 350 metres (once at c. 1850 metres, at Aayoun El Siman on 17 March 1995 by G. Tohmé).
- Lanius senator* **Woodchat Shrike** **sb, PM**  
Scarce migrant breeder from late March–mid-July in most montane areas with sparse vegetation, and to 1800 metres at edges of cedar forest. Formerly bred in coastal orchards (Kumerloeve 1962). Relatively common migrant in early March–late May and early August–late September, from sea-level to the tree-line.
- Lanius nubicus* **Masked Shrike** **SB, PM**  
Common and widespread migrant breeder from late March–mid-July in most montane areas, replacing Red-backed Shrike at lower altitudes. Frequents open areas with sparse vegetation and scattered trees, and open woodland. Recorded in low hills to cedar forests and in Beqaa. Relatively common on passage in late February–mid-May and early August–early October.
- Garrulus glandarius* **Jay** **R**  
Abundant breeding resident (mid-March–late August) in montane areas, mainly in orchards, olive groves, pine, cedar and oak forests at 500–1900 metres.
- Pica pica* **Magpie** **v**  
Three records: several reported in the south of the country in October 1967 and August 1968 by 4–5 observers (Benson 1970), and one in woodland north of Baabda on 15 April 1984 (Khairallah 1986).
- Pyrrhonorax graculus* **Alpine Chough** **R**  
Breeding reconfirmed (Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi 1997). A colony of c. 200 resident breeding birds regularly recorded at Ayou Al Siman (c. 2200 metres) with juveniles in early June.
- Pyrrhonorax pyrrhonorax* **Chough** **?r**  
Status uncertain. Formerly bred in large numbers in the highest areas of the Lebanon range (Aharoni 1931), but no records since one at Faraya in 1969 (Benson 1970).
- Corvus monedula* **Jackdaw** **WV**  
Reportedly resident (Shirihai 1996) but specific evidence unavailable. Common and regular in winter from October–early March in Beqaa, the Anti-Lebanon and Marjaayoun valley.
- Corvus frugilegus* **Rook** **v**  
Listed as a vagrant by Benson (1970).



- Corvus corone cornix* **Hooded Crow** **R**  
Common breeding resident (late February–late July) in montane areas, from coastal cliffs to c. 1900 metres. Most frequent in cedar groves, orchards and around rubbish dumps.
- Corvus corax* **Raven** **FB, ?r**  
Status uncertain: breeding recorded occasionally (Benson 1970) but no recent proof. Four records since 1976: at Wadi el Karn, Anti-Lebanon on 1 October 1976 (Macfarlane 1978), one at Afqa on 14 April 1996, one at Ainab on 27 July 1996 and three between Ainab and Hermel on 11 August 1996 (T. Bara).
- Sturnus vulgaris* **Starling** **PM, WV**  
Common autumn migrant in early October–late November and scarce in March. Abundant in winter from December–early March in cultivated and open areas of Beqaa, less regular elsewhere.
- Sturnus roseus* **Rose-coloured Starling** **?FB, v**  
Considered a very erratic late spring and summer vagrant, occasionally remaining until autumn (Benson 1970), that may have bred in 1945 (Hardy 1946), but only one subsequent, dated record: a flock of 20, of which three were killed by hunters, near Tel Hezzin in Beqaa in October 1970 (Khairallah 1986).
- Passer domesticus* **House Sparrow** **R**  
Very common and widespread breeding resident (mid-February–late August) around habitation and at rubbish dumps in more remote areas.
- Passer hispaniolensis* **Spanish Sparrow** **sb, pm**  
Uncommon and local migrant breeder from early April–mid-June (Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi 1997). Two small colonies located: five nests in two *Robinia* sp. trees at Bsharri on 4 June 1996 (c. 1850 metres), and four nests in a *Pistacea* sp. tree at Mrayjat on 17 May 1997 (c. 1000 metres). Scarce on passage in small flocks from mid-February–mid-May and early September–late November. Probably more common than records suggest.
- Passer montanus* **Tree Sparrow** **v**  
Vagrant (Shirihai 1996), a comment probably based on an uncertain record by Nevins (1960), who may have seen it in the Litany river valley on 19 March 1955.
- Carospiza brachydactyla* **Pale Rock Sparrow** **sb, pm**  
Scarce migrant breeder from mid-May–mid-July in the southern Anti-Lebanon, where it to some extent replaces Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia*. Scarce on passage in March–April and mid-August–mid-September in montane rocky areas.
- Petronia xanthocollis* **Yellow-throated Sparrow** **v**  
One record: a male trapped and photographed at Mrayjat above Beqaa on 15 May 1997 (GRJ).
- Petronia petronia* **Rock Sparrow** **R**  
Very common breeding resident (early April–early August) in high montane areas of the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon ranges (1300–2200 metres), chiefly around cedar groves and in rocky areas above the tree-line. (Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi 1997). Performs altitudinal movements to lower elevations in winter.
- Fringilla coelebs* **Chaffinch** **R, PM, WV**  
Very common breeding resident (mid-March–late July) in most habitats at mid- to high altitude, with highest densities in cedar groves, *Abies* and pine forests, river valleys and orchards. Very common on passage and in winter in early October–late April.
- Fringilla montifringilla* **Brambling** **pm, wv**  
Scarce passage migrant and winter visitor in early October–late April in cedar, pine and fir forests, and orchards.

- Serinus pusillus* **Red-fronted Serin** **pm, wv**  
Scarce passage migrant in mid-February–late March and late October–late November, overwintering from early December–early February. On migration, mainly recorded in high rocky montane areas with scattered trees; in winter, mostly on hills above Beqaa.
- Serinus serinus* **European Serin** **WV, pm**  
Uncommon passage migrant in early March–late April and early October–late November. Common in winter from December–mid-March, usually in coastal orchards and gardens, low hills and cultivated areas of Beqaa.
- Serinus syriacus* **Syrian Serin** **R, pm, wv**  
Very common migrant breeder from late April–mid-August in rocky montane areas. Mainly recorded in open cedar, pine and fir forests. During post-breeding dispersal, commonly found above the tree-line. Some migrants from outside Lebanon probably arrive in early October–late March.
- Carduelis chloris* **Greenfinch** **R, WV, pm**  
Very common and widespread breeding resident (mid-March–mid-August), usually at 300–1850 metres, chiefly in cedar, pine and mixed groves, maquis, orchards, cultivation and ravines with trees. Scarce passage migrant in late February–early May and mid-September–late November. In early November–early March, the resident population is augmented by large numbers of migrants.
- Carduelis carduelis* **Goldfinch** **R, WV, pm**  
Very common breeding resident (early March–mid-August) in a wide variety of habitats, usually from mid-altitudes to c. 1850 metres. Frequent in conifers, orchards and cultivated areas. Scarce on passage from late February–early April and late September–late November. Considerable winter immigration in late November–mid-February.
- Carduelis spinus* **Siskin** **pm, WV, s**  
Scarce on passage in early February–late April and late October–late November. Locally common in winter from early December–mid-February in conifers in the central Lebanon range, mainly at 250–600 metres. Very few records of overwintering in this area.
- Carduelis cannabina* **Linnet** **R, PM, WV**  
Common breeding resident (mid-March–mid-August) in mountains, mainly at 1500–2200 metres. Inhabits open cedar forest and areas above the tree-line with low scrub. During post-breeding dispersal, birds flock at higher altitudes, but in autumn and winter descend to lower elevations. Considerable immigration during early October–early April.
- Rhodopechys sanguinea* **Crimson-winged Finch** **r**  
Uncommon breeding resident (mid-May–mid-July) on rocky or stony slopes with sparse scrub at 1700–2500 metres. Post-breeding and in winter, regularly occurs at edge of cedar and fir forests.
- Rhodospiza obsoleta* **Desert Finch** **w**  
Scarce to rare winter visitor, almost exclusively in Beqaa.
- Bucanetes githagineus* **Trumpeter Finch** **r**  
Very scarce to rare breeding resident in the Anti-Lebanon, particularly near Deir Al Ashayer, where post-breeding flocks occur in mid-August–early September.
- Coccothraustes coccothraustes* **Hawfinch** **pm, wv**  
Very rare on passage from early March–early April and in November. Scarce in winter from early December–mid-February. Recorded from sea-level to 1750 metres (near Qammouha), mainly in open groves interspersed with orchards or cultivation.
- Emberiza leucocephalos* **Pine Bunting** **v**  
Listed as a vagrant by Shirihai (1996).

- Emberiza citrinella* **Yellowhammer** **wv**  
Scarce winter visitor in mid-November–mid-March in open coniferous woodland and orchards, principally at 500–1200 metres and in Beqaa. Occasionally recorded on the coast.
- Emberiza cia* **Rock Bunting** **R**  
Common breeding resident (late April–mid-July) in rocky montane areas with sparse low vegetation and scattered trees, mainly above 1000 metres. Highest densities on edges of cedar groves and low hills. In winter, descends to lower altitudes.
- Emberiza cineracea* **Cinereous Bunting** **pm**  
Very scarce passage migrant in mid-March–early May and even rarer in September. Most recorded at mid- and high altitudes, in low vegetation on rocky slopes or hills, particularly in the Anti-Lebanon range.
- Emberiza hortulana* **Ortolan Bunting** **sb, PM**  
Scarce migrant breeder from late April–mid-July in high rocky areas with scattered low vegetation, at 1500–2000 meters but principally above the tree-line. Common on passage in open habitats from late March–mid-May and early August–late October.
- Emberiza caesia* **Cretzschmar's Bunting** **sb, PM**  
Uncommon migrant breeder from early April–mid-July in open montane habitats, e.g. degraded oak groves at low and mid-altitudes, and low bushy areas with scattered trees at higher altitudes. Common on passage from early March–early April and late August–early October.
- Emberiza rustica* **Rustic Bunting** **v**  
Listed as a vagrant by Shirihai (1996).
- Emberiza pusilla* **Little Bunting** **v**  
Recorded once in Lebanon (Benson 1970).
- Emberiza schoeniclus* **Reed Bunting** **pm, wv**  
Very scarce passage migrant and winter visitor in late October–early April to Ammiq, Yammouné, Anjar and Tanayel in Beqaa.
- Emberiza melanocephala* **Black-headed Bunting** **SB, PM**  
Very common and widespread migrant breeder from early May–late July in montane areas; highest densities in orchards at 1400–1500 metres, but also common in *Abies cilicica* and *Quercus pseudocerris* forests at c. 1900 metres. Less common at lower altitudes in the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon ranges, in open hilly terrain with few trees or in terraced valleys, and in Beqaa. No breeding records below 500 metres. Very common on passage from sea-level to high altitude, principally in mid-April–late May and less commonly in late August–mid-October.
- Miliaria calandra* **Corn Bunting** **R, PM, WV**  
Common breeding resident (mid-March–early July) in the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon ranges, in grassy areas with few trees, and in Beqaa. Common on passage over much of the country in late February–early April and early October–late November. Resident birds augmented by immigrants in December–early March, particularly in cultivated and open areas of Beqaa and terraced hills or valleys.

