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DJIBOUTI II FOLLOW UP

Geoff and Hilary Welch

Following the publication of the Djibouti II Autumn '85 Expedition Report early in 1987, a two week visit was made to Djibouti between 18 and 31 March. The purpose of the visit was two-fold: to deliver the Report to the Djibouti Government and other interested parties, and thus to increase the chances of implementation of some of its conservation recommendations; and to obtain permission for Djibouti III, an expedition planned for autumn 1987 to count raptors migrating across the Bab-el-Mandeb straits.

Being largely a "political" visit, and because of a lack of independent transport, birdwatching opportunities were rather limited. However, several afternoons/evenings were spent exploring the local gardens and pools on Le Heron, near to the flat where we were staying, and through the kindness of our host, Alain Laurent, we were able to have two nights at Dittilou (a camp on the edge of the Forêt du Day) and one day at Lac Abbé, an area we had not visited before.

Much of the open ground on Le Heron is in the process of being reclaimed for building with several of the pools we had found in 1985 having been infilled and those that remained being used for tipping rubbish. However, this did not seem to deter birds, and high tide roosts of Lesser Sand Plover Charadrius mongolus, Grey Plover Pluvialis squatarola, Little Stint Calidris minuta, Curlew Sandpiper C. ferruginea, Terek Sandpiper Xenus cinereus and Turnstone Arenaria interpres were commonplace. An area of open ground next to the new Chinese Embassy held up to 26 Broad-billed Sandpipers Limicola falcinellus, whilst a neighbouring pool produced two Marsh Sandpipers Tringa stagnatilis and a Long-toed Stint

Calidris subminuta, the latter being present for at least four days and a new species for Djibouti.

A not particularly salubrious location but one which is often good for birds, the rubbish dump 11km west of the city held up to six immature Steppe Eagles Aquila nipalensis plus very good numbers of Abdim's Stork Ciconia abdimii and Sacred Ibis Threskiornis aethiopicus. On 25 March at least 14 Wattled Starlings Creatophora cinerea were also present, though regrettably none was in breeding plumage.

The brief visit to Dittilou between 19 and 21 March enabled us to obtain more information on the endemic Djibouti Francolin Francolinus ochropectus. Up to 11 birds were encountered and males were very active, calling and setting up breeding territories following recent local rain. The presumed endemic sub-species of Green-winged Pytilia Pytilia melba flavicaudata was also seen and it would now appear that it is not restricted to areas of Acacia scrub as was originally thought. A non-birding bonus were visits to two stands of the rare Bankoualé Palm Livistona carinensis in Tôha and at Wêr, sites not visited in 1985, where 66 mature trees were found, further increasing Djibouti's importance for this species.

Lac Abbé, a large saline lake on the western border of Djibouti, proved to be very different to our expectations. Around the hot springs were small areas of lush vegetation and these proved irresistible to migrants, with many Red-throated Pipits Anthus cervinus and Yellow Wagtails Motacilla flava ssp. being seen. Waders were also present in good numbers with Little Ringed Charadrius dubius, Ringed C. hiaticula and Kentish Plovers C. alexandrinus, Little Stint, Curlew Sandpiper and Ruff Philomachus pugnax being quite numerous. Spur-winged Plovers Hoplopterus spinosus were establishing breeding territories and one pair of

Kittlitz's Sand Plover Charadrius pecuarius was found with very small young. At dawn a Trumpeter Finch Bucanetes githagineus flew over our campsite calling, adding another species to Djibouti's birdlist. At nearby As Eyla there was an obvious passage of doves taking place, with over 500 African Collared Doves Streptopelia roseogrisea, up to 60 Laughing Doves S. senegalensis, 62 Namaqua Doves Oena capensis, and a Bruce's Green Pigeon Treron waalia and a Turtle Dove S. turtur recorded around the gîte. One wonders what else was passing through!

A short visit was also made along the Djibouti to Loyada road, in search of White-faced Scops Owl Otus leucotis. Regrettably several trees in the wadi where they were found in 1985 had been felled and there was no sign of the birds. However, there was a bonus of two or three Somali Sparrows Passer castanopterus, calling and displaying, and these were yet another new species for the country.

On the "business" side of our visit, the Report was very well received though we are not too optimistic that much action will be taken without additional pressure being brought to bear by outside conservation organisations. A short lecture on the work of the 1985 Expedition was given to a group of about 60 French and Djiboutien and they were extremely interested by our account of the amazing raptor migration through the north of the country. Therefore, to capitalise on this interest (an interest in wildlife never before encountered in the local population), the emphasis of Djibouti III has shifted slightly. Besides documenting the migration, we will also be trying to encourage local people to visit our camps to view the spectacle for themselves. The scientific institute, ISERST, will be providing Djiboutien counterparts who we will be training in raptor counting and identification, whilst a small group of students from the Ecole Normale will be joining us during a week's vacation at the start of November. If this interest in raptors can be

nurtured, it will hopefully grow into a wider concern for the countryside and its wildlife and therefore give hope for the future survival of Djibouti's unique natural heritage.

