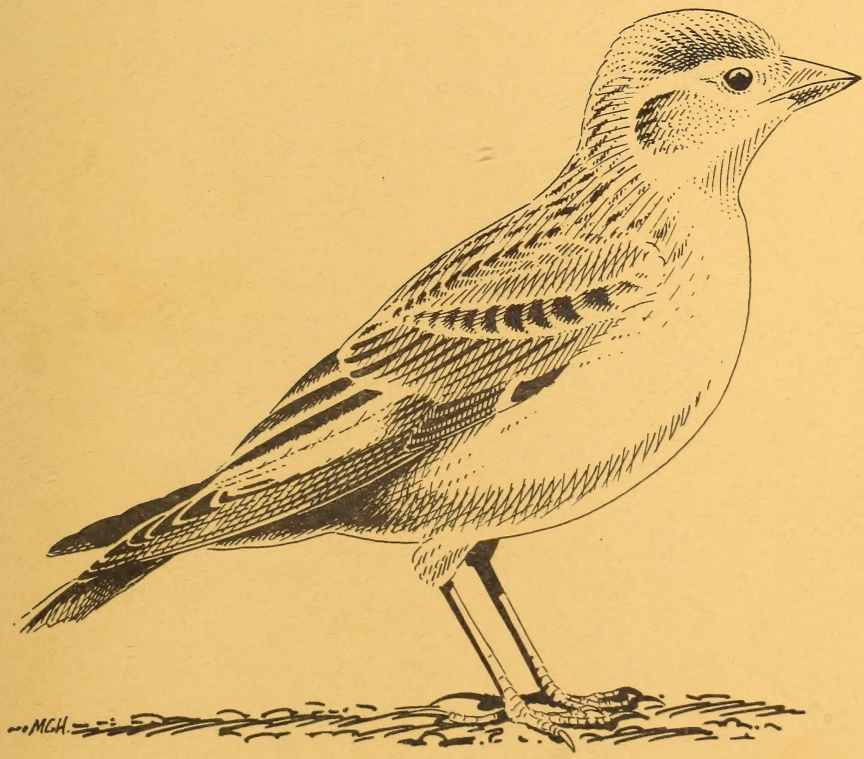
THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF THE MIDDLE EAST



BULLETIN 18

SPRING 1987

OSME BULLETIN 18 SPRING 1987

EDITOR: D J Fisher

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

Please note that details of expeditions, availability of expedition reports, news of members, other Societies and ornithological events are welcomed and may be printed in the Bulletin free of charge subject to the discretion of the Bulletin Editor. Contributions for the next Bulletin should be sent to the Editor by 15th July 1987.

SOME AUTUMN OBSERVATIONS IN TURKEY

Jon Mycock

Between 10 September and 15 October 1986, Malcolm Davies and I travelled throughout Turkey and visited Northern Cyprus. We recorded 237 including some which are rarely seen and explored several new sites so that we might add to the ornithological knowledge of this fascinating country.

On 11 September in the wooded hills above Bebek, Istanbul, migrants included a Golden Oriole Oriolus oriolus, a Semi-collared Flycatcher Ficedula semitorquata, two Icterine Warblers Hippolais icterina and several Red-throated Pipits Anthus cervinus.

The Kizilirmak Delta possesses a rich variety of habitats, from deciduous woodland to the shore of the Black Sea. Here we saw 20 Dalmation Pelicans Pelicanus crispus, c. 150 Black Storks Ciconia nigra, a Savi's Warbler Locustella fluviatilis and several Red-breasted Flycatchers Ficedula parva on 14 and 15 September.

In total contrast, our next site was at 3000m above sea level, in the Pontic Alps between Rize and Ispir. A pre-dawn start, on 17 September followed by a very steep climb, rewarded us with excellent views of four male Caucasian Black Grouse Tetrao mlokosiewiczi, feeding among Alpine grasses. Higher up, three Caspian Snowcocks Tetraogallus caspius were flushed, and at least four more heard, their calls echoing around the corrie walls. A flock of c.150 Twite Carduelis flavirostris and several Alpine Accentors Prunella collaris were also noted.

In the valley below, a single Marsh Warbler Acrocephalus palustris was found, while 12 Mountain Chiffchaffs Phylloscopus sindianus were located along the edge of the coniferous forest.

On 18 September travelling from Ispir to Erzerum we passed through arid mountains and steppe, seeing a Saker Falco cherrug en-route and large flocks of Rooks Corvus frugilegus feeding in stubble fields.
While exploring the semi-arid steppes north of Arpaçay (50km east of Kars) on 20 September we were surprised to discover a White-winged Lark Melanocorypha leucoptera, feeding with Skylarks Alauda arvensis on cultivated land. This species has only been recorded in Turkey on a few previous occasions.

Further east, Çildir Golu proved disappointing during our visit on 20 and 21 September with few waterfowl except for ten Black-necked Grebes Podiceps nigricollis and c.500 Coot Fulica atra. This was remedied, however, by the discovery of a spectacular rocky gorge 2km north of Çildir. Here our first Red-fronted Serins Serinus pusillus were feeding on thistles Cirsium sp., whilst higher up c.60 Snowfinches Montifringilla nivalis were watched going to roost on sheltered, grassy ledges.

On 23 September at south Van marsh, a Great Snipe Gallinago media was obligingly tame, while the north marsh held a flock of 100 Whiskered and 30 White-winged Black Terns Chlidonias hybridus and C. leucopterus. On arable land east of Van, a fine male Red-tailed Wheatear Oenanthe xanthoprymna was chanced upon.

West of Tatvan the cultivated lower slopes of Nemrüt Dağ were rich in birdlife. Migrants seen on 26 and 27 September included 38 White-tailed Plovers Chettusia leucura (flying south), several Pallid Harriers Circus macrourus, three Quails Coturnix coturnix, and a Wryneck Junx torquilla. Residents included c.40 Short Larks Eremophila alpestris and three Radde's Accentors P. occularis.

West of Diyarbakir we explored the rocky desert landscape of the Karacadag, an igneous plateau surrounded by boulder fields and lava flows, where Finsch's Wheatears O. finschii were common on 28 September.

We stayed at Birecik between 29 September and 1 October highlights being two Striated Scops Owls Otus brucei, five Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters Merops supercilliosus, three Upcher's Warblers H. languida, and at least three Desert Larks Ammomanes deserti. In 1986, 11 young Bald Ibis Geronticus eremita fledged. In late September, 27 captive and seven free-flying birds were present at the breeding centre.