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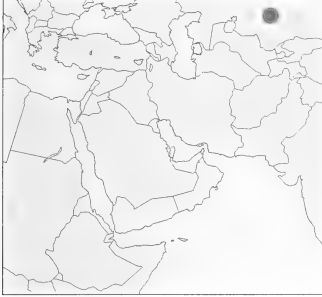
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# An estimation of the nesting success in a Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata macqueenii* population in Kazakhstan

O. COMBREAU AND F. LAUNAY



Nesting success of Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata macqueenii* was studied in western Kazakhstan in spring 1996. A total of 12 nests and seven broods were found: 8% of the eggs were cracked and two nests were raided by Brown-necked Ravens *Corvus ruficollis*. Nest failure, estimated by two different methods, was 17–22%. A bimodal distribution of laying dates suggested the existence of a replacement clutch. Mean clutch size was 3.3 for the first clutch cohort and 2.7 for the second clutch cohort. Brood size diminished to two chicks after the first two or three weeks of age.

**H**OUBARA BUSTARD *Chlamydotis undulata macqueenii* is a species of great regional importance in the Middle East and Central Asia as it is the main quarry of Arab falconers. Combined with the general impoverishment of its habitat (due to overgrazing, human settlement and agricultural development), hunting pressure has caused a serious decline in Houbara Bustard populations over the last three decades (Collar 1979, Goriup 1997). Concern for the species led the IUCN/SSC and the Steppe and Grassland Bird Specialist Group of BirdLife International to establish a Houbara Bustard Working Group in 1994 (Goriup 1997). At the first meeting of this group, held in Oman in 1996, a consensus was reached that Houbara Bustard should benefit from a conservation status under the Convention of Migratory Species (CMS) while maintaining traditional falconry. However, this conservation shift from total protection to sustainable use, is neither supported nor contradicted by hard biological evidence. The status of Houbara Bustard populations, and their perceived decrease, is poorly documented let alone understood. The species' breeding success in the wild is virtually unknown. The only well measured parameter is the number of eggs per nest (Cramp & Simmons 1983, Lavee 1988, Mendelsohn 1980, P. Gaucher unpubl., P. Paillat unpubl.). A single attempt to measure breeding success of wild Houbara Bustard was conducted on a small Israeli dispersive population (Lavee 1988). This paper details an attempt to estimate nesting success in Kazakhstan.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was conducted from 15 April–1 June 1996 in the Buzachi peninsula in western Kazakhstan, 250 km north of Aktau (formerly Chevchenko), near the Caspian Sea. Three different methods were used to search for nests and chicks: 1) driving along tracks in the area at a low speed (30 km/h) to flush the birds, 2) direct observation of females from an elevated point with a telescope and, 3) using local people to help locate nests. The laying dates of eggs found in the wild were estimated by calculating their fresh and the pre-hatch weight with the following method:

Fresh egg weight is given by the equation:  $W_f = K_w \cdot L \cdot B^2$  (after Hoyt 1979)

Where  $W_f$  = fresh egg weight in g,  $L$  = length in mm,  $B$  = breadth in mm and  $K_w$  = species-specific weight coefficient.

Pre-hatch weight is given by the equation:  $W_p = W_f \cdot K_l$

Where  $W_p$  = pre-hatch weight in g,  $W_f$  = fresh weight in g and  $K_l$  = species-specific weight loss coefficient.

$K_w$  was estimated from 103 Houbara Bustard eggs in the National Avian Research Center in 1996 (Jarrett 1995):  $K_w = 0.55$ .  $K_l$  was derived from the average weight loss in Houbara Bustard egg incubation (17% according to Saint-Jalme & van Heezik 1995):  $K_l = 0.83$ .

Knowing that the average incubation period in Houbara is 21 days, the incubation stage was calculated with the equation:

$$I.S. = 21 \cdot (W_f - W) / (W_f - W_p)$$

Where I.S. = incubation stage in days,  $W_f$  = fresh egg weight in g,  $W$  = weight at time of measurement and  $W_p$  = pre-hatch weight in g.

Chicks' age was estimated according to their appearance and/or their weight. Chicks were classified as 1–3 days, one, 1.5, two, 2.5, three, four weeks-old and older than one month. The hatching dates as well as the laying date of the corresponding eggs were estimated from these assumptions.

## RESULTS

Twelve nests were found (see Table 1). Four were discovered after the female had been flushed by a car; four by direct observation of females with a telescope, three were shown to us by shepherds and one corresponded to the relaying of one female caught and tagged previously on its former nest. Seven broods were also found during the survey, the first on 9 May 1996.

Three eggs in two nests appeared broken or cracked upon discovery. It is likely that they were damaged by the numerous sheep and goats in the area which moved in compact groups of over 200. It is possible that tortoises *Erionomys horsfieldi* (also very numerous in the study area) cracked the eggs during their movements. The proportion of eggs lost due to broken or cracked shells was estimated to be 8%.

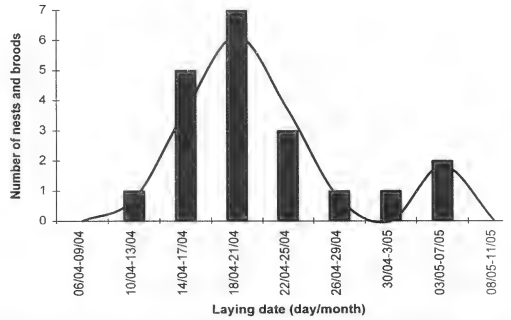


Plate 1. Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata macqueenii* nest in sandy habitat. (O. Combreau)

**Table 1.** Clutch size, nesting success and estimated chick survival in a Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata macqueenii* population in Kazakhstan, in April–June 1996.

	Parameters	Estimation
<b>Number of nests</b>		12
<b>Clutch size</b>	first clutch	3.3 ± 0.2
	second clutch	2.7 ± 0.3
	average	3.2 ± 0.2
<b>Nesting failure</b>	cracked eggs	8%
	predation	17–22%
	fertility and hatchability	100% ?
<b>Number of broods</b>		7
<b>Chick survival</b>	losses within broods	~ 30%
	Complete loss of broods	unknown

**Figure 1.** Frequency distribution of laying dates of Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata macqueenii* plotted against date in the Buzachi peninsula, Kazakhstan, April–May 1996.



**Plate 2.** Two-day-old Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata macqueenii* chick hiding in vegetation. (O. Combreau)

Two nests were predated after their discovery. This was attributed to Brown-necked Ravens *Corvus ruficollis*, that apparently took the eggs, rather than foxes *Vulpes* sp. or monitor lizards *Varanus griseus* as careful examination showed a lack of terrestrial predator footprints. Nests were not destroyed but raided. The percentage of nests known to have fallen prey to predators was 17%.

The bimodal laying date patterns in Fig. 1 suggest the existence of a first clutch peak and a replacement clutch peak 15 days later. Two of the nine nests in the first clutch cohort were eventually destroyed and re-laid in a second clutch (22% failure for the first clutch cohort).

The average number of eggs per nest was 3.2 (S.E. = 0.2). However, first clutches with 3.3 (S.E. = 0.2) eggs (n = 9) per nest tended to be larger than second clutches, which had only 2.7 (S.E. = 0.3) eggs per nest (n = 3) (t test: t = 3.3, df = 10, p < 0.005). Moreover, all nests of four eggs occurred in first clutches whereas second clutches never had more than three eggs. The nest of two eggs corresponds to a very late replacement clutch.

The fertility of all eggs found was not checked systematically. However, all the females hatched all their eggs suggesting that fertility and hatchability are close to maximum.

An indication of the survival rates of chicks within a brood is given by the size of broods less than one week old (three chicks), of 2–3 weeks old (two or three chicks) and of broods older than three weeks (two chicks), suggesting that loss of part of the brood to adverse weather, predation or other factors was common. From these observations, chick loss within broods was c. 30%.

## DISCUSSION

The size of the first clutch was found to be 3.3 eggs per nest and the second clutch 2.7 eggs per nest. These results are in accordance with the literature where Houbara are stated to lay 1–4 eggs on alternate days (Cramp & Simmons 1983, Étchécopar & Hüe 1978, Heim de Balzac & Mayaud 1962). However, the common clutch size appears to be two in Israel (Mendelssohn 1980) and Algeria (P. Gaucher unpubl.), whereas three was more common in our study and four not rare. The number of eggs per nest may be related to prevailing weather during the breeding season. A wet breeding season would be more favourable for larger clutches based on the observations of P. Paillat (unpubl.) in Pakistan. As Houbara Bustards feed their chicks beak-to-beak during the first 15 days, richer breeding habitats (those that have received more rain) may permit females to raise more chicks.