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### BIRDS IN THE DESERTS OF PAKISTAN AND INDIA: A PRELIMINARY REVIEW

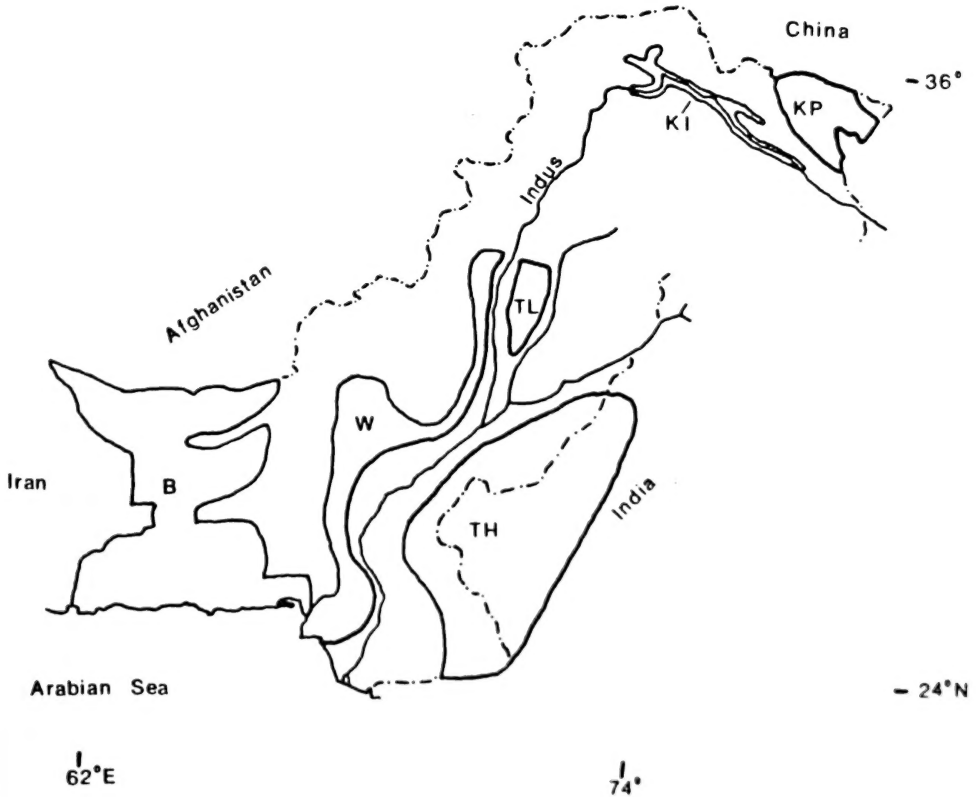
P J Cowan

The status and distribution of birds in some of the world's deserts is fairly well known. However, such knowledge for the deserts of Pakistan and India is far less satisfactory and consists mainly of reports dating back many years. The present paper highlights this problem in the hope of initiating further research. The question of what areas constitute the deserts of Pakistan and India is also problematic.

The definition and delimitation of deserts in general has been much discussed and various bioclimatic aridity indices have been applied to India and Pakistan (Gupta 1986, McGinnies *et al.* 1968). The deserts of Pakistan and India are outlined in Figure 1. The main guide was the UNESCO (1979) map of the world distribution of arid regions, excluding their semi-arid and sub-humid regions. The Indus delta, Rann of Kutch and areas of widespread irrigation are also excluded. The following deserts can be delimited.

The Baluchistan Desert abuts the deserts of Iran and Afghanistan (Breckle 1983, Petrov 1976, UNESCO 1979) and can be considered in two parts north and south of the Siah Range (Kureshy 1978, Spate & Learmonth 1967). To the north are the desert basins of the Hamun-i-Mashkel and Hamun-i-Lora. West of the Hamun-i-Lora basin are the Chagai Hills, which extend into Afghanistan, and the

Koh-i-Sultan Range. The topography of the desert north of the Siahan Range has been described by Abu Bakr (1963). To the south is the Makran (Collins-Longman 1984, Johnson 1979, Meigs 1966, Snead & Tasnif 1966). The Central and Coastal Makran Ranges create a hill and valley desert landscape. East of the Coastal Range is the Porali Plain.