On the Mediterranean coast, the Goksu Delta proved rewarding. A Great White Egret Egretta alba, three Marbled Duck Marmaronetta angustirostris, and two Purple Gallinules Porphyrio porphyrio were found on and around the Golu, while a Red-footed falcon F. vespertinus was observed hawking for insects.

A two-day visit to Cyprus on 9 and 10 October was worthwhile, both for the birds and for the beautiful coastline. We awoke to the calls of Black Francolin Francolinus francolinus, and quickly arose, locating four males on the bushy hillside. Although the Cyprus Pied Wheatear O. cypriaca was conspicuous, the Cyprus Warbler S. melanothorax proved to be rather skulking, but several were eventually found.

On 12 October the saline Külu Golu (Central Plateau) held four White-headed Ducks Oxyura leucocephala. Here we witnessed the shooting of a Greater Flamingo Phoenicopterus ruber by local youths, and the dessicated corpses of many ducks and waders littered the muddy shore.

The next day our final destination was Manyas Golu (Western Anatolia). Unfortunately, most of the summer visitors had departed, but this was compensated for by a flock of over 300 White Pelicans P. onocrotalus.

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HISTORICAL RECORDS OF THE SIBERIAN WHITE CRANE IN TURKEY

Max Kasparek

The Siberian White Crane Grus leucogeranus was not accepted by Kumerloeve (1961) for his avifauna of Turkey. Although he refers to an observation by Danford, he rejected the record without any comment. In a later check-list of the birds of Turkey (Kumerloeve 1966), the same author included the species, but put a question mark by it. From another check-list of the birds of Turkey (Hollom et al 1971) the species was omitted completely. I believe Danford's record should be reconsidered as should another by Sandwith.

At the beginning of April 1879, Danford (1880) spent some days at Ankara. After mentioning some observations of the Partridge Perdix perdix and the Chukar Alextoris chukar, he writes: "We had also the rare opportunity of closely observing a large flock of Cranes Grus leucogeranus. While on an excursion down the river, a large flock of birds was seen wheeling about in a very unsettled way: we at first took them for Storks; but they presently came close enough to show their very distinctive markings, and further down the stream a flock was met with feeding on a field of sprouting corn. There must have been about a hundred, moving slowly and regularly in compact body. One of our party made a careful stalk to within a hundred and fifty yards; but the ball from the smooth-bore struck the ground just in advance of them, and so a fine chance was lost; nor did we encounter them again".

From Danford's description, the record should be beyond doubt, even though no specimen was collected. The Siberian White Crane is unmistakable at close range and the general appearance at any distance

resembles the White Stork Ciconia ciconia. I therefore believe that this record should be accepted.

Sandwith (1856) saw the species in the plain of Erzurum, at the marshes of the River Karasu, one of the contributaries of the River Euphrates. In September 1854, he saw a group of 4 or 5 birds and later on the same day another group of 20 individuals. Out of these, he shot one which weighed 15lbs. He describes the 'wild strange voice' of the birds which 'harmonizes with the wildness of the locality'. Local people were able to recognise the species by its voice alone and told Sandwith that it was impossible to hunt because of its shyness.

The species is referred to as 'Silberkranich' by Sandwich making a definite species identification and the weight of the shot specimen also fits. Sandwith continued his description of the plain of Erzurum with the Demoiselle Crane Anthropoides virgo of which, he said, "smaller, much more beautiful, exceeding fine taste and extremely rare".

The Siberian White Crane has a disjunct breeding range, with one breeding colony in north western Siberia and one in north eastern Siberia. The north western breeding area is confined to the area of the Lower Ob River. This population winters in Iran and perhaps in Transcaspia (see map in Dement'ev & Gladkov 1951). On the southern shores of the Caspian Sea, the species has been recorded several times, but only a few records are from this century (Schüz 1959). A population decline is reflected by the number of records in the winter quarters. This fact also can explain the Turkish situation: in former times the country was within the wintering range of the species, but the virtual extinction of the western population of the Siberian White Crane makes it unlikely to be recorded again in Turkey. Migration takes place mainly in April and September (Dement'ev & Gladkov 1951). The two records in Turkey fit well into this pattern: Sandwith's observation is from September, Danford's record from April.

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A WINTER ROOST OF PALLID SWIFTS IN CENTRAL CAIRO

Ted Flaxman

On 11th February 1987 I located a roost of Pallid Swifts Apus pallidus in central Cairo.

I had suspected the presence of this winter roost since 11 November 1978, when I saw about 400 swifts wheeling and rising rapidly over the same area at 0655: they rose out of sight (to the naked eye) within a few minutes. On the two succeeding mornings I saw similar departures; c.500 swifts at 0708 on 12 November and c.200 swifts at 0705 on 13 November 1978. I did not discover where the birds came from.

In December 1986 and January 1987 I again saw swifts in the same central area of Cairo, just south of Tahrir Square, on several occasions around dawn and dusk, the largest number being c.200 on the evening of 21st December. Each evening the swift numbers diminished rapidly at around 1700 but I could not tell where the birds were going. In the mornings, which were often cool and misty, single birds and small parties of 2-4 swifts, left the area, flying purposefully to the west, at irregular times between 0700 and 0815.

Only on the (very clear) evening of 21 December did I see any of these swifts well enough to be sure of the species: on that evening I saw seven birds close enough to be sure that they were all Pallid Swifts.

On the evening of 11 February I managed to be in the Tahrir Square area on foot and found c.70 swifts dashing low around the old Coptic church at the back of the Mogamma Building. I watched this area from 1730 onwards and at 1739 saw two swifts fly up into the tops of window openings on the Mogamma Building and vanish. By 1745 I had seen five swifts fly up into window openings and disappear: these openings were at various levels ranging from the 3rd to the 9th floor. I counted another 18 swifts going to roost in this manner during the next seven minutes.

By 1752 there were no swifts left in the air and I had counted 23 going to roost: many more must have done so uncounted because it was difficult to follow the movements of many birds during periods of rapid dashing flight close to the building. On the following morning I returned to the same place just after dawn, arriving at 0710. By then c.30 swifts were dashing around the Coptic church and c.50 more were over Tahrir Square. By 0716 there were few swifts flying nearby: between then and 0719 I saw two swifts leave the building silently. At 0720 a small party of swifts returned and flew close to the back of the Mogamma Building and I was able to identify three of them as Pallid Swifts. By

0722 there were c.30 swifts high over the area, but none at low level, and observations terminated.