No evidence that eggs were infertile or did not hatch was found, although these problems do not appear uncommon in the wild. P. Gaucher (unpubl.) found that in 130 Houbara Bustard eggs collected in Algeria, 6.9% were infertile and 1.5% contained dead embryos, and Lavee (1988) found that 12% of 43 monitored eggs were infertile or had a dead embryo.

Destruction of nests, estimated by two different methods (direct observation of nest predation and the relative importance of the second clutch cohort compared to the first clutch cohort), in the study found losses of 17% and 22%. This similarity in results suggests these estimates may be reasonably accurate. This level of destruction is 30–50% lower than that found by Lavee (1988) who determined the probability of a nest being predated or raided to be 33%. Lavee (1985, 1988) attributed these high figures of nest destruction to heavy grazing, intensive cultivation, predation and poaching. Grazing in the Buzachi peninsula was at a tolerable level as no extra food was provided to livestock and the area is grazed for only six months per year. However, livestock are potentially responsible for the high level of egg shell cracks. Cultivation is not practised in the peninsula and human settlements are scarce resulting in habitat with low disturbance. Poaching is perhaps rare as other wildlife such as saiga *Saiga tatarica* and gazelle *Gazella subgutturosa* exist at high density, and constitute a more valuable quarry than Houbara Bustard to poachers. Moreover, the density of Houbara Bustard in the peninsula (0.8 / km<sup>2</sup>, OC & FL unpubl.), albeit high for the species' norm, remains low from a hunter's viewpoint. In this case, predation appears to be the major factor involved in the destruction of nests.

This work is a contribution to a deeper understanding of the population dynamics of Houbara Bustard. Many aspects of this birds' biology remain unclear, preventing an estimate of yearly recruitment. For instance, it is unknown if the species is polygynous or monogamous, albeit a dispersed lekking might be a reasonable working hypothesis (see Carranza & Hidalgo de Trucios 1987). Furthermore, the percentage of females physiologically able to breed is unknown, as is the age structure of populations. Losses due to hunting, poaching and natural predation in the wintering grounds and during migration are unknown. We strongly recommend that remaining Houbara Bustard populations be hunted with extreme caution until more studies are conducted and population growth rate better estimated.





Plate 3. Three- to four-week-old Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata macqueenii* chicks. (O. Combreau)

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## Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* off northern Cyprus in autumn 1998

PETER FLINT

**D**URING AUTUMN 1998 I observed westward coasting migration of waterbirds (principally herons, ibises, ducks, waders, gulls and terns) near Girne (Kyrenia) on the north coast of Cyprus. From 10 September I also began to see small numbers (10s or less) of Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* and on 4 October their numbers increased markedly to 428 off two headlands four and five km east of Girne, near Karakum (Karakoumi). On the evening of 23 October, while watching flocks of migrating Common Cranes *Grus grus* arriving over the sea 21 km west of Girne near Güzelyalı (Vavilas), I counted 220 Cory's Shearwater. That same evening, while returning to Karakum, I also counted 420 off Karaoğlanoğlu (Ayios Yeoryios) six km west of Girne and 340 off Karakum. Most birds appeared to be staying locally offshore rather than migrating and it occurred to me that perhaps they were also elsewhere off the north coast. The following day, 24 October, I made a systematic search from six sites along a 52 km-stretch of coast 11–63 km east of Girne. I found 435 at the first site but none at the next site (21 km east of Girne) nor at any of the other sites further east.

On 25 October, I counted from nine sites along a 42 km-stretch of coast from 28 km west to 14 km east of Girne. I spent 10–15 minutes at each site, longer if many birds were present. My observations were made primarily with a 30 x 77 telescope, birds being usually too far away for binoculars to be effective. I found Cory's Shearwater off all nine sites, the total number being c. 2,929. There was some coasting movement, mainly west e.g., within a ten minute period 200 went west far out off Karaoğlanoğlu. (As my counts were made from west to east the number double-counted should have been relatively small.) However, as before, most birds were staying locally offshore, resting on the sea in loose rafts, flying to feed when fish shoals disturbed the surface of the sea and then dispersing again. The largest such feeding concentration being c. 1100 (of which 800 were counted and 300 estimated) off Karakum.

When counting from low vantage points, I noticed that when birds relatively far away landed again after feeding they virtually disappeared among the waves. From sea-level near Güzelyalı I could see none on the sea but from a nearby high vantage point I counted 460. Thus, as most of my counts were made from relatively low vantage points, I may have missed many birds resting on the sea. Furthermore, if birds were all along the coast, as they appeared to be, then many more will have been missed between counting points. For these reasons, I believe the actual number present may have been considerably higher than my total count.

On 30 October I searched further west—Güzelyurt (Morphou) Bay and as far as Vouni—but found none. However, on 31 October, c. 300 were still off Karakum, plus, in exceptionally calm and clear conditions, apparently many more far out on the horizon. By 6 November, only ten were off Karakum and on 11 November none were seen there. On 22 November, I revisited the nine sites counted on 25 October but found no Cory's Shearwater off any of them.

The number of birds present during October is unprecedented in Cyprus (and apparently also very high in the eastern Mediterranean). Cory's Shearwater is a scarce passage migrant in Cyprus, usually recorded singly, although 71 were off Koruçam

Burnu (Cape Kormakiti) on the north coast on 25 October 1990, and is probably greatly overlooked offshore (Flint & Stewart 1992). There is also one subsequent record of large numbers: c. 100 off Pakhyammos on the north-west coast on 10 October 1997 (Sadler 1998).

The pattern of these records suggests that the occurrence of large numbers of Cory's Shearwater off the north coast of Cyprus in October may be regular. This is supported by the fact that I several times saw local fishing boats heading for feeding concentrations of the species, suggesting that the fishermen were familiar with the birds. These waters may be an important post-breeding area for the species, perhaps of birds from the nearest large colonies which are in the Aegean (Snow & Perrins 1998). Such large numbers have probably been overlooked in the past due to the lack of seawatching activity off the north coast of Cyprus, especially since the division of the island in 1974, and because earlier observers did not have the advantage of modern optics.

(Place names are given thus: Turkish (Anglicised Greek).

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## Clamorous Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus* apparently predating nest of Booted Warbler *Hippolais rama* in the United Arab Emirates

PETER CASTELL

ON 11 MAY 1998, on the landward side of the mangroves at Khor Kalba, United Arab Emirates, I watched from my car as a noisy and agitated pair of Booted Warbler *Hippolais rama* mobbed a Clamorous Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus*. The Booted Warblers became increasingly aggressive as the Clamorous Reed Warbler entered a low bush on the outer edge of the mangrove.

I walked over to the bush and all three birds flew into the taller mangrove. Inside the low bush, there was a Booted Warbler nest, c. 50 cm above the ground, containing two undamaged eggs and a third (very fresh) egg with two holes in the shell. There was also a broken eggshell, wet on the inside, on a branch adjacent to the rim of the nest. It appeared that the Clamorous Reed Warbler had been disturbed in the process of eating the eggs. The following day the nest was empty, with no trace of damage or the eggshells in the bush or its surroundings.

During 11-14 May 1998, I found several other nests of Booted Warbler in the same general area, all in low bushes at the edge of mangrove. This is clearly the start of the



Plate 1. Nest of Booted Warbler *Hippolais rama* containing three eggs at Khor Kalba, United Arab Emirates, May 1998. (Peter Castell)

laying period: only one nest contained three eggs, all others were recently constructed and ready for eggs, with singing birds near each one. The nest containing three eggs was discovered on 11 May but was empty on 12 May, with no trace of damage, and had possibly also been predated by Clamorous Reed Warbler.

These are the first Booted Warbler nest observations in Arabia. A complete study of this small, isolated population, throughout the breeding cycle, is clearly required.

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## The first records of Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis* in Oman and Arabia

HANNE AND JENS ERIKSEN

ONE OF THE FIRST claims JE received as a member of the Oman Bird Records Committee (OBRC) was of Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis*: the observer, Conrad Greaves, had reported singles at Khor Taqah on 20 July 1984 and at East Khor, Salalah on 9 June–18 July 1986 (the second occurrence documented with photographs). CG was well-known to the committee as a careful observer with over 30 new species to the Oman Bird List to his credit. The descriptions and photographs were sent to James Hancock for confirmation, who considered the occurrences likely to relate to Yellow Bittern. The claims were filed as probables.



Plates 1 and 2. Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis*, East Khor, Salalah, Sultanate of Oman, May 1997. (Hanne & Jens Eriksen)

The next claim was from Ian Brown, another experienced birder. IB reported three birds in flight for five seconds at Khor Rouri on 21 June 1996, too brief an observation to gain acceptance.

We decided to seek further evidence of this species' occurrence whilst in the Salalah area on 29–31 May 1997. Arriving at the reedbeds at the upper end of East Khor at 07.00, within minutes we had seen several small *Ixobrychus* bitterns both perched and in flight. In addition to several juveniles, at least four adult males in breeding plumage were present and appeared quite different from Little Bittern *I. minutus* which breeds in the area. The following notes were taken over three mornings.

**Size and shape.** As Little Bittern, which was present for direct comparison.

**Upperparts.** Crown blue-grey (no black), back unstreaked beige. Side of neck chestnut when feathers ruffled. Beige wing patch, paler than mantle.

**Underparts.** Throat paler beige than rest of underparts, no streaking or, at most, very faint streaking on breast. In flight, pattern similar to Little Bittern, but no black on crown or mantle. Black flight feathers. Beige back and wing-coverts forming large beige patches on wings, but not as contrasting as on Little Bittern.

**Bare parts.** Upper part of upper mandible black, lower part and lower mandible straw coloured. Black eye-ring, bright yellow iris. Loes and base of bill red (bright red on one individual). Legs greenish yellow.