**Figure 1:** Deserts of Pakistan and India. B, Baluchistan Desert; W, Western Valley Desert; TL, Thal Desert; TH, Thar Desert; KI, Karakorum Indus Desert; KP, Karakorum Plains Desert.

The Western Valley Desert can be divided into four, the Derajat, Kachhi-Sibi Plain, Kirthar piedmont and Sindi Kohistan. In the west it extends some distance up the eastern slopes of the Sulaiman and Kirthar Ranges whilst its eastern boundary is the Indus-based irrigation. Some details of this region can be gleaned from Ahmad 1951, Dichter 1967, Johnson 1969 and 1979, Kureshy 1978, Pithawalla 1959 and Spate & Learmonth 1967. The Derajat extends from the Marwat Range in the north and south to perhaps Sui. The topography and vegetation of the northern Derajat plain have been outlined by Dean (1947). The Kachhi-Sibi Plain is enclosed by highlands on the west, north and north-east. Further south the piedmont plain of the Kirthar Range is replaced by the hills of Sindi Kohistan. The desert vegetation of the Gadap area (southern Kohistan) has been investigated by Shaukat et al. (1976). The sea and Indus delta form the southern boundary of the Karachi plain (Chaudhri 1961).

The Thal Desert is a sandy plain lying within the Sind Sagar Doab (Johnson 1979, Kureshy 1978, Spate & Learmonth 1967). The boundaries of the Thal are the Indus-based irrigation on the west and Jhelum-Chenab based irrigation on the east. The Taunsa-Panjnad-Bahawal Canal is near the southern boundary and the Chasma-Jhelum Connecting Canal near the northern boundary (Collins-Longman 1984). Topography of the Thal Desert has been described by Higgins et al. (1974) and Abbasi (1978).

The Thar Desert occurs in eastern Pakistan and north-western India. It reaches west to the irrigated lands of the Indus and south to the periodically flooded Rann of Kutch. Its eastern boundary merges into semi-arid country west of the Aravalli Range whilst to the north it reaches the irrigated lands of the Sutlej. The Rohri Hills and sand plain to the south, south of Sukkur lie west of the Eastern Nara Canal. Useful descriptions of the Thar and the semi-arid area to its east are found in, for example, Allchin et al. (1978), Breed



et al. (1979), Gupta (1986), Mani (1974), Mishra (1968) and Seth (1978).

The Karakorum Indus Desert, a cold-winter desert, occurs in the Indus Valley from north of Nanga Parbat to east of Leh and extends some distance up the valley of the Gilgit and other tributaries (Goudie et al. 1984, Johnson 1979, Spate & Learmonth 1967, UNESCO 1979). Its vegetation has been described by Schweinfurth (1968, see also 1984).

The Karakorum Plains Desert, a cold-winter desert, extends north-east and east from the Karakorum Range and consists of the high rolling Depsang, Lingzi Tang and Aksai Chin Plains. This is a plateau habitat presumably similar to that of Tibet and the eastern Pamir (Chang 1981, Schweinfurth 1968, UNESCO 1979, Walter & Box 1983a and 1983b).

The following list presents the apparent status of various bird species in the deserts shown in Figure 1. Species selected are those more restricted to arid habitats. These status statements were based on inspection of the Ali & Ripley (1983) Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan, the Ripley (1982) synopsis and various other key references. Unfortunately, the status and distribution statements of Ali & Ripley (1983) and Ripley (1982), though useful tend to be over-generalised for the present purpose. The other references used were: Ali (1941), Christison (1941), Holmes & Wright (1968-9), Ticehurst (1922-4, 1926-7), Vaurie (1972) and Whistler (1938).

See-see Partridge Ammoperdix griseogularis. Resident, hillsides, Western Valley and Baluchistan Deserts.

Houbara Bustard Chlamydotis undulata. Small numbers breed Baluchistan Desert (see also Mian 1984). Winter visitor to each

desert in Figure 1 except Karakorum deserts. Wintering population in Baluchistan Desert described by Mian (1984) and Mian & Surahio (1983).

Cream-coloured Courser Cursorius cursor. Winter visitor to each desert except the Karakorum deserts.

Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse Pterocles lichtensteinii. Resident, Baluchistan and Western Valley Deserts.

Crowned Sandgrouse Pterocles coronatus. Resident in and winter visitor to Baluchistan and Western Valley Deserts.

Spotted Sandgrouse Pterocles senegallus. Winter visitor to each desert except Karakorum deserts. Some resident in Baluchistan (Makran), Western Valley (Sind, foothills Kachhi-Sibi Plain) and possibly Thar Deserts.