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A BREEDING RECORD OF THE GREATER SAND PLOVER IN SYRIA

Dr S Bottema

Accordingly to BWP volume 3 there are no certain records of the Greater Sand Plover Charadrius leschenaultii breeding in Syria, though two probable breeding records are mentioned for 1952 and 1954. In May 1967 I was working at the oasis of El Kaum in Central Syria and learnt from local residents of some lakes lying to the west of the oasis that held water only during part of the year. I visited the lakes of Bahriyet el Qdeir and Mimlahat-El Kaum and in the shallow water at the latter found pairs and small groups of Greater Sand Plovers. At that time the Mimlahat measured 4 km^2 but would obviously shrink as the hot summer progressed. The lake was very shallow - I walked about 20m out into the lake, but the water still did not get into my shoes.

The southern edge was rather inaccessible as a steep stone edge bordered the water. The northern edge was bordered by low dunes carrying a vegetation mainly consisting of Chenopodiaceae such as Salsola. When approached the Greater Sand Plovers flew away to settle again after a plaintive peeping sound. When I walked along the edge of the water I found about 15 birds. Pairs occurred about every 500m. On the whole lake some 20-30 pairs may have been present, calculating from the available habitat.

On the way back we drove over the low dunes, some 50m from the Mimlahat. On a flat area in between the dunes a Greater Sand Plover suddenly appeared in front of the car performing a distraction display. It kept the wings spread out and the tail was opened like a fan showing black and white. We stopped immediately and I found a nest a few metres in front of the car. It contained three eggs one of which measured 40 x 29mm. The shallow scrape was lined with small pieces of silt, small 'polygones", that had been formed when the silt on the flat dried out. It would seem that this is the first record of certain breeding of this species in Syria.

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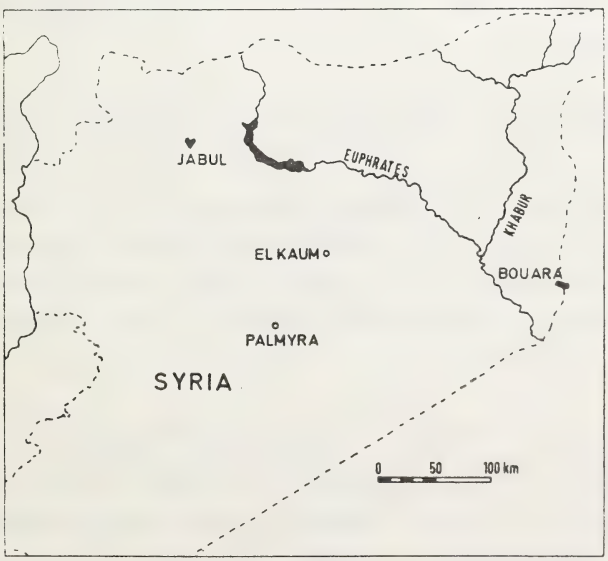
Fig 1.



Map of Syria showing position of the oasis, El Kaum

THE NILE VALLEY SUNBIRD IN EGYPT

Stan Howe

The Nile Valley Sunbird Anthreptes metallicus is a common resident in the grounds of the Movenpick Hotel on Crocodile Island, some 5km south of Luxor in Upper Egypt.

In spring and early summer I have heard small parties moving about the inner branches of the deep-green leaved acacias which line the river banks of the island. The yellow flowers of the acacias clearly provide nectar for the sunbirds.

An interesting interaction with another common resident has been observed, which may account for the sunbirds staying within the canopy notwithstanding the many attractive blooms on the outer twigs. Inside the foliage the reduced light and the similarity of colour between the sunbirds and the tree make it difficult to discern them as anything more than silhouettes.

On each occasion that a sunbird was seen to emerge onto an exposed blossom, it was summarily attacked and sent scurrying back into cover by a Little Green Bee-eater Merops orientalis. The bee-eaters would be hawking insects from a nearby vantage point on a bush or overhead wires, but on seeing a sunbird on the acacia flower it would immediately fly at it; and thereafter do its next few hawking sallies from the very spot the sunbird had vacated.

I noted this behaviour on several occasions and on successive days. Since both species live and breed on the island in close juxtapposition it must be a well-developed accommodation for A. metallicus to stay indoors when M. orientalis is abroad.

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SOME COMMENTS ON TURKISH BIRD SANCTUARIES

H. Kummerloeve

Nearly fifty years ago, in spring 1938 Curt Kosswig (at that time Director of the Zoological Institute of Istanbul University) was carrying out hydrobiological studies at Manyas Gölü (NW-Anatolia) and witnessed the way in which the many herons, Glossy Ibises, Spoonbills, Cormorants, Pygmy Cormorants, terns etc., breeding at the lake, were persecuted and killed by the local people. After many years of hard work he succeeded in saving this site which became the first Turkish bird sanctuary and is now protected by the local people and the government and is generally called "Kus Cenneti" (Bird Paradise). In spring 1953, following an invitation from Prof. Kosswig, I was pleased to find c.800-1000 pairs of Spoonbills, c.900 pairs of Grey Herons, c.800 pairs of Night Herons, c.600 pairs of Little Egrets, c.150 pairs of Squacco Herons and a
similar number of Glossy Ibises, c.300 pairs of Cormorants, c.100 pairs Pygmy Cormorants, c.20 pairs of Little Bittern (the Bittern remained doubtful), many Black-winged Stilts and various other species.

While Kosswig, the discoverer and founder of the Sanctuary, remained closely involved with it, ornithological studies were not his main interest - this was the study of genetics and ichthyology. To describe him as "Altmeister der türkischen Ornithologie" (Oldmaster of Turkish ornithology) (cf. Kasparek 1985) is quite erroneous: the real oldmasters in Turkey included H. E. Strickland (1836/42), Comte A. Alléon (1866/98), Th. Krüper (1860/75) and Ch. Danford (1877/80). Only three short reports on the Kus Cenneti were published by Kosswig himself (1950, 1954 and 1956). His wife Leonore wrote a report on the results of her ringing of breeding birds in the sanctuary (1973). Further information was given by Kumerloeve (1955), Schüz (1957), Gürpinar (1967, 1968,1975) and Géroudet (1977).