**Voice.** 'Orh, orh' at one-second intervals. Sounded different from Little Bittern's 'orrrh, orrrh' which we had on tape and played at the site.

**Habits.** In early morning, sat in top of reeds and often flew short distances. Also seen creeping through the reeds.

We obtained a few photographs (Plates 1 and 2), but open water separated us from the reedbed and we were unable to get closer. The blue-grey crown, lack of black on the crown and mantle, and the red facial patch excluded Little Bittern. Comparison between our photographs and those of CG convinced us we had observed the same species.

Our description and photographs were sent to Richard Porter and he and Mike Crosby had no doubt that the birds were Yellow Bitterns. Our photos matched perfectly breeding season photographs of Yellow Bittern in Japan. OBRC formally accepted our claim in December 1997 as well as the earlier records by CG and IB.

The Salalah birds have been seen several times subsequently. The birds are active prior to 08.00, but very secretive thereafter. All observations are in summer (29 April–21 August). We suspect that the birds leave Oman in winter, although their destination is unknown. Yellow Bittern breeds from the Indian Subcontinent north and east through China to south-east Siberia, Japan, west Oceania and Indochina, the Philippines, Indonesia and New Guinea. An isolated population breeds on the Seychelles and it has occurred as a vagrant on Christmas Island and in Australia. Northern populations winter south to Indonesia (Sibley & Monroe 1990).

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## The first Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* in Yemen

PHIL HANSBRO AND DAVE SARGAENT

WHILE SEARCHING THROUGH large numbers of terns and waders on the beach at Al Fazzah, on the south-west coast of Yemen, on 1 April 1998, we counted over 400 Saunders's Tern *Sterna saundersi*. This exceeds the previous highest count: 150 at Hodeidah on 18 April 1980 (Brooks *et al.* 1987). Among c. 20 Saunders's Terns feeding in the surf at close range (5–20 metres away) we noticed a different bird. It had a more extensive white forehead than the Saunders's Terns, extending beyond the eye toward the nape. This bird, along with most of the Saunders's Terns, was in full summer plumage. Further examination revealed other differences: a wholly white rump and tail contrasting with the pale grey mantle. The Saunders's Terns had a concolourous pale grey triangle extending across the rump and tail from the mantle. The bird also had much reduced black in the primaries, only the outermost primary appeared black (although probably the outer two primaries were black), whereas the outer three primaries of the Saunders's Terns were black. These features confirmed the identification as an adult summer plumaged Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*—the first Yemen record (Porter *et al.* 1996a,b). No perceivable difference in the mantle coloration of the two species was noted, often a useful feature in separating Little and Saunders's Terns in the Red Sea area; however, it was close to midday, cloudless and the light was thus very strong. In addition, no call was heard.

A probable Little Tern was observed at Ras Kathib, Hodeidah on 31 March 1998, but its identification could not be confirmed before we were asked to leave by the military authorities.

It seems likely that other Little Terns would have been present among the flock of Saunders's Terns, but the observation time was limited. Little Tern breeds in east Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Jordan and Turkey, wintering south to southern Africa and occurs on passage in small numbers through much of coastal Arabia (Olsen & Larsson 1995, Porter *et al.* 1996a), making its occurrence in Yemen unsurprising.

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## The status of Pin-tailed Sandgrouse *Pterocles alchata* in Golestan Province, Iran

RAMEZANALI GHAEMI

THE VAST PLAINS OF THE Gorgan-o-Gonbab area, in Golestan province, on the border between Iran and Turkmenistan have a semi-desert climate. Northern parts

are dry, and wheat and barley are farmed there. To the south, the plains are enclosed by the Elburz mountains. Altitude varies from just below sea-level, in the north, to over 3945 metres in the south. The best habitats for Pin-tailed Sandgrouse *Pterocles alchata*, Houbara *Chlamydotis undulata* and Little Bustards *Tetrax tetrax*, Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* and Saker Falcons *F. cherrug* are found close to the border with Turkmenistan.

In winter, between mid-autumn and March, up to 10,000 Pin-tailed Sandgrouse winter in this area (occasionally in groups of up to 3000 birds), their arrival coinciding with wheat and barley planting. In order to protect their seeds, farmers use various pesticides resulting in significant sandgrouse mortality. In winter 1990, many poisoned birds were found in the area. In addition, raptors which predate the sandgrouse also died in significant numbers; corpses sometimes being discovered near those of their prey. Hunting and habitat degradation are also threats. From my counts of the species in Golestan province, there is evidence that this population, which breeds in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and south Kazakhstan, is declining.



Plate 1. Pin-tailed Sandgrouse *Pterocles alchata*, Golestan province, Iran. (Ramezanali Ghaemi)

### Breeding

In Iran, Pin-tailed Sandgrouse principally breeds in the south-west of the country, e.g. in Khuzestan province. Nests are on the ground in shallow scrapes. Three buffy cream eggs with small russet-brown and larger grey blotches are laid. Incubation occupies 21 days with the male undertaking the majority of these duties once the final egg has been laid. The eggs are laid at one-day intervals.

Ramezanali Ghaemi, Senior Expert, Gorgan Department of the Environment, Gorgan, Islamic Republic of Iran.

## The first Red-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus erythrorhynchus* in Yemen and the Middle East

PHIL HANSBRO AND DAVE SARGEANT

ON 5 APRIL 1998, while trying to gain access to Aden marsh, brief views were obtained of a flushed bird as it flew behind some trees. Our immediate impressions were of a grey starling-like bird with pale cream underparts. DS

suggested Wattled Starling *Creatophora cinerea*—a very scarce visitor to Yemen—and we proceeded to search for it. It was soon located, feeding on the back of a cow, which, combined with the bird's jizz, immediately suggested it was an oxpecker. The bare part colours were immediately checked and the identification, as Red-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus erythrorhynchus*, confirmed. As the bird flitted from cow-to-cow, it was clear that most of the cattle did not appreciate its presence and were unaccustomed to such attention. PH managed to take two photographs from a distance which serve to confirm its identity (see Plate 1). On closer approach, the bird took flight. It was seen twice more, during the next two hours, both times in flight.



Plate 1. Red-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus erythrorhynchus*, Aden marsh, Yemen, 5 April 1998. (Phil Hansbro)

**Description:** Size, appearance and jizz of starling-like bird with cream coloured underparts and mid-grey upperparts. Large bright red bill and eye-ring also this colour, contrasting with the bright yellow iris. It, characteristically for the species, hitched rides and fed from the backs and heads of domestic cows.

This is the first record of Red-billed Oxpecker in Yemen and the Middle East. The species is widely distributed in open savannah in east and southern Africa from Angola north-west to Somalia and Djibouti, and south throughout the continent to north-east South Africa (Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 1993, Sibley & Monroe 1990). In Somalia, it is a common and widespread resident breeder in the north-west and south, becoming rarer and even absent further east and north in the country (Ash & Miskell 1998).

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# REVIEWS & Recent Literature

**Bibby, C., Jones, M. & Marsden, S. (1998)** *Bird surveys*. BirdLife International, Cambridge/Expedition Advisory Centre, Royal Geographic Society, London. pp. 134. £10 (incl. p+p.)

This new handbook for expeditions and field research, produced in a handy, lightweight, A5-sized spiral bound format, focuses on the application of bird counting techniques that can directly assist conservation research and planning. It is necessarily biased toward forests and tropical areas, but can also be easily adapted to the arid, often sparsely vegetated, and desert environments invariably encountered in the OSME region. A collaborative effort with BirdLife International, it incorporates input from researchers from a variety of backgrounds, all of whom have extensive experience of quantitative assessment of bird populations. It condenses information from a wide variety of sources into one accessible, easy-to-use manual.

There are nine main sections. An introduction to counting birds is followed by chapters explaining how to go about designing a study and choosing the most appropriate method(s). Species survey techniques, tailored to both individual species, suites of species (e.g. nightbirds) and whole communities, sites and habitats are then presented, including discussion of the potential pitfalls and problems of each. There are also useful sections on data analysis and interpretation (kept simple and straightforward), and how to maximise the impact of the work (information dissemination, report writing and presentation). A list of references and further reading (deliberately limited to a short selection in order to encourage users to get started without feeling inhibited by huge literature lists) is also included, as well as contact details for persons/organisations to get in touch with for further information.

An excellent reference work, not only for university/graduate-style expeditions, but for all birdwatchers, conservationists and

researchers, amateur or professional, with an interest in contributing quantitatively to the knowledge of bird populations worldwide. At a reasonable £10 (including postage and packing) it should be near the top of any purchase list for anyone planning a trip which involves conducting bird surveys.

*Pete Davidson*

**Kourtellarides, L. (1998)** *Breeding birds of Cyprus*. Bank of Cyprus/Cyprus Ornithological Society, Nicosia. pp 314, 335 colour photographs, 3 maps, £Cy16.

After so many books by British authors on the birds of Cyprus it is pleasing to see one by a Cypriot, especially one who has spent many years studying and photographing the breeding birds. This is a large book (almost 2 kg in weight), attractively produced and, in view of its price, must be heavily subsidised by the publisher. Its large format, many colour photographs and rather large print give it something of a coffee-table book appearance.

This edition, published in association with the Greek Cyprus Ornithological Society, is an English translation of a 1997 Greek edition. It is intended for the general reader, as well as for birdwatchers. From the author's note, his ambition was to inform his fellow countrymen about the breeding birds in order to heighten environmental awareness. He is to be commended for this, especially in view of the appalling and undiminished level of mist-netting, liming and shooting in Cyprus.

Short introductory sections deal with climate, vegetation, migration etc. and there is also a terminal checklist which usefully includes Greek Cypriot names for many species. The main part of the book covers the breeding species, with 1-2 pages devoted to each. Unfortunately, like the *Bannermans' Birds of Cyprus*, it includes many species for which there is little or no evidence that they have ever bred in Cyprus, in some cases devoting more space to these than to the endemics.