Skyes's Nightjar Caprimulgus mahrattensis. Resident, Baluchistan, Western Valley and possibly Thal Deserts. Small numbers winter Thar Desert (might breed).

Egyptian Nightjar Caprimulgus aegyptius. Probably breeding summer visitor north-west Balchustian Desert.

Black-crowned Finch Lark Eremopterix nigriceps. Resident, Baluchistan (coastal Makran), Western Valley, Thal and Thar Deserts.

Bar-tailed Desert Lark Ammomanes cincturus. Resident, Baluchistan and possibly Western Valley Deserts.

Desert Lark Ammomanes deserti. Resident, Baluchistan, Western Valley, Thal and western and north-western Thar Deserts.

Hoopoe Lark Alaemon alaudipes. Resident, Baluchistan, Western Valley (Kachhi-Sibi Plain southwards, possibly Derajat), Thar (except central and eastern) and possibly Thal Deserts.

Rock Martin Ptyonoprogne fuligula. Resident, Baluchistan (summer visitor in north) and Western Valley Deserts.

Stoliczka's Whinchat Saxicola macrorhyncha. Resident, Thar Desert.

Desert Wheatear Oenanthe deserti. Breeding summer visitor to Karakorum Indus (though extent to which it penetrates desert zone uncertain) and Plains Deserts. Winter visitor to the other deserts.

Eastern Pied Wheatear Oenanthe picata. Breeding summer visitor to Karakorum Indus Desert and to hills of the northern Baluchistan Desert. Winter visitor to the other deserts and the Baluchistan Desert but not the Karakorum Plains Desert.

Mourning Wheatear Oenanthe lugens. Might occur western Baluchistan Desert (Harrison 1982).

Hooded Wheatear Oenanthe monacha. Resident, Baluchistan (coastal Makran) and Western Valley (Sind) Deserts.

Hume's Wheatear Oenanthe alboniger. Resident, Baluchistan (Makran), Western Valley (Sind) and Karakorum Indus Deserts.

Scrub Warbler Scotocerca inquieta. Resident, Baluchistan and Western Valley (Kirthar Range) Deserts.

Desert Warbler Sylvia nana. Winter visitor to each desert except the Karakorum deserts.

Henderson's Ground Jay Podoces hendersoni. Might occur Karakorum Plains Desert (Harrison 1982).

Pleske's Ground Jay Podoces pleskei. Probably occurs north-western Baluchistan Desert.

Brown-necked Raven Corvus ruficollis. Resident, Baluchistan (but only winter visitor in small numbers to north) and Western Valley (Sind north of Sindi Kohistan) Deserts. Possibly occurs north-western Thar Desert.

Mongolian Trumpeter Finch Bucanetes mongolicus. Winter visitor, Karakorum Indus Desert.

Trumpeter Finch Bucanetes githagineus. Winter visitor, Baluchistan (coastal Makran), Western Valley (Kirthar Range foothills southwards) and Thar Deserts.

House Bunting Emberiza striolata. Resident, Baluchistan, Western Valley (Kirthar Range southwards) and Thar Deserts.

The tentative nature of these status statements should be emphasised. Certain of these deserts, such as the Derajat portion of the Western Valley Desert and the Thal, appear to have received only the slightest ornithological exploration. The avifaunas of the Karakorum Indus and Plains Deserts require much further investigation. The references consulted for the present paper do not allow easy separation of records of the desert zone from higher altitudinal zones of the Karakorum Indus Valley (see also Holmes 1986, Williams & Delany 1985-6).

Most of the records of birds in the deserts of Pakistan and India date back many years. All records of the Hooded Wheatear are apparently from the 19th Century. Again, with the exception of the

Thar, our knowledge of the deserts themselves is poor. With improved climatic and ground data the extent of the various deserts could be more correctly described. What is the current extent of irrigation schemes?

Although an exhaustive review of the literature on birds in the deserts of Pakistan and India is needed, clearly the most relevant research involves making actual observations of birds in these deserts, whether on tourist trips or full-scale expeditions. For example, the paper by Sharma (1980) suggests that the Desert and Hoopoe Larks occur more widely in the Thar Desert.

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#### CRANES IN EGYPT

Ted Flaxman

I have seen cranes in Egypt only once myself, on 19 March 1982 when, in company with Ali Hamdy, I saw two Common Cranes Grus grus at Dhashur, about 30km south of Cairo.

During a visit to Cairo in December 1986 I went with Ali Hamdy to Wadi Natrun. On the east side of the string of lakes we called at a small village and met a Bedouin, Abdul Kader, who is a keen hunter and who Ali has known for more than 20 years.