During the 1960's I made proposals for further sanctuaries: the Akşehir Gölü/Eber Gölü complex (Kumerloeve 1964), the important Burdur Gölü (K. 1964), some areas of Van Gölü (K. 1969) and the wonderful Amik Gölü near the Syrian border (1963, 1966/67) now tragically destroyed. In spite of long discussions at ministerial level, none of these proposals had a chance to be realised in those years. It was therefore very important and pleasing when a second bird sanctuary Sultansazlığı (Sultan Marshes, Sultanssümpfe) was created within the inner-Anatolian plain south of Kayseri and in the neighbourhood of the Erciyas Dagi. This was described in Azmaz (1977), Anonymus (1977), Matthews (1978), Bezzel (1980), Akçakaya & Bilgin (1982), Bilgin (1983), Akçakaya, Baris & Bilgin (1983), Serez (1984) and in other notes. In 1985 Kasparek produced a work on the scientific significance of the new bird sanctuary, in collaboration with other interested people. In Collar's review (1986) only "a certain laxity in the accuracy of scientific names" was objected to, due the fact, that the scientific names of 14 species (Red-necked Grebe, Cormorant, Night Heron, Pallid Harrier, Osprey, Temminck's Stint, Whimbrel, Common Sandpiper, Syrian Woodpecker, Crag Martin, Black Tern, White-winged Black Tern, Whiskered Tern and Corn Bunting) are not correct and that of the White-headed Duck Oxyura leucocephala has apparently been missed out. I should like to add that Prof. Dr. Curt Kosswig's name (p. 10) has been quoted as K. Cosswig and that the name of the excellent Anatolia-explorer Ch. Danford (1877/80) has been confused (p.9) three times with the name of the similarly excellent mammalogist W. T. Blanford who was active in India, Persia etc. about the same time but was never in Turkey.

On the whole the information put together by the author is certainly a good base for future research on the biological value of the Sultan Marshes, whose full significance was realized only in the late 1960's and early 1970's. Kasparek only began in late 1979, a relatively short time for such an 'all-round' task. About 67 pages (of 155) are devoted to Birds and bird protection, only 5 to mammals (surely too few?), 6 to

reptiles/amphibians, 1 to fishes and about 6 to molluscs, dragonflies etc. No less interesting are the chapters on anthropogene influences and threats (human population, economic situation etc.). While it is not yet a real "natural history", it is an important contribution to it and I should like to see a comparable publication for Manyas Gölü.

Because of the rapid changes in the ecosphere of Anatolia it seems more necessary than ever to save what is left of the endemic fauna and flora; by creating more sanctuaries on governmental orders. I shall be very happy to make urgent proposals to the Turkish government and to the relevant ministry!

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NEWS AND INFORMATION (Compiled by Simon Albrecht)

More Native Language Popular Bird Books

ICBP's Migratory Committee continues to produce these introductory books which play an important role in local conservation education. The books not only give the identity with colour plates of over 100 local birds but also explain how to encourage birds to feed and nest in gardens and the importance of conserving bird habitats.

The latest book in preparation is for Jordan in conjunction with the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature in Jordan. It is being partly funded by a generous grant from the York Members' Group of the British Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). This international co-operation to promote conservation of the world's birds is very welcome

ICCE

The International Centre for Conservation Education exists to promote greater understanding of conservation and the environment, and stresses the importance of sustainable development. The wide range of skills and services offered represents the culmination of more than a decade of

direct involvement with conservation education programmes in developing countries. They include:

advisory and consultancy services on all matters relating to the establishment and management of national conservation education programmes;

specialised training for conservation education educators, particularly those working in developing countries;

the provision of appropriate, low-cost educational materials using the wide range of technical facilities and expertise available at the Centre as well as a wide range of audio-visual presentations, posters, wallcharts, leaflets and books.

ICCE has had experience throughout the world including the Middle East.

For further information write to: The Director, International Centre for Conservation Education, Greenfield House, Guiting Power, Cheltenham, GL54 5TZ, Great Britain. Telephone 045-15 549. Telex 43670 EUROCP G.

ICBP Flying Visitors Wallchart

The English edition of this excellent poster has already been produced and the French and Arabic editions are in production and should be available later this year. The attractive wallchart (60 x 80 cm) illustrates some common migrant birds, the routes they follow from Europe to Africa including some important routes through the Middle East, and some of the threats that they face on their journey. Overleaf detailed information is given on the phenomenom of bird migration, the major threats and the work of the international conservation community working for the conservation of migratory birds.

This is a poster that should be displayed in every school from Arctic Norway through Turkey and Arabia to the Cape of Good Hope in the South of Africa. It is thoroughly recommended both to those who like bird posters and to those concerned with bird conservation and education.

The posters are available at £2.50 each from ICBP, 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 ODI, Great Britain.

Two New Publications on the Zoology of the Middle East

1986 saw the publication of two new series of books likely to be of interest to birdwatchers active in the Middle East. The first is entitled Zoology in the Middle East: Volume 1 and is edited by R. Kinzelbach and M. Kasparek. It is written in English and 50 of it's 160 pages deal with birds and contain a variety of papers about different species. A full review of this book will appear in the next bulletin. The book costs DM 35.00 and can be obtained from Max Kasparek, Bleichstrasse 1, D-6900 Heidelberg, West Germany.

The second series is entitled Zoological Bibliography of Turkey and the first volume covers fish, amphibians and reptiles. We assume that a future volume will cover birds. The text is in English and German and the first volume runs to 118 pages. It is also edited by Max Kasparek and copies can be obtained from him for DM 24.50.

Teaching Conservation

This is the title of the Proceedings of a Seminar on Teaching Conservation Overseas edited by Simon Albrecht and Janet Seeley. The seminar was held in Cambridge, England in September 1986 with the objective of bringing together conservationists, teachers and examiners

so that each could hear the others point of view and discuss together ways of improving the conservation content of 'O' and 'A' level examinations. It is hoped that this book will be of value to all those interested in the expanding field of conservation and education. The book (106 pages, illustrations and bibliography) is available from ICBP, 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL, Great Britain. Price £5.00 surface mail and £5.80 airmail.

Year of the Raptor

The World Working Group on Birds of Prey has declared the year from March 1987 as the International Year of the Raptor. The start of the year coincides with the Third World Conference on Birds of Prey held in Israel in March 1987 (see Bull. 17: 29). The object is to boost protection and increase awareness of birds of prey through an extensive education campaign in co-operation with conservation organisations throughout the world. Booklets, slides, films and videos will be produced with profits going to raptor research and education projects. Further information is available from Ms E. Gorney, Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel, Information Centres Department, 4 Hashfela Street, Tel Aviv 66183, Israel.