For each species, the text covers identification, habitat, food and breeding plus a final section specific to Cyprus. This last section is based on the literature, apparently mainly from the BOU's Cyprus checklist, and on the author's own extensive observations. The latter are somewhat anecdotal but include many interesting records, e.g. the first breeding of Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis* and Blackbird *Turdus merula* (long suspected) and the first described nest of the local Crossbill *Loxia curvirostris* (which until very recently was considered an endemic subspecies). Half or more of each page is taken up by colour photographs, mainly of adult birds but also of nests, eggs, young and occasionally habitats. They are nearly all by the author and are largely very good, some excellent, although many of the adult birds were obviously photographed in captivity.

Despite the book's limitations, its many photographs and (especially) the previously unpublished observations of the author make it a worthwhile purchase for anyone interested in the breeding birds of Cyprus.

Peter Flint

**Miles, J. (1998)** *Pharaohs' birds*. The American University in Cairo Press, Cairo. pp 210, £20.

A new guide about Egypt would normally be very welcome, unfortunately the countless inaccuracies render this one almost useless. The tone is set on p. 7 where Miles falsely alludes to Britain "spending all its time creating heather moorland for Red Grouse" and on p. 9 with "lack of high ground" along the Nile "upsetting" soaring bird migration. High ground abounds here along a major White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* and Crane *Grus grus* flyway through Egypt, they don't need to feed on migration either, as implied.

Many of the errors result from poor collation of sources like *Ornithological studies in Egyptian wetlands* (Meininger & Atta 1994), *The birds of ancient Egypt* (Houlihan 1986) and recent records from the OSME internet web site. In 'for the record' on p. 18 the "44 mummified species identified by X-ray" were actually identified at the turn of the century before X-ray had been invented, including Barbary Falcon *Falco peregrinoides*, contra Miles, but as detailed by Mienertzhagen in 1930.

A 'where to watch birds' section for a country like Egypt needs to provide important information such as the need for permits to visit Zaranik or to get past the Bir Lahfan checkpoint in Wadi el Arish, but there is no mention of these. Birders will be disappointed to be turned away from such sites, if they can find them in the first place. The 120 or so sites covered average just 10 lines of text each, so access arrangements, seasonal bird lists and directions are largely non-existent. The accounts are also distorted by erroneous sightings, e.g. Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi* at Dashour, petrels at Ras el Heckma, Black Bush Robin *Cercotrichas podobe* at Sharm el Sheikh and 110,000 raptors of 24 species at Zaranik. More alarming is the lack of caveats concerning birding in areas such as Gebel Uweinat which require full-scale desert expeditions.

The 'Birds of Egypt Check-List' and 'Birds of Egypt systematic list' detail more than 500 species although 37 of them have not been recorded in Egypt, but are extracted from *The birds of Israel* (Shirihai 1996). Using the same criteria for Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis*, recorded 150 miles away in northern Israel, 15 Israeli species have been missed, including Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis* from Eilat, and another 12 species could have been added from the Sudan!

Over 100 species (20%) have incorrect codes which will mislead birders into looking for birds when they are not present. Examples include breeding for Shag *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* (wishful thinking), resident for Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* (absent in winter) and Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* shown as a general migrant (one record). Twelve species included here are not generally considered acceptable, e.g. Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria* (cagebird), Mountain Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus sibilans*, and Rüppell's Weaver *Ploceus galbula* (probably a Hoopoe Lark *Alaemon alaudipes* nest), while an African Rock Bunting *Emberiza tahapisi* record is now considered referable to House Bunting *E. striolata*. Conversely, recent additions, e.g. Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata*, Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* and Common Mynah *Acridotheres tristis* are missed. At least 24 species contain unacceptable records, e.g. Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva* and Basra Reed

Warbler *Acrocephalus griseldis* at Sharm el Sheikh in February, while Mediterranean Shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan* is not unrecorded, being previously listed as Levantine Manx Shearwater, although Miles appears unaware of this.

The drawings by Mike Henry are excellent and the 230 colour photographs show a range of species, but it is a shame they are associated with such a poor publication. Birdwatchers intending to visit Egypt will probably buy this book because there are few alternatives but they are going to be very disappointed by the inaccuracies and lack of detail.

Andrew Grieve

**Richardson, C. & Aspinall, S. (1998)** *The Shell birdwatching guide to the United Arab Emirates*. Hobby Publications, Dubai. pp 96, 17 colour photographs, several line drawings and maps, £10 incl. p&p.

This attractive publication provides comprehensive information on birdwatching in the United Arab Emirates. The introductory section includes much of the essential travel information that one would expect to find in any guide of this nature. A short birding calendar provides a useful guide as to what to expect at each season, while a section on local bird information includes details of where to find the most recent information and where to send your bird records.

The main body of the guide is, of course, the site details. Forty-four sites are covered, each with a useful star rating that indicates whether the area is a key, seasonally good or secondary site. Each account includes clear details of how to reach the site and indicates the birds you might expect to find. Most also include a sketch map showing access points and the best areas to concentrate upon. A systematic checklist details all species reliably recorded in UAE and is commendably up-to-date, with a number of records from 1998 included. Two appendices list introduced species and those of uncertain status. Finally, a combined checklist and site index permit the reader to identify sites where a particular species of interest may be found. A number of attractive line drawings interrupt the text, while a selection of colour photographs

depicting various sites and some sought-after species are grouped together in the centre of the guide.

The introductory sections suggest that the *Field guide to the birds of the Middle East* (Porter *et al.* 1996) and *The birds of the United Arab Emirates* (Richardson 1990) are essential items in your luggage before departing for the UAE. To that list you can add this splendid little publication.

Chris Bradshaw

**Snow, D. W & Perrins, C. M. (1998)** *The birds of the Western Palearctic. Concise edition*. Vols. 1 & 2. Oxford University Press. pp 1697, 594 colour plates, 620 colour plates, £150.

These two volumes have made *BWP* (just about) affordable and accessible to the average birder. Text, maps and plates have all been extensively revised, largely to a high standard. Two-hundred and thirty-one new plates were prepared for these volumes. These admirably illustrate new species for the region, unrecorded at the time of the relevant original volume, but were also prepared in recognition of the increasing standards of excellence established in the bird art arena since the *BWP* project commenced. A recurring criticism, principally levelled retrospectively, of the initial volumes was the standard of the artwork. This has been rectified, and *BWP Concise* can 'hold its head high' in this respect. Christopher Schmidt's crakes, painted for this project, jostle for one's attention with classics from the original volumes such as Viggo Ree's perched redstarts. In many respects the artwork compares very favourably with recently published identification works, although the raptors in *The handbook of bird identification* (Beaman & Madge 1998) really do make the original *BWP* plates look stale.

Nonetheless, most people will have bought *BWP* for its text, so how does the concise edition measure up? Each regularly occurring species' account consists of the following sections: Field Characters, Habitat, Distribution, Population, Movements, Food, Social pattern and behaviour, Voice, Breeding, biometric data (ranges only), and Geographical variation. Most accounts occupy

1.5–2 pages, although vagrants and species whose breeding ranges only just reach the region under discussion merit considerably less. Most birders, rather than ecologists and ornithologists, will probably find that the mode of presentation, because the information has been chosen so selectively, is much more user-friendly than that in the original volumes. In addition, many errors have been corrected, and much new information incorporated. *BWP* is no longer out-of-date, as was inevitable for those species accounts prepared 20 or more years ago, but is, once again, the essential and comprehensive reference it was always designed to be. The new maps are a reflection of the extensive work of two *BWP* stalwarts—Dorothy Vincent and Mike Wilson—and new developments in technology. Attractiveness and ease-of-use have been combined.

Many reviews have already appeared of *BWP Concise*, or *BWPC* as the editors recommend we call it, and I am sure that many readers will have already made a decision to buy or not to buy this new tome. If you own the original nine-volume set, but do not require the detail therein, buy this concise version; for those who did not collect the original series, purchase is essential (and you may also care to invest in the CD-ROM).

Guy M. Kirwan

#### ALSO RECEIVED

**Clark, W. S. & Yosef, R. (1998)** *In-hand identification guide to Palearctic raptors*. International Birdwatching Center Eilat Tech. Publ. Vol. 7 No. 2. pp 67, 120 colour photographs, NIS80 / US\$25.

Nicely produced booklet from the IBCE, although some of the colour reproduction in the review copy appeared slightly false. It will be of use to fieldworkers, as well as ringers. Most species are treated within the confines of a double-page spread (some receive just one page) with up to six photographs of each. Most photographs, unsurprisingly, are of birds in-the-hand. The text provides details of similar species, basic identification, ageing and sexing, required ring size, measurements (wing chord, culmen, tail and hallux), references and conservation status. Most Middle Eastern species are covered.

**Feare, C. & Craig, A. (1998)** *Starlings and mynas*. A. & C. Black, London, UK. pp 285, 32 colour plates, 114 distribution maps, £32.

An attractive addition to the Helm Identification Guide series, which couples an authoritative text with a series of largely successful, if sometimes a little cluttered, plates. The African starlings, in particular, are handsomely illustrated. As is usual, with this and the Pica Press series, many species are well covered by both text and plates for the first time in the ornithological literature. This volume is unlikely to win new converts to the series, but should not disappoint its confirmed collectors.

**Francis, J. & Shirihai, H. (1999)** *Ethiopia. In search of endemic birds*. Francis, London. pp 45, 47 colour photographs, 1 colour map. £10. Available from the author or via African Bird Club (Sales), c/o BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA, U. K.

Based on a visit to the country in late 1997, this very attractive publication breaks the mould in trip report production and will prove essential reading for anyone planning a trip to this part of north-east Africa. The photographs, by Shirihai, are without exception outstanding and should more than whet the appetite for a trip to this superb country.