Ali had already told me of their encounter with cranes in April 1986 and while we were with Abdul Kader they filled in the details for me, as follows.

On 21 March 1986 Abdul Kader took Ali Hamdy, in the latter's jeep, to an area about 10km east of the desert road between Cairo and Alexandria, about 120km from Cairo, to see whether they could locate any of the large birds that Abdul was expecting. They arrived around noon and eventually, at 15.00, Abdul said he could hear the birds coming. A flock of about 400 birds appeared from the south and settled in an area where the normally barren ground was covered in short green shoots after the winter rains.

Ali attempted to drive close enough to these birds to shoot one in order to identify them but failed. However, there were other people in the area with vehicles trying to do the same thing, and eventually one of the birds was killed. Ali and Abdul inspected the bird and Ali identified it (from a copy of Heinzel, Fitter & Parslow which he carries with him) as a Common Crane.

Prior to our discussion with Abdul Kader, Ali Hamdy had already told me that there was occasionally a white bird among the flocks of cranes. Now, with the illustrations of Heinzel's cranes in front of him, I asked Abdul Kader what he knew of the other birds on the page. He immediately pointed to the Demoiselle Crane Anthropoides virgo at the foot of the page and said that these, 'the females', usually passed through in April and in smaller numbers than the larger, male birds. He clearly knew the difference between Demoiselle and Common Cranes and there seems little doubt that both species use this area regularly as a staging post in spring.

As regards the white birds, Abdul Kader said that there had been one among the flocks in the spring of 1986 and that he had seen one a few times in previous years. He was not able to give me any details of these white birds.

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[Peter Meininger has commented that Wadi Natrun and the surrounding area is know as a staging post for migrating cranes and will be mentioned in the forthcoming "The Birds of Egypt". There are, however, very few recent records of Demoiselle Cranes in Egypt.]

COMMENTS ON HISTORICAL RECORDS OF THE SIBERIAN WHITE CRANE IN  
TURKEY

Simon Harrap

Kasperek (1987) advocates the acceptance of two nineteenth century records of the Siberian White Crane Grus leucogeranus in Turkey. He quotes first Danford (1880), who records a flock of about 100 near Ankara in 1879. Examination of Danford's account shows it to be rather anecdotal and, though he distinguishes between Grus cinerea and G. leucogeranus, it is noteworthy that the paragraph containing the details of the Siberian White Cranes starts thus: 'Our best acquisition here was the common Grey Partridge Perdix cinerea, ...' and continues 'We also had the rare opportunity of closely observing a large flock of Cranes Grus leucogeranus.' From this narrative it is not clear whether Danford realised that he was recording the occurrence, perhaps the first in Turkey, of such a rare and spectacular bird. Indeed, it may only have been the birds' closeness that was considered exceptional. No details whatsoever are given on the cranes' appearance, yet Kasperek states 'From Danford's description, the record should be beyond doubt' (my emphasis).

The second account quoted by Kasperek is that of Sandwith, who records two groups, of four or five and of 20, near Erzurum in 1854. I have been unable to consult the original, but the description of the birds' "strange wild voice" is mentioned, as well as the weight (15lb) of a Crane that was shot, in support of Sandwith's identification of the birds as 'Siberkranich'.

It is clear that neither of these accounts would be acceptable to a modern records committee. However unmistakable the Siberian White Crane is, there are simply no descriptions. What grounds therefore, are there for accepting the records? The very casualness of Danford's account, and Sandwith's failure to preserve

a specimen, may be seen to imply that the species was regular and needed no description, but there are no specimens or fully documented sight records to support this hypothesis. The possibility that the Siberian White Crane was a regular migrant through Turkey, or even wintered in the country, is intriguing and noteworthy, though sadly we are unlikely to have the opportunity to confirm this with contemporary observations. It is unfortunate, however, that Kasparek feels it necessary to go beyond this and advocate the acceptance of definite records and the addition of the species to the Turkish list.

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(To be continued in next Bulletin)

#### FROM THE ARCHIVES

Geoff and Hilary Welch

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

Birds in west central Libya, 1980-81, Birds in the Brak and Sabha regions of central Libya, 1981-82 and Birds in the central Fezzan, Libya, 1982-83 by P. J. Cowan

Three reprints, the first two from Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl. 102: 32-35 (1982) and 103: 44-47 (1983) and the third from Le Gerfaut 75: 211-218 (1985), giving details of birds occurring in the Fezzan region (south of 30°N and west of 1°E) of Libya between 15 September 1980 and 29 June 1983.