OSME Sites Register Scheme - Oman

Work has begun on cataloguing sites of special ornithological interest in the Sultanate of Oman, and the Oman Bird Record Committee (OBRC, PO Box 246, Muscat) invites contributions from observers.

Proposals for a system of nature conservation areas in Oman are to be presented to the Government soon following a detailed 18-month survey by IUCN. The proposals will include sites of ornithological importance so the completion of the OBRC catalogue will await the proposals' publication.

Cyprus: Lake Akrotiri - Wildlife, Sewage and Development

After three years of discussion and enquiry it is still not clear whether this important salt lake will have the protection it deserves. It is of global importance as a staging post for tens of thousands of migrating birds and is an important wintering area for Greater Flamingos Phoenicopterus ruber and wildfowl. Plans to put a sewage works next to the lake are in the balance while a report from the Thames Water Authority (UK) on a number of possible sites is awaited. Whatever the outcome of the report it is to be hoped that any planned development in the area will safeguard the lake's water supply and purity so that the area is maintained and improved for wildlife.

Wildlife in Bahrain

The fourth edition of this useful publication has recently been produced. It contains the Bahrain Bird Report for 1982 - 1984 and also a chapter on the Desert Wildflowers of Bahrain and a checklist of wildflower species. This edition of Wildlife in Bahrain is available from OSME Sales price £7.00 surface mail and £9.00 airmail.

Cyprus - 1.6 million birds killed illegally in 1986

The illegal use of limesticks and mist nets to catch migrant passerines for food is still common in the Republic of Cyprus according to a report in preparation by ICBP*. This trapping is particularly bad in the areas of Paralimni and Ayios Theodhoros where Blackcap Sylvia atricapilla is the main species affected. Although wild birds have been legally protected since 1974 the law is openly violated with local festivals "celebrating" the Blackcap catch each autumn. Indeed a police chief is quoted as saying "Liming is illegal yet not illegal since the local people make their own laws".

ICBP have already expressed their concern to the Cyprus government and are following this up with an extensive education programme this spring in conjunction with the International Youth Federation for Environmental and Conservation Studies. This includes posters and literature which will go to each school, slide shows, organised bird watching and extensive publicity. We wish the programme well and urge the Cyprus Government to ensure that the law is enforced.

*The Report on the illegal shooting and trapping of birds in Cyprus is available from ICBP, 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL, Great Britain. Price £4.00.

Proposed Reserve for Akamas Peninsula, Cyprus

The Akamas Peninsula in north west Cyprus is an important staging post for migrating birds and for Griffon Vultures Gyps fulvus. The area is currently threatened by major tourist development but conservationists have suggested that a 2000 HA Forest Park Reserve be established to protect the area.

Turkish Goldfinches

On 9 January 1987 Customs Officers at Heathrow Airport, London apprehended a man entering the country from Turkey. Concealed in his luggage in specially constructed cages were approximately 100 Goldfinches Carduelis carduelis which he was attempting to illegally import. It was believed that they were wild birds which had been trapped in Turkey. The birds were seized by Customs and were placed in a quarantine centre at Heathrow. It is understood that criminal charges are to be instigated against the person responsible.

Customs solicited the assistance of the RSPB in an attempt to 'repatriate' the birds of Turkey and a joint operation between the RSPB

and the Dogal Hayati Koruma Dernegi (The Turkish Society for the Protection of Wildlife) took place. British Airways agreed to return the birds to Turkey free of charge and arrangements were made for a representative of the DHKD to collect the birds from Istanbul Airport. The birds were collected on 29 January 1987 and were successfully returned to the wild shortly afterwards. Turkish Customs formalities had to be complied with, and the assistance of the Turkish Consulate in London was sought by RSPB staff to ensure that these requirements were completed correctly.

This matter is still sub-judice and although full details of the arrest and motives of the person responsible cannot be reported it is pleasing to see that international co-operation between two concerned Societies can result in some good coming from a selfish and illegal act.

Turkey - Three important developments for Conservation

Dogal Hayati Koruma Dernegi

It has long been recognised that Dogal Hayati Koruma Dernegi (DHKD - The Society for the Protection of Wildlife) does an important and excellent job in promoting conservation in Turkey. They are now in a position where they can expand both their membership and activities thanks to funds raised by ICBP to support two full-time co-ordinators over a three year period. The co-ordinators will be responsible for increasing the membership and publicity of the Society and to oversee the field work projects that have been initiated (see below).

Important Bird Areas Project

The Important Bird Areas in Turkey Project (see Bull 17: 24-28) is now established and financially secure thanks to a large grant from the

World Wildlife Fund and smaller grants from elsewhere including OSME. The main objective is to publish an attractively illustrated report on Important Bird Areas in Turkey. This report, in Turkish with an extensive English summary, will have an account for each site which will concentrate on the ornithological importance with information on habitat, land use, protection status, and potential threats. The Turkish co-ordinator, Asef Ertan, will collect and collate information in Turkey while Aygun Kilic-Kasparek and Max Kasparek will be responsible for collating information outside Turkey. Work has already started and it is intended that the report should be published by March of next year.

Konya-Eregli Marshes

The series of marshes near Eregli in Konya province are amongst the most important wetland sites in Europe. They hold important numbers of breeding White Pelican Pelicanus onocrotalus and Dalmation Pelican P. crispus. These marshes are now under serious threat from a proposed NATO airbase which could have an exclusion zone of up to 400 sq. km.

ICBP and DHKD will carry out an extensive survey of the area in May and June this year. They will then publish a report in English and Turkish to promote the conservation of the area. A final decision on the airbase is expected in early 1989.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Amongst the literature received for the OSME Archives during the last 6 months have been the following items:

Checklist Israel 1986 by Marc Raes, Dullingen 40, B213U Brassmaat, Belgium.

This is a privately produced report summarising observations made during the period 28 September - 12 October as part of a trip organised by the CCBV (Belgium Bird Protection organisation).

Oman Bird List compiled under the direction of the Oman Bird Records Committee.

A 15 page cyclostyled report summarising the status of all bird species reported as occurring in Oman. Notes are given on the more interesting records but the majority of species are simply referred back to the Birds of Oman and Tuyur Oman.

From the accompanying correspondence it is unclear if this list will be generally available, therefore we suggest that anyone interested in obtaining a copy contact Prof. Hilary Fry, Dept of Biology, Sultan Qaboos University, PO Box 32486, Al Khoudh, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman.

White-throated Robin Irania gutturalis Breeding in Northern Iraq by Pacel Ctyroky

A reprint from the Bull Iraq Nat Hist Mus Vol V, No 3 (1972) documenting the first breeding record for this species in Iraq in the mountainous region of Iraqi Kurdistan.