**Keijl, G. O., Ruiters, P. S., van der Have, T. M., de Vaate, A. b., Martiejn, E. C. L. & Noordhuis, R. (1998)** *Waders and other waterbirds in the United Arab Emirates: autumn 1994 & spring 1995*. WIWO Report 62, Zeist. pp 133, 25 Dfl plus 15 Dfl for administration costs.

This typically thorough report from WIWO details the results of wader and other waterbird surveys, principally focusing on Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* migration ecology at Khor Dubai, although counts were made at a total of nine other sites in autumn 1994 and ten in spring 1995. A complete annotated checklist of all species recorded during the surveys is included within the main body of the report.

**Kinzelbach, R. & Kasperek, M. (eds.) (1998)** *Zoology in the Middle East Volumes 16 & 17*. Kasperek Verlag, Heidelberg.

The most recent volumes contain 120 and 119 pages, of which 18 and six pages are devoted to birds. The two avian papers in Volume 16 comprise a study of Barn Owl *Tyto alba* diet in northern Jordan, and another of habitat associations and breeding bird communities in the south-west Jordan highlands. In Volume 17, there is a paper discussing the distribution of the Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* in Bulgaria.

**Leshem, Y, Lachman, E. & Berthold, P. (eds.) (1998)** *Migrating birds know no boundaries. The Torgos 28*. Several colour and black-and-white photographs, many line drawings and maps.

These international seminar proceedings are published as a special, 255-page, edition of *The Torgos*. Many of the presentations will be of interest to Middle Eastern birders, although it is unlikely to be read other than by serious students of avian migration.

**Ranft, R. & Cleere, N. (1999)** *A sound guide to nightjars and related nightbirds*. Pica Press, Mountfield & The British Library National Sound Archive, London. 72.5 minute CD. £14.99.

Songs of 99 species of the world's nightjars and close relatives are included on this CD compilation which accompanies the *Nightjars* book published in 1998 by Pica Press. An additional eight species are represented by call notes only. Thus, the vast majority of the 119 species recognised by Cleere & Nurney (1998) are covered by this innovative new publishing venture. Of the seven species known to occur in the Middle East, the songs of all but one—Sykes's Nightjar *Caprimulgus mahrattensis* (calls when flushed are presented here)—appear on this nicely produced set. Future volumes in the series would benefit from more extensive liner notes, and perhaps the inclusion of relevant voice texts from the companion book. It is also a little annoying that several tracks contain the calls of more than one species (these are clearly indicated in the accompanying booklet): the beauty of most CDs is that they enable the user to swiftly and directly access the relevant recording.

**Soorne, P. S. & Seddon, P. J. (eds.) (1998)** *Re-introduction practitioners directory 1998*. NCWCD, Riyadh. pp 97. US\$15.

Reintroduction agencies and individuals will find this an invaluable guide. Along with taxa in other orders, this compilation covers efforts to re-establish 28 species of birds in the wild.

**Taylor, B. & van Perlo, B. (1998)** *Rails. A guide to the rails, crakes, gallinules and coots of the world*. Pica Press, Mountfield, Sussex. pp 600, 43 colour plates, 148 distribution maps, 15 line drawings, £35.

A worthy successor to Ripley's *Rails of the world*, this guide deserves to be on the bookshelves of all those with an interest in this largely secretive and difficult-to-study assemblage of species. Some of the plates appear a little garish in the review copy, but this work possesses many of the hallmarks of an exemplary and largely up-to-date monograph.

**Yosef, R. & Lohrer, F. E. (eds.) (1998)** *Shrikes of the world—2: conservation and implementation*. Proc. 2nd International Shrike Symp., Eilat 17–23 March 1996. International Birdwatching Center Eilat Tech. Publ. Vol. 7 No. 1. pp 119, NIS100/US\$30.

Thirty-four papers or abstracts presented at the symposium are reproduced here, and deal with migration, evolution and systematics, population status and trends, foraging ecology and habitat selection, reproductive ecology, and conservation and management. There are relatively few papers dealing specifically with Middle Eastern taxa but this document will be essential reading for all those interested in this attractive group of species.

Guy M. Kirwan

# Around the Region

compiled by  
Guy M. Kirwan

Records in *Around the Region* are published for interest only; their inclusion does not imply acceptance by the records committee of the relevant country. Some records have been authenticated, including all those from Cyprus and Oman, and these are usually indicated. All records refer to 1999 unless otherwise stated.

Records and photographs for *Sandgrouse 22 (1)* should be sent, by December 15, to *Around the Region*, OSME, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, U.K.



Bee-eaters  
*Merops apiaster*  
by D. Powell

In Saudi Arabia, a pair of **Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus* twice attempted nesting at Dhahran in late April-early May, the first recorded breeding attempt in Arabia. On the Sea of Galilee, Israel, there was a **Slavonian Grebe** *P. auritus* on 26 February, approximately the fourth country record. The first record of **Little Grebe** *Tachybaptus ruficollis* on Socotra was of three adults and a juvenile at Erhina lagoon on 30 December 1998 (*The Lammergeier* 22: 13). The fourth record of **Swinhoe's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma monorhis* in Oman was a single off Mirbat on 21 August 1998. Stan Howe has recently drawn my attention to a number of interesting records from the seas around Socotra, all of which had previously been published in *Sea Swallow*. These include the first records in the archipelago of **White-bellied Storm-petrel** *Fregatta grallaria* (July 1969: *Sea Swallow* 21: 41) and **White-faced Storm-petrel** *Pelagodroma marina* (one on board the SS Strathaird on 24 June 1960: *Sea Swallow* 14: 20). Seawatching off Zaranik, north Sinai, on 7 March produced 15 **Gannet** *Sula bassana*. A **Lesser Frigatebird** *Fregata ariel* was reported at Eilat, Israel on 6 May. An adult **Black-headed Heron** *Ardea melanoccephala* at Erhina lagoon on 30 December 1998 was the first record for Socotra and mirrors the recent spate of records in Yemen (*The Lammergeier* 22: 13). There was a late immature **Yellow Bittern** *Ixobrychus sinensis* at Mughsayl, Oman on 11 November 1998. Up to two **White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia* at Dhahran during 7 September-8 October 1998 was an unusual record for the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. Two **African Spoonbill** *Platalea alba* were at Salalah, Oman on 15 December 1998. Three species of wildfowl were recorded for the first time on Socotra in autumn 1998: two female **Cotton Teal** *Nettapus coronandelianus* were at Qadub on 16-17 November, two pairs of **Pintail** *Anas acuta* were on Hadibu lagoon on 12-17 November, and a pair of **Shoveler** *A. clypeata* was present at an unspecified locality for three weeks in November (*The Lammergeier* 22: 13). In Oman, two Cotton Teal were reported at Salalah on 14 December 1998.

Up to two **Crested Honey Buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhynchus* at Abu Dhabi from November 1998 until 10 May at least, with one over Dibba on 17 March, were almost expected occurrences in the UAE in recent years. More

unexpected was the total of 14 which passed Eilat, Israel during 30 April–24 May, including four on 11 May. A **Black-winged Kite** *Elanus caeruleus* remained at Ras al-Khaimah, UAE, from November 1998 until 13 February at least, and further singles were at Fujairah on 29 January and Khor Dubai on 10 February. In Israel, there was a possible **Shikra** *Accipiter badius* trapped and ringed at Eilat on 2 May (see photographs in *Birding World* 12: 191) and, in UAE, one was at Al Ain on 15 January. A **Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis* at Azraq on 31 December 1998 was approximately the tenth record in Jordan, and a **Sparrowhawk** *A. nisus* at Al Barrah, Dana, was unusual in summer. In Oman, there were singles of Shikra at Hinna on 7 November 1998 and Zeek on 16 January (7–8th records), and **Tawny Eagle** *Aquila rapax*, at Sanub Dump on 1 November and Taqah on 8 November 1998. In addition, there was a **Merlin** *Falco columbarius* at Khor Dirif on 5 October 1998. A young **Greater Spotted Eagle** *Aquila clanga* at Akrotiri salt lake on 5 October 1998 has been accepted as the fourth Cypriot record (*Brit. Birds* 92: 284) and a **Lesser Spotted Eagle** *A. pomarina* was reported in Yemen in November 1998 (*The Lammergeier* 18: 4). A pair of **Golden Eagle** *A. chrysaetos* found nesting near Liwa on 18 January was the first confirmed breeding report in UAE. A **Sooty Falcon** *Falco concolor* over Dana tower, Jordan, on 15 April was unusually early.

In Oman, there was an **Allen's Gallinule** *Porphyrio alleni* at Khor Rhouri on 20 August 1998, while the ninth **White-breasted Waterhen** *Amaurornis phoeniceus* in UAE was at Dubai during 13–16 February. Recent accepted records from Cyprus include the island's second recent report of **Little Bustard** *Tetrax tetrax*, a female in the Spiros Pool area on 12 December 1998, while the **Houbara Bustard** *Chlamydotis undulata* in the same area already featured in these reports (*Sandgrouse* 21: 110) has also been accepted (*Brit. Birds* 92: 286).