Spolecenstva Ptaku Hnizdicich V Iraku (Breeding-assemblages of birds in Iraq) by P Ctyroky

A reprint from Zpravy Moravskeho Ornitologickeh Sdruzeni 44: 7-29 (1986) covering the breeding bird assemblages in three habitat categories: deserts and semi-deserts; the alluvial plain of

Mesopotamia; and submountaneous, mountaneous and high mountaneous regions. Detailed breeding information is given on 17 species. Czech text with an English summary.

Birds in Egypt - September to December 1986 by D. J. Evans

A systematic list giving details of 85 species recorded by the observer during this four month period.

The Distribution of the extinct Arabian Ostrich *Stuthio camelus syriacus* Rothschild, 1919 by M. C. Jennings

A reprint from Fauna of Saudi Arabia 8: 447-461 (1986). The Arabian Ostrich existed in the Arabian peninsula until at least 1939, possibly as late as 1966. Two populations occurred, one on the edge of the Rub al Khali, the other in the deserts of central and northern Arabia. Numbers probably remained fairly constant as the result of low level hunting by the Bedouin using traditional weapons and horses, but with the introduction of modern weapons and motor vehicles, and an increased demand for plumes in the 1920s, pressure on the species increased and it was eventually hunted to extinction.

Highlights of an Ornithological Expedition to Eastern and South Central Saudi Arabia: 14 February - 14 March 1987 by M. C. Jennings

An account of the birds recorded by the author and a companion during a month's extensive travelling throughout these regions of Saudi Arabia. Comparison is made of the current birdlife found in several areas which the author had not visited since the 1970s.



Domenico Sestini (1750-1832): Aus der Frühzeit zoologischer  
Forschung im Bosphorus-Raum (Türkei) by H. Kumerloeve

A reprint from Ann. Naturhist. Mus. Wien 88/89 B 345-350 giving a previously unpublished birdlist, by Sestini, of the Bosphorus area, together with a few references to the mammals of the same region. German text.

The occurrence of Skuas (Stercoraridae) in the Middle East, with special reference to Egypt and the northern Red Sea by P. L. Meininger & Sorensen U. G.

A reprint from Die Vogelwarte 33: 281-294 (1986) giving details of the regular occurrence of skuas in the Middle East. Arctic Stercorarius parasiticus and Pomarine S. pomarinus are the most commonly recorded, with a few records of Long-tailed Skua S. longicaudus. There would appear to be regular spring and autumn movements through the region and the origins of the birds involved are speculated upon. There are few summer and winter records of any species. Great S. skua and/or South Polar Skua S. maccormicki have been recorded a few times in the Mediterranean.

Seabirds along the Mediterranean Sea coast of Egypt by P. L. Meininger & Baha el Din S. M.

A reprint from NATO ASI Series, vol G 12 giving a preliminary summary of the present knowledge of 31 species of seabird which occur along this section of coast, together with a section on threats facing these birds and recommendations for future research and the establishment of nature reserves.

REVIEWS

Zoology in the Middle East, Volume 1, 1986. Edited by Ragner Kinzelbac and Max Kasperek. Price DM 35.00

This is the first issue of an occasional Journal which arose because, as the editors state, "short communications in 'classical' zoology, although of scientific interest ... are, at times, not printed due to the lack of a suitable journal". The publication's intended scope will embrace the following fields: morphology, zoogeography, faunistics, systematics, animal biology and ecology. An initiative of this kind dealing with a region as politically disparate as the Middle East is especially welcome.

Volume 1 comprises a collection of 49 papers/short communications on mammals (6), birds (14), reptiles (7), amphibians (5), fishes (4), molluscs (5), insects (3), crustaceans (2), leeches (2) and nematodes (1), the editors themselves contributing nearly half. As the journal is unlikely to have a wide circulation, OSME members may wish to know the titles of those articles dealing with birds. In order of presentation these are: Lesser Sand Plover Charadrius mongolus in Turkey, Red-rumped Wheatear Oenanthe moesta in Turkey, (previously unrecorded), Mass migration of the Red-necked Phalarope Phalaropus lobatus in Eastern Turkey; Pellet contents of the Barn Owl Tyto alba near Samandag, Turkey; Occurrence of Brown-necked Raven Corvus ruficollis at Cizre in Eastern Turkey (previously unrecorded); On the occurrence of the Bittern Botaurus stellaris in Turkey; On the age of the colony of Bald Ibis Geronticus eremita at Birecik, Turkey; On the distribution and systematic position of the Barn Owl Tyto alba in Turkey and adjacent areas; New records of the Red-tailed Wheatear Oenanthe xanthropygna in Turkey; The Cyprus Warbler Sylvia melanothorax recorded in Turkey (previously unrecorded); On records of the Pine Bunting Emberiza leucocephalos in Turkey from the last century; On the occurrence of Eleonora's

alcon Falco eleonorae in Turkey; New records of Alexander's Parrot Sittacula krameri from Egypt and the Levant countries (introduced in the Middle East); and The White-cheeked Bulbul Pycnonotus eucogenys a resident of the Palmyra Oasis, Syria (introduced in the Middle East). There are cases where some pundits will feel more rigorous presentation of the field characteristics of a vagrant would have been useful.