Ergebnisse Ornithologischer Beobachtungen in Der Syrischen Arabischen Republik. Teil 1: Non-passeriformes by Wolfgang Baumgart and Burkhard Stephan.

A reprint from Mitt Zool Mus Berl 62 (1986) Suppl: Ann Orn 10 summarising records of non-passerine species recorded mainly in the period May 1980 - December 1983, together with earlier published records where available. German text with English Abstract.

Cyprus Ornithological Society Annual Report 1983 edited by C J L Bennett

A very well produced and readable report covering bird records for 1983. Additional copies may be available from Mr Bennett, PO Box 4319, Nicosia, Cyprus.

Djibouti II Autumn '85 by Geoff & Hilary Welch, 21a East Delph, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire PE7 1RH, Great Britain.

A privately published 200 page report covering the work of the Djibouti II Expedition of October and November 1985. It contains sections on Raptor Migration, Forét du Day, Bankoualé Palm, Djibouti Francolin, Arabian Bustards and a new sub-species of Pytilia together with a systematic list of birds and mammals recorded.

A limited number of copies are available from the authors price £4.00 or £6.00 airmail. (If non-sterling cheques are sent, please add £3.00 to cover bank charges.)

Midwinter Waterfowl Census - Turkey January 1986 by L. J. Dijksen and F. J. Koning

This 88 page report presents the results of a WIWO (International Working Group for Wader and Waterfowl Research) census carried out in January 1986. Reviews of previous counts are also included.

Copies are available from the WIWO for Dfl 10.00 which should be paid in to postal giro account 2.666.009 of "Stichting WIWO", Ewijk, Netherlands or to ABN bank account number 57.02.16.613 of Stichting WIWO, Ewijk, Netherlands.

Birdwatching in Israel and adjacent areas, 1972-85 by Lars Norgaard Anderson

A 116 page booklet summarising the results of nine birdwatching trips made to Israel by the author and friends. The bulk of the booklet is a detailed systematic list.

Copies are available from the Danish Ornithological Society - "DOF-salg", Vesterbrogade 140, DK-1620, Kbh. V, Denmark; price 75 Danish Kroner. Please send payment in Danish Kroner or pay the equivalent into Postal Giro Account 7 1661 41.

We are extremely grateful to everyone who has contributed material to the Archives - please keep up the good work! Any unpublished observations from the Middle East are an exceedingly valuable addition to the Archives.

REVIEWS

Studies on the Tihamah: the report of the Tihamah expedition 1982 and related papers. Edited by Francine Stone. Longman 1985. Price £25.

If you pick up this scholarly book and skim through it, looking at the marvellous drawings and paintings, you are instantly enthralled by a culture that you long to experience. You are not instantly aware that the temperature could be soaring to 120° or more, and that you could be dripping with perspiration in a humidity that frequently exceeds 95%. I have experienced that wall of heat as one comes off the mountain roads and enters the Tihamah strip that runs along the Red Sea coast of the Yemen Arab Republic. Yet it is so easy to overlook when reading this beautifully presented and artistically exciting work.

The 1982 Tihamah expedition was multi-disciplinary, its team worked collaboratively on providing a digest of the history, geology, architecture, music, ethnography and natural history of this little known region of the world. You will find things on fish curing, costumes, furniture, the silk trade, the Turkish invasions, the valley forest plant communities and of course birds. There are so many facts

supported by truly wonderful illustrations (not a photograph in sight) yet the imaginative presentation never leaves you bewildered, you want to keep moving from page to page.

The people of Yemen are super, I wish I lived in such an exciting culture that a group of people wanted to travel to study my way of life.

Richard Porter

The Birds of Israel by Uzi Paz. Photographs by Yossi Eshbol. 1987. Christopher Helm, London. 264 pages. 60 colour photographs, 29 line drawings and 1 map. Price £19.95.

Uzi Paz's book on the Birds of Israel was originally written in Hebrew for a series of volumes entitled 'Plants and Animals of the Land of Israel: An Illustrated Encyclopedia' and was aimed at Israeli naturalists. This version has been translated into English by Philip Simpson and then edited by Chris Harbard and David Christie. The result is a very readable account of Israel's birdlife containing a wealth of information of interest to anyone who has visited or is planning to visit Israel to watch birds.

The bulk of the book (242 pages) consists of a detailed systematic list of all the species recorded in Israel up to the end of 1984. Each species account contains a lot of background information about the bird including a description, it's world range and migration patterns and it's habits. These paragraphs are often longer than those about the species in Israel presumably because of the books original purpose. Because of this some of the Israeli information lacks the kind of detail I would have liked to find, for example I was interested to know how early in the spring Marsh Warblers arrive in Israel. All the book tells

me is that "In Israel the Marsh Warbler is a fairly rare spring passage migrant, more common in autumn". No other information relating to Israel is given at all. Surely with all the ringing that has taken place in Elat over the last ten years it would have been possible to give more specific information about periods of passage?

Perhaps I was unlucky in choosing that species to look at. Certainly passage periods are given for other acrocephalus warblers such as Reed and Sedge and for real rarities (such as Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler and Booted Warbler) specific dates are given. However, I still feel that the reader that the English edition of this book is aimed at would have preferred less general 'world' information and more specific Israeli information. I haven't been able to find any real errors in the text, the only point worth mentioning being the unfortunate transposition of the captions to the photographs of Eagle Owl and Little Owl, something that will be obvious to all but the absolute beginner.

The colour photographs by Yossi Eshbol are quite superb and my only regret is that there aren't more of them, but then I suppose that would have pushed the price of the book up still higher. The book also contains an introduction which looks at each group of birds in an Israeli context, a guide to birdwatching sites, a bibliography and an index.

It is certainly a great advance on anything previously available on the birds of Israel and with the tremendous growth in the number of foreign birdwatchers now visiting that country will be a very useful book to take along. Fortunately it is neither too bulky nor too heavy and I would encourage birdwatchers to purchase a copy and to refer to it during their visits as well as before and afterwards.

David Fisher

IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS OF TURKEY

1987 is a vital year for this project and all visitors to Turkey are urged to send in records without delay. These can either be sent to OSME or to the address below. In addition to the sites listed in Bulletin 17: 26-27, information is needed on Turkey's National Parks. The information on the National Parks has been provided by the Protected Areas Data Unit of the Conservation Monitoring Centre of IUCN, Cambridge, UK and any information supplied will be used to update their files in addition to any use in the above project.