In Oman, the eighth and ninth records of **Great Stone Plover** *Esacus recurvirostris* were singles at Qurm Beach on 3 February 1998 and one that lingered at Schnass from November 1998 into 1999 and there was a **European Golden Plover** *Pluvialis apricaria* at Dauka on 13 November 1998. Another of the last-named species at Umm al

Quwain on 4 February was approximately the tenth record in UAE. The second Israeli record of **Lesser Sand Plover** *Charadrius mongolus*, at Eilat on 14–16 April 1998 (*Sandgrouse* 20: 158), has recently been authenticated, as have a single **Caspian Plover** *C. asiaticus* on Cyprus on 16–19 April 1998 (*Brit. Birds* 92: 70) with three at Paralimni on 3 May. A **Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni* at Ghadir Burqu on 29 September 1998 was the 11th record in Jordan (Andrews *et al.* 1999) and a probable **Oriental Pratincole** *G. maldivarum* in Dubai on 9 January–31 March would be only the second UAE record if accepted. During February–May, six **White-tailed Plover** *Chettusia leucura* were nesting near Dubai, the second breeding record in the country, while a flock of 28 at Jahra East Outfall, Kuwait, on 27 February was an exceptional number in eastern Arabia. The eighth and ninth records of **Spur-winged Plover** *Hoplopterus spinosus* in Oman were singles at Sohar on 29 November 1998 and Lansab Lagoons on 23 January, while the first **Red-wattled Plover** *H. indicus* in Jordan was photographed at Azraq on 28 April (but was perhaps present from 26 April–5 May). Up to six **Lapwing** *Vanellus vanellus* at Dhahran, Saudi Arabia during 26 October–24 December 1998 were unusual in this area. There is one previous Middle Eastern record of **Baird's Sandpiper** *Calidris bairdii*, from Oman, thus, if accepted, one at Ma'again Mikhael, Israel, on 17 October 1998 (*Brit. Birds* 92: 287) will be the second record in the region. The **Pectoral Sandpiper** *C. melanotos* in the same country in September 1998 (*Sandgrouse* 21: 110) has recently been accepted (*Brit. Birds* 92: 288). A **Long-toed Stint** *C. subminuta* was reported from Yemen in November 1998 (*The Lammergeier* 18: 4) and the first Egyptian record was north of Ismaliya on 6 March, while one was photographed at Salalah, Oman on 14 December 1998 (*Birding World* 12: 12). The **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* in Oman, at Sohar Sun Farms (see *Sandgrouse* 21: 110) was seen again on 8 November 1998, on which date there was also a **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* there. A **Woodcock** *Scolopax rusticola* at the Emirates golf course on 20 January–16 February was the 11th record in UAE.

In Turkey, there was a second-summer **Long-tailed Skua** *Stercorarius longicaudus* off Yumurtalik on 8 May.

There are still relatively few country records. Another, the fifth country record, was at Sha'am, UAE, on 17 January. In Egypt, there was a report of an adult winter **Grey-headed Gull** *Larus cirrocephalus* at Nabaq, south Sinai on 7 February, potentially the first country record. Interesting gull records in UAE included the first **Herring Gull** *L. argentatus*, at Khor Ajman on 8 January, and the seventh **Common Gull** *L. canus*, at Khor Kalba on 15 January. The second and third records of Herring Gull in Cyprus have recently been accepted: a third-winter at Larnaca salt lake on 2 December 1998 and an adult in the same place on 20 January. Additionally the first and second records of *Larus (a.) heuglinii* in Cyprus involved an adult at Larnaca sewage works on 23 November 1998 with five remaining elsewhere in this area until 18 March. First-summer **Kittiwakes** *Rissa tridactyla* were seen in Istanbul on 26 September 1998 (*Dutch Birding* 20: 251) and off Manavgat on 10–11 May, while in UAE, one at Fujairah on 6 February was the second country record. Details of the first **Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* on Socotra are awaited (*The Lammergeier* 22: 13); a **Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* in offshore waters on 7 October 1960, the first and only record for Socotra, has already been published (*Sea Swallow* 14: 25). Three to five unidentified **noddy** *Anous* sp. were seen at Khor Kalba, UAE on 19 December 1998; there is a previous record of **Lesser Noddy** *A. tenuirostris* (Richardson & Aspinall 1998).

Two **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse** *Pterocles alchata*, of uncertain origin, were at the Emirates golf course on 9 February and 13 June, the third and fourth records in UAE. A **Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis* was As Safawi, Jordan, where the species is scarce, on 30 October 1998. A **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* at Salmiya on 14 April was the second Kuwaiti record, and the second and third records of **Barn Owl** *Tyto alba* were at Tulha in April, with the fourth, found dead, at Jahra on 30 April. A **Hume's Tawny Owl** *Strix butleri* was found dead at Hawiatahir, Oman on 15 December 1998 providing further confirmation of its presence in that country. A total of 24 **Egyptian Nightjar** *Caprimulgus aegyptius* was reported from Yemen in November 1998 (*The Lammergeier* 18: 4); only the fifth country record (*Sandgrouse* 20: 78), while the first record from eastern

Yemen of **Plain Nightjar** *C. inornatus* involved at least three calling at Wadi Hajar on 12 March 1998 (*The Phoenix* 15: 5). An **Alpine Swift** *Apus melba* was over Al Ain zoo on 20 December 1998 while one was seen over Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, on 20 May and two, the first country record, were at Tulha, Kuwait in April. The seventh Cyprus record of **Little Swift** *A. affinis*, one at Paphos lighthouse on 8 April 1998, has been accepted. The sixth record of **White-breasted Kingfisher** *Halcyon smyrnensis* in UAE was one near Khatt lake on 7 March. Very rare inland in Arabia, a **Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis* remained at Dhahran from 12 November 1998–11 February, when a second bird was also present, and, in Oman, one was at Khor Razat on 14 August 1998. A **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** *Merops persicus* at sea off Socotra on 21 November 1960 (*Sea Swallow* 14: 39) pre-dates the record in spring 1993 (Kirwan *et al.* 1996) and the first **Indian Roller** *Coracias benghalensis* on Socotra was videotaped at Ilha on 21 December 1998 (*The Lammergeier* 22: 13). The first **Lilac-breasted Roller** *C. caudata* in Oman was at Khawr Mughsayl on 20 August 1998. A **Syrian Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos syriacus* at El Arish on 7 November 1998 is the westernmost record in Egypt.

The first **Bar-tailed Desert Lark** *Ammomanes cincturus* in Cyprus was at Cape Greco on 24–26 March. A **Thick-billed Lark** *Ramphocoris clotbey* at Fidan, Jordan, on 16 April was the first record in Wadi Araba, but up to ten pairs, including one pair with a nest containing eggs, in the southern Negev in May was the first breeding record in Israel. Also in southern Israel, there were two **Small Skylark** *Alauda gulgula* at Yotvata on 18–25 March. Ten **Woodlark** *Lullula arborea* at El Arish on 8 March was a high total of scarce winter visitor to Egypt. Records of **Richard's Pipit** *Anthus richardi* on Cyprus in 1997—singles on 14 March and 12 October and two on 4 May and 8 May—have recently been accepted, as has the second island record of **Olive-backed Pipit** *A. hodgsoni*, three during 19–29 April 1998 (*Brit. Birds* 92: 76). Rare pipits in Kuwait included the second record of Richard's Pipit, at Jahra on 23 April, and fifth Olive-backed Pipit, at Jahra Farms on 17 April. Two **Blyth's Pipit** *Anthus godlewskii*, the third record in Israel, remained at Ma'agan Mikhael from mid-January–21 February at

least; the second record, on 24 September 1998 (*Sandgrouse* 21: 111), has only recently been accepted (*Brit. Birds* 92: 293). The fifth report of **Buff-bellied Pipit** *A. rubescens* in UAE involved one at Rams rubbish dump on 18 March. A **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* off the north coast of Socotra on 13 September 1987 (*Sea Swallow* 37: 39) is only the second record for the archipelago.

At Yotvata, Israel, there was a **Grey Hypocolius** *Hypocolius ampelinus* on 30 December 1998–4 January (*Dutch Birding* 21: 55, 57) with a first-summer male in the Eilat area on 24 March–2 April at least. More impressive must have been the sight of over 120 of this species at Al Ain camel track, UAE on 13 March. The eighth record of **White-throated Robin** *Irania gutturalis* in Cyprus, a male at Akamas on 11 April 1998, has recently been accepted and the island's second **Pied Stonechat** *Saxicola caprata* on 23 November 1997, previously mentioned in these reports (*Sandgrouse* 20: 79), has also been accepted (*Brit. Birds* 92: 77). The first record of a **Stonechat** *S. torquata* of the race *variegata* in Cyprus was a first-winter male at Cape Greco on 25 March. The fourth to sixth records of Pied Stonechat in UAE were of single males at the Emirates golf course on 26 March, Fujairah on 30 March and Al Ain on 31 March, while elsewhere the 7–9th country records of **White-crowned Black Wheatear** *Oenanthe leucopyga* were on Ras al Jebel on 8 January, Qarn Nazwa on 6–8 February and Das Island on 13 April. The fourth White-crowned Black Wheatear in Cyprus was an adult male at Cape Greco on 22 February. Earlier, there was an **Eversmann's Redstart** *Phoenicurus erythronotus* on Das Island on 14 December 1998 and in Oman, an exceptional 12 in Musandam on 10–11 December 1998. In Jordan, the 3–5th records of **Ring Ouzel** *Turdus torquatus* involved one at As Safawi on 31 October 1998, two first-winters at Dana on 6 December (*Dutch Birding* 20: 310) and one in the same place on 23 December 1998, while the fourth record of **Redwing** *T. iliacus* was one at Wadi al Butm on 1 December 1998 (see Andrews *et al.* 1999). Several **Black-throated Thrush** *T. ruficollis* reached eastern Arabia last autumn: two singles were in Dubai on 28–29 November and 5 December 1998, and in Kuwait, two were at Jahra Farm on 22 January. Already mentioned in these reports (*Sandgrouse* 21: 111), an **Eye-browed Thrush** *T. obscurus* at