This is a worthwhile endeavour which deserves support. It would, however, be sad if the energy devoted to studies of this type compromised efforts to solve the practical difficulties of wildlife conservation in a country such as Turkey, where future prospects look increasingly grim.

The journal is available from Max Kasperek, Bleichstrasse 1, D-6900 Heidelberg, West Germany.

Rod Martins

Localizations of the owls of the genus Otus in Pakistan by Tom J. Roberts and Ben King. 1986. Ornith. Scand. 17: 299-305

This short paper presents the results and evaluations of tape-recorded voices of five species of owl in the Otus genus in Pakistan, together with comparisons of wing formulae and details of each species' favoured biotope in that country. The five species are: Spotted Scops Owl Otus spilocephalus, Scops Owl O. scops, Striated Scops Owl O. brucei, Indian Scops Owl O. sunia and Collared Scops Owl O. bakkamoena which together with the Afrotropical African Scops Owl O. senegalensis are all regarded as being good biological species upon the evidence of call-notes. Furthermore, the authors discovered that the Collared Scops Owl O. bakkamoena, of authors from Peters (1940: 98-100) onwards, is actually composed of two entirely different groups of populations with totally different

vocalizations - an Indian Sub-continental one which is O. bakkamoena in the restricted sense, and an East Himalayan - east Eurasian-Malaysian one for which O. lempiji of Horsfield 1821 is the oldest valid name for this vocally distinct species. Scops Owl, Indian Scops Owl and African Scops Owl are regarded as geographically replacing species forming a superspecies with the sympatric Striated Scops Owl in the same species-group.

Only six pages, only six species out of the 35-40 contained in Otus, but a very important contribution towards a better understanding of species relationships within the largest owl genus which ranges over most of the warmer parts of the world. I fully agree with the authors and with Joe Marshall that vocalizations provide more reliable clues to relationships than details of colours and patterns of cryptic plumage which is prevalent in Otus. The problem with "owling" is the identification of voices duly recorded with their authors under nocturnal conditions in the field ...

Derek Lees-Smith

#### Reference

Peters, J. L. 1940. Checklist of Birds of the World, volume IV. pp XII + 291. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., USA

#### NEWS AND INFORMATION

(Compiled by Simon Albrecht)

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

Turkey occupies a strategic position at the crossroads of migration routes between Europe, Asia and Africa. In addition it is an important wintering area for many waterfowl.

The Republic of Turkey is a contracting party of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (the Berne Convention). This convention, among other things, requires contracting parties to give full legal protection to an extensive number of migratory birds. So far Turkey has not rectified or amended its national wildlife legislation to give effect to the Berne Convention provisions. In addition it has long been clear that many migrants are caught or shot as they pass through migratory bottlenecks like the Arhavi-Borçka area of north-east Turkey.

Dogal Hayati Koruma Dernegi (DHKD - the Turkish Society for the Protection of Wildlife) hopes to establish the magnitude of illegal shooting and catching of wild birds in the autumn and winter of 1987-1988. The work will begin in the north-east where it will include studies on raptor and passerine persecution. From early winter studies will concentrate on the lakes of central Turkey. At the same time DHKD is designing an educational programme to raise public awareness of the need for adequate bird protection.

It is expected that DHKD will publish a report in the spring of 1988 which will include detailed recommendations on how to stop the illegal taking of wild birds in Turkey. If anyone has relevant information will they please send it to Dogal Hayati Koruma Dernegi, PK 18, Bebek, Istanbul, Turkey.

#### Turkey - Eregli Marshes

A team from the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP) and DHKD spent from 8-19 May surveying the Eregli Marshes in Konya Province. The survey was a great success with important breeding data collected on a number of rare species including Pygmy Cormorant Phalacrocorax pygmeus, Dalmation Pelican Pelecanus crispus, Glossy Ibis Plegadis falcinellus, Spoonbill Platalea leucorodia, Mute Swan Cygnus olor, Red-crested Pochard Netta rufina, White-headed Duck

Oxyura leucocephala, Lesser Kestrel Falco naumanni, Black-winged Stilt Himantopus himantopus, Collared Pratincole Glareola pratincola, Spur-winged Plover Hoplopterus spinosus, Slender-billed Gull Larus genei and Whiskered Tern Chlidonias hybridus.