Turkey's National Parks are:

NAME	REGION	PROVINCE	ROAD NO.	AREA HA.	CHARACTER
Yozgat Camligi	Cent. Anatolia	Yozgat	E23	264	Flora & Fauna
Karatepe-Aslantas	E. Mediterr	Adana	E5,47	2215	Flora
Soguksu	Cent. Anatolia	Ankara	E5	1050	Flora
Kuscenneti	Marmara	Balikesir	15	64	Ornithological
Uludag	Marmara	Bursa	2	11338	Geology & Flora
Yedigoller	N. Anatolia	Zonguldak	E5,35	2019	Flora & Fauna
Dilek Yarimadasi	W. Aegean	Aydin	E24, 30	10985	Flora, Fauna & Geology
Spil Dagi	W. Aegean	Manisa	E23	5505	Geology & Fauna
Kizildag	S. Anatolia	Isparta	E24	550	Flora
Termessos	Mediterr.	Antalya	E24	6702	Flora & Fauna
Kovada	S. Anatolia	Isparta	E24	6534	Flora & Fauna
Munsur Vadisi	E. Anatolia	Tunceli	E391	42000	Flora, Fauna & Geology

Olimpos-Beydaglari	Mediterr.	Antalya	E24	69800	Geology & Fauna
Gelibolu Yarimadasi	Marmara	Canakkale	E24	33000	Historical
Koprulu Kanyon	Mediterr.	Antalya	E24	36614	Geology & Fauna
Ilgas Dagi	N. Cent. Anatolia	Kastamonu	39	1088	Flora
Baskomzitan	Cent. Anatolia	Afyon-Kutahya	650-300	35500	Historical
Goreme Capadocia	Cent. Anatolia	Nevsehir	765-300	9572	Geology & Historical

Please send information to: Richard Grimmett, ICBP, 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge, CB3 ODL, Great Britain.

THE CONDITION OF FORESTS IN TURKEY

Simon Albrecht.

After wetlands, forests are perhaps the most important and vulnerable natural habitat in Turkey. These forests are relatively unexplored and contain a number of species which are rare at least in Turkey. During 1976 - 1978 I noted extensive tree felling with little sign of replanting in the provinces of Bolu and Zonguldak in the Western Black Sea region. In this same area I found the first breeding record of Red-breasted Flycatcher Ficedula parva for Turkey and the most westerly site (by some 800 km) of Green Warbler Phylloscopus nitidus (See Sandgrouse 3: 91 and 6: 69 respectively).

Further enquiries reveal that logging continues in this area with serious soil erosion and is also widespread in the rest of Turkey. However there are signs of replanting in other areas but often without sufficient protection from grazing sheep and goats. It is important to know the true status of forests in Turkey so that they can be given

protection before it is too late. Please send any relevant information (both positive and negative) together with any bird list to Simon Albrecht, c/o OSME.

OMAN WAHIBA SANDS PROJECT 1985/86 (contributed by M D Gallagher)
This ambitious expedition covered a diverse sand sea the size of Wales over a period of four months from December 1985 to March 1986 and involved 32 research projects in three teams - the geomorphologists, the biologists and the team studying the indigenous communities, their economy and development.

The biological team included an ecologist, botanists, an ornithologist and an entomologist, also a mammalogist and other specialists. Reptiles and other groups were monitored so that as complete a picture as possible would be obtained of the biological resources of this unique area.

Nearly 90 species of bird were seen in the sands and along its coastal and inland borders. Although very few are true desert-adapted species, it was found that many are able to penetrate the area along belts of the ghaf or Prosopis tree, which is truly the "tree of life" to the pastorialists who live here. It was amongst these trees that many species were found migrating or nesting, such species as Turtle Dove and Bruce's Scops Owl in a significant extension of the previously known breeding range in Oman.

Many of the scientific results will be presented at a symposium, to be held in the new Sultan Qaboos University in April 1987, and published in a Journal of Oman Studies special volume. It is very pleasing to note the tremendous support and encouragement given by the Omanis at every stage of this joint Oman/Royal Geographical Society Project.

RECENT CHANGES OF ADDRESS

The following groups have recently changed their addresses to:

Cyprus Ornithological Society (1957), PO, Box 4319, Nicosia, Cyprus.

Ornithological Society of Egypt, Dr Moustfa Fouda, Department of Zoology, Al Azhar University, Nasr City, Cairo, Egypt.

REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

Register of Seabird Researchers in the Mediterranean

Following the First Mediterranean Seabird Symposium held in Alghero, Sardinia, Italy in March last year, the organiser of "Medmaravis" (Mediterranean Marine Bird Association) is compiling a Register of Seabird Researchers working in the Mediterranean Sea. The register will be made available to other workers and institutions. The benefits of such a register include greater liaison, avoidance of duplication and increased participation in census and atlas work.

Anyone wishing to register should write to Andrew Paterson, Edificio San Gabriel, 2-4° - A, c/ Escritor Adolfo Reyes, 29620 Torremolinos, (Malaga), Spain.

Status of Grey Hypocolius in the Middle East

Information is required on the status and distribution of the Grey Hypocolius Hypocollus ampelinus in the Middle East, especially in Iraq and Iran but also records since 1980 from the Arabian Peninsula including the Gulf States. Any records from Syria, Jordan or Israel are also welcome. The information is required for the production of a paper on the species. Information, which will be acknowledged, should be

sent to Tom Nightingale, Operations Department, Gulf Air, PO Box 5246, Bahrain.

COLOUR-MARKED WADERS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

In order to estimate the importance of the eastern Mediterranean wetlands for waders wintering in Africa and the Middle East, several wader species were colour-marked during expeditions last winter in Africa and will be this spring in Greece and Turkey.

Visitors to the eastern Mediterranean are therefore requested to pay special attention to the following wader species:

Ruff Philomachus pugnax, Black-tailed Godwit Limosa limosa, Dunlin Calidris alpina, Little Stint Calidris minuta and Curlew Sandpiper Calidris ferrguinea.

These species have been colour-dyed (yellow, red or blue) in combination with (or without) temporary leg-flags, positioned around the metal ring (left or right, on or above tarsus). We would be very grateful to receive observations, with date, locality and possibly the number of unmarked individuals. Records should be sent to Chris Thomas, University of Durham, Dept of Zoology, South Road, Durham DH1 3LE, Great Britain.

GOING TO EGYPT?