Dauka, Oman, on 13 November 1998 has now been accepted. A **Mistle Thrush** *T. viscivorus* at Jebel Ali on 12 February was the 11th UAE record. In Saudi Arabia, there was a **Robin** *Erithacus rubecula* in Dhahran on 25–26 February. A **River Warbler** *Locustella fluviatilis* at Al Wathba on 19 March was the second UAE record. In Israel, a **Basra Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus griseldis* at Kefar Ruppim kibbutz was present during 29–31 March; on the last date it was apparently videotaped, while others passed through Dhahran, Saudi Arabia on 29 April, 27 and 28 May. There was a **Grasshopper Warbler** *L. naevia* at East Khor, Oman on 20 January. The sixth **Desert Warbler** *Sylvia deserti* in Cyprus was at Paphos lighthouse on 12–13 April. Single **Ménétries's Warblers** *S. mystacea* were recorded on seven dates at As Safawi, Jordan during 6–25 October 1998, nine at Azraq during 2–14 April, with two at Wadi Butm on 6 April and a female at Feinan on 24 April, while a **Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* at As Safawi on 24 October 1998 is the first record in Jordan and a record of the latter species in Cyprus, on 21 February 1998, has been accepted recently (*Brit. Birds* 92: 297). The third or fourth record of this species in UAE was at Bu Hasa on 5 February. In neighbouring Israel, a **Hume's Yellow-browed Warbler** *P. humei* wintered at Yotvata from 2 January–29 March at least, and a first-summer male Ménétries's Warbler was at Kibbutz Lotan on 18 March–2 April at least. A Hume's Yellow-browed Warbler was on Das Island, UAE, on 16–23 December 1998. A **Pallas's Warbler** *P. proregulus* reported at Beer Sheva on 10 February would be the third record in Israel if confirmed. There was a possible **Mountain Chiffchaff** *P. sindianus* at Aqaba sewage works on 15 April; there are no previous records in Jordan. Following a record in December 1998, there were two **Goldcrest** *Regulus regulus* at Azraq guesthouse, Jordan, on 13–14 February. A **Blue-and-white Flycatcher** *Cyanoptila cyanomelana* at Masafi on 11 February was the second UAE record (the first was in November 1980) and only the third in Arabia (the other being in Oman in January 1982). A first-winter **Semi-collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula semitorquata* at Akhna dam on 12 September 1998 is the first accepted autumn record on Cyprus (*Brit. Birds* 92: 298) and another was at Sayh,



Musandam, Oman on 15 April. A **Red-breasted Flycatcher** *F. parva* at Aqaba on 23 December 1998 was the first December record in Jordan.

An **Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* was at Eilat, Israel on 23–27 March, and, in Cyprus, the 7–8th records were single males of the race *phoenicuroides* at Cape Greco on 9–11 March (Plate 1) and at Zakaki marsh on 20 April. The first breeding report of **Red-backed Shrike** *L. collurio* in Cyprus involved a

(*The Lammergeier* 18: 3) and subsequently up to 20 birds may have been present (*The Lammergeier* 22: 13). On the same island, there were two **Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris* at Hadibu lagoon on 16–17 December 1998 (*The Lammergeier* 22: 13). In eastern Saudi, there were two adult **Rose-coloured Starling** *S. roseus* near Al Khobar on 17 February with four there on 25 February and singles on 4 and 11 March. Rarer starling reports came from Oman, where the first and

the second country record of **Common Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus* involved two at As Safawi on 25 September 1998, with one remaining until 27th. Reflecting high numbers in southern Israel and Jordan, a **Hawfinch** was at El Arish, Egypt on 8 March. In south-east Turkey, there were three male and a female **Trumpeter Finch** *Bucanetes githagineus* at Işıklı in early May (most recent records in the country come from this area) and two males at the



Plate 1. Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*, Cape Greco, Cyprus, 11 March 1999. (R. Frost)

female with a fledged juvenile at an unspecified locality on 26 June. The first-winter **Great Grey Shrike** *L. excubitor*, of the race *pallidirostris*, at Spiros Pool (see *Sandgrouse* 21: 112) has recently been accepted as the first island record of this taxon; it remained from 20 November–4 December 1998 (*Brit. Birds* 92: 298). There was a spate of records of this taxon, now usually accorded species status, in Jordan in autumn 1998, with singles at Tel Hassan on 23 September, Hazeem on 1–2 October and 15–16 October, and Wadi Rum on 25 December. Of relevance here is the rejection of the only European record of **Long-tailed Shrike** *L. schach*, in Hungary in 1979 (*Brit. Birds* 92: 80); the sole Western Palearctic records are those in Israel and Turkey (Shirihai & Golan 1994). A **Black Drongo** *Dicrurus macrocerus* reported at Al Ansab lagoons, Oman, on 7 December 1998 (*Birding World* 12: 12), will be only the second country record if accepted; the first was in November 1991 and it pre-dates an already accepted record at Qitbit on 17 January. The colonisation of Socotra by **House Crow** *Corvus splendens*, already reported (Kirwan 1998), continues. Fifteen were recorded in September 1998 (*The Phoenix* 15: 20), six were in Hadibu in November 1998

second Arabian records of **Brahminy Starling** *S. pagodarum* involved an adult at Montasar on 30 October 1998 and an immature at Khor Rhouri on 20 January. Their origin is unknown, although its range has been increasing in Pakistan and there are accidental records from Yunnan, China and peninsular Thailand, indicating that the species does wander (Feare & Craig 1998). In addition, there was a **Bank Mynah** *Acridotheres ginginianus* at Schnass on 29 November 1998, the first country record, although presumed to originate from the feral population in UAE. There was an influx of 100s of **Spanish Sparrow** *Passer hispaniolensis* into Kuwait in December 1998. Interesting carduelines recorded in Jordan included the second and third country records of **Red-fronted Serin** *Serinus pusillus*, one in Wadi Dana on 29 December 1998 and perhaps the same at Lahdha on 12 January, four **Siskin** *Carduelis spinus* at Dibbin on 1 January, and the first and second records of **Crossbill** *Loxia curvirostris*, one at As Safawi on 15 October 1998 and two in Wadi Dana on 29 December 1998. In addition, the largest count of **Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* in Jordan was of 20 at Dibbin on 1 January, and

Göksu delta on 13 June. In Cyprus there was a series of records from Cape Greco of the same species: single males on 27 April, 11, 24 and 26 May, with three birds on 4–5 May. A female **Pine Bunting** *Emberiza leucocephalos* at Wadi Dana on 29 December 1998 was the third record in Jordan; previous occurrences were in 1995 and 1997. Even more surprising were the 12 **Cinereous Bunting** *E. cineracea* at the same locality on the same date, while a **Reed Bunting** *E. schoeniclus* at Aqaba on 23 December 1998 was also unusual. The sixth record in UAE of the latter species was at Dhaya on 26 November, and nearby was the second country record of **Yellow-breasted Bunting** *E. aureola*, at Al Wathba on 3 December 1998. In Syria, there was a remarkable report of a pair of **Grey-necked Bunting** *E. buchanani* gathering nest material at Burqush on 15 May. If confirmed, this would be only the second country record and a significant range extension. Two **Rock Bunting** *E. cia* at Besparmak on 4 November 1998, with three in the same place on 11 November, have been accepted as the seventh Cypriot record (and they were reportedly still present on 13 February: *Birding World* 12: 53), while the eighth record was a first-winter

female in the Dhiarizos valley on 23 January. There was a **Rustic Bunting** *E. rustica* at Kibbutz Shizzafon, Israel on 25 October 1998. Finally, a female **Red-headed Bunting** *E. bruniceps*

reported at As Safawi on 24 September 1998 would be another first record for Jordan if confirmed. A bizarre and unconfirmed report involved an **Indigo Bunting** *Passerina*

*cyanea* on Mount Hermon, Israel, presumably an escape, in the second week of June 1998 (*Brit. Birds* 92: 82).

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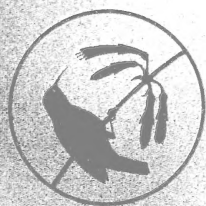
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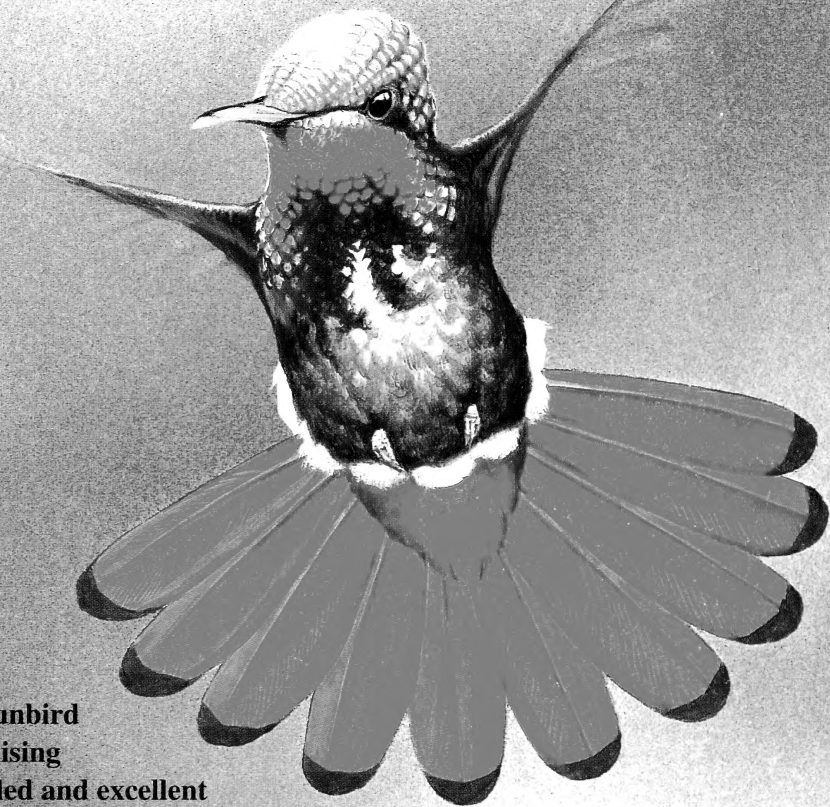
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