Derek Evans, a British birdwatcher resident in Cairo since last September, has written to us offering to help any birdwatchers visiting Egypt for the first time. He can be contacted at the British

International School, PO Box 137, Brasil Street, Zamalek, Gezira, Cairo, Egypt.

SOUTH TURKEY WADER AND WATERFOWL PROJECT

Huge numbers of birds migrate through Asia Minor, between the northern breeding grounds in Eurasia and the wintering quarters in Africa and the Middle East. The successful migration of waders and waterfowl depends on the availability of wetlands. Such areas can for instance be found on the south coast of Turkey, especially in the deltas of the rivers Tarsus, Seyhan and Ceyhan: up to 600 km^2 of wetlands and dunecoast with sheltered lagoons and grazed salt marshes fringed with mudflats.

As a result of preliminary surveys in autumn '85 and spring '86 these deltas were selected for a wader and waterfowl study project in spring '87.

We'll be in this area for ten weeks between March and May 1987:

* to determine the importance of the deltas for migrating waders and waterfowl in spring,
* to estimate the relative importance of the Mid Eurasian Flyway in spring for waders which use the East Atlantic Flyway in autumn and winter, and
* to determine the distribution and densities of breeding birds in the deltas and to survey the numbers and dispersion of migrating passerines and local wildlife.

The fieldwork will focus on three major topics:

1. regular counts of waders, including the Göksu delta,

2. trapping of waders and passerines to collect biometric data and quantifying turnover, and
3. general census of breeding birds and local wildlife, mainly mammals.

This project is one of the WIWO* activities and is being run in cooperation with Dogal Hayati Koruma Dernegi (The Society for the Protection of Wildlife, Bebek, Istanbul).

It will try to integrate and summarize all available data, together with the results of the expedition in one report to demonstrate the importance of the deltas for Nature Conservation in Turkey and Western Europe.

We ask all people who have visited or will visit these deltas in the near future to contact Mr Vincent van den Berk, Noordereind 3a, 4012 BT Kerk-Avezaath, the Netherlands, who will supply them with maps of the deltas on the route they took/are taking and in return will ask for the dates of their visits and a summary of their observations.

* WIWO stands for Dutch Working Groups for International Wader and Waterfowl Research. This foundation was foundered in 1983 to unite the activities of various Dutch ornithological expeditions to Southern Europe and Western Africa and, building on the growing organizational and scientific experience, promote new scientific activities in these and other areas. The WIWO does not want to be a co-ordinating overall organization, but aims to carry out the actual fieldwork and subsequent analysis of data.

RESEARCH PROJECT ON BIRD MIGRATION ACROSS THE SAHARA DESERT

This project which planned to study bird migration across the Sahara has been cancelled for political reasons.

Everybody, who was engaged in any way in the preparational work, will understand our disappointment about the failure of this project. Many of those who supported us will be disappointed personally. We deeply regret the present situation. However, we have not only to accept, but should also try to understand the decision taken by the Ministry of Defence of a country with a very difficult political situation at this time.

I would like to make a final, sincere 'thank you' to all who supported or encouraged us during 1985 and 1986.

Dr B Bruderer, Migration Department, Swiss Ornithological Institute, CH-6204 Sempach, Switzerland.

PHOENIX 3

With this issue comes a complimentary copy of Phoenix 3 - an annual newsletter about the Arabian Atlas Project. OSME has given this publication financial support and would recommend anyone interested in Arabia (whether they can supply records or not) to consider taking it. The Co-ordinator, Mike Jennings (a member of OSME Council) would be particularly pleased to hear from anyone who has old records or is currently working in Arabia. His address is Moonraker Cottage, 1 Eastcourt, Burbage, Nr Marlborough, Wiltshire SN8 3AG, Great Britain.

ICBP

The conservation work of the International Council for Bird Preservation is of great importance. OSME is proud of its links with ICBP and has recently donated £400 to ICBP's Important Bird Areas project for the work that will be undertaken in Turkey. We now have pleasure in enclosing a leaflet outlining its worldwide work in bird protection and habitat conservation. We urge members to support it. The address for further details is ICBP, 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 ODL, Great Britain.

SANDGROUSE VOLUME, 8

All members who paid a full subscription of £7 (£10 airmail) for 1986 should by now have received Sandgrouse Vol. 8 which was dispatched in January 1987. If you have not received your copy please let the Secretary know as soon as possible.

NOTES FROM THE SALES OFFICER

OSME Ties

We have all but sold out of OSME ties and the only colour left is red. Council has not yet decided whether to produce any more. If you haven't got an OSME tie and want one then send your order in at once. First come, first served!

Wildlife in Bahrain

Fourth Report. With the agreement of the Bahrain Natural History Society we are stocking the fourth edition of Wildlife in Bahrain which

covers 1982 - 1984 (see News and Information Pg. x) Stocks of this edition are limited so those wanting a copy are advised not to delay their order. Price: £7.00 Surface and £9.00 Air Mail.

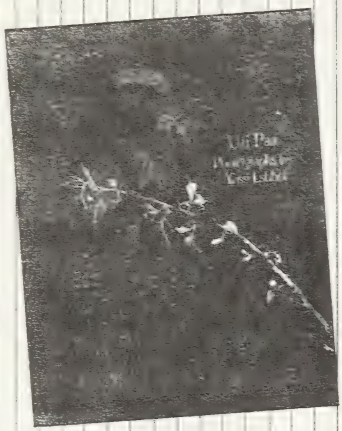
Third Report. The third edition is still available and is reduced to £4.00 Surface and £6.00 Air Mail.

AGM REMINDER

This year's AGM will be held on the afternoon of Saturday 4 July at the British Museum (Natural History), Cromwell Road, London. Details will be sent out nearer the date.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Mike Hodgson for his cover illustration of White-winged Lark Melanocorypha leucoptera



NEW

THE BIRDS OF ISRAEL

Uzi Paz

Photographs by Yossi Eshbol

The Birds of Israel provides detailed information, previously unavailable in any form, on this country's astonishing variety of birds and is the essential handbook for anyone visiting the area – either for ornithological research or simply keen to learn more about its birds. Written and photographed by two of the leading lights in the conservation movement in Israel, this is a unique and up-to-date work on the birds of the region.

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For information write to:
Dutch Birding, Postbus 5611,
1007 AP Amsterdam,
Netherlands.

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

Aims

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

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

3. To develop a mutually beneficial working relationship with all environmental and conservation bodies and natural history societies in and concerned with the Middle East.

Membership is open to all and spans over 40 countries.

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

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