The team also visited nearby marshes and plan to visit the area again next May before publishing their report which will give results and recommended conservation action to manage and protect the area.

#### Cyprus - Anti-liming Poster

On 3 April 4,000 anti-liming posters were handed over to the Director of Primary Education in Nicosia for distribution throughout the country. This is the first part of a campaign to educate and inform Cypriots about the illegal slaughter of birds each year by liming. Following a successful Birdwatching Week from 30 March to 3 April a Youth Project Co-ordinator has been appointed to develop further educational programmes in co-operation with local groups.

#### Cyprus - Stop the Massacre Postcard Campaign

The Republic of Cyprus has the unenviable reputation of being the country where more birds are killed per capita than any other in the Mediterranean. Millions of birds are persecuted by illegal means such as mistnets and limesticks each year. ICBP sent Gernant Magnin, a Dutch ornithologist, to Cyprus during spring and autumn 1986 to monitor the illegal slaughter of migratory birds. Up to 2.2 million migrant birds, mainly Blackcaps Sylvia atricapilla were estimated to have been caught during 1986, despite the Cyprus Government's pledge to enforce effective protection.

ICBP is assisting the Cyprus Anti-liming Committee in organising a protest campaign throughout Europe to put pressure upon the Cyprus

Administration to effectively enforce the laws protecting wild birds. Over 100,000 postcards addressed to either the Cyprus High Commission or the President are to be distributed through the ICBP network of member organisations and will be mailed this year requesting vigorous enforcement of the Wild Bird Laws.

A pre-addressed postcard is enclosed with this Bulletin for British residents and you are requested to add your weight by sending it to the Cyprus High Commissioner in London. Further information and cards can be obtained from Wim Verheugt, Migratory Birds Programme Co-ordinator, ICBP, 219c Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL, Great Britain.

#### Yemen Arab Republic

As part of a six year conservation programme to enhance the conservation of the rich bird life of Yemen which OSME and ICBP are jointly promoting, Yamil Al Ba'dara of the Department of Animal Resources (Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries) has attended the 1987 conservation education training course run by ICCE (see Bull 18:15-16). During the course he designed and produced a range of educational material to foster an interest in the plight of birds in general and on the threatened and endemic birds of Yemen in particular. This included a slide programme on the environmental problems facing the country. The RSPB kindly hosted a post ICCE tour to allow Yemen's first conservation education officer to visit conservation institutions in Britain (ICBP, NCC, RSPB, Wildfowl Trust and WWF-UK) and to attend workshops on reserve management and environmental education organised by the RSPB.

Meanwhile preparation for an educational booklet on the birds of the Yemen Arab Republic are advancing well. This autumn a British artist will travel to Sana'a to draw the Yemen birds from life.

Egypt

As a result of a lobby by various conservation organisations Egypt is in the process of acceding to the Ramsar Convention and is considering the designation of four wetlands in the Nile Valley under the convention. ICBP, in conjunction with Egyptian organisations, is hoping to launch a major education campaign on conservation and wildlife. Negotiations are currently in progress and we hope to be able to give more details next spring.

Migratory Bottlenecks in the Middle East

ICBP has just published its Study Report No 18 - Bottleneck Areas for Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean Region: An Assessment of the Problems and Recommendations for Action by Rob G Bijlsma. This excellent 135 page report analyses the threats to migratory birds (mainly raptors and storks) at 17 bottleneck sites, 12 of which are in the OSME Middle East region including the Bosphorus, Borçka, Eilat and Suez.

For each site the published data up to 1985 is summarised and discussed and recommendations are made for education, law enforcement and further research. This report will be fully reviewed in the next Bulletin. Meanwhile it is available from OSME Sales price £4.00 surface mail and £6.00 airmail.

Israel

The Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI) has recently launched a branch in London. The objective of the British branch according to the August 1987 issue of Birdwatching is to foster support for the SPNI by encouraging membership at £15.00 per year, promoting natural history visits to Israel and raising up to £100,000 to protect a special sand dune system in Israel.



Slender-billed Curlew - Almost Extinct?

ICBP is very concerned about the status of the Slender-billed Curlew Numenius tenuirostris which appears to be on the verge of extinction. The bird breeds in Western Siberia and winters particularly in Morocco but with small numbers throughout the Middle East. A hundred years ago it was the most abundant large wader in Italy and could be seen migrating in massive flocks throughout the Eastern Mediterranean region but today it is rarely seen. ICBP is carrying out a survey of the Moroccan coastal wetlands but only an international campaign will establish the real status and regular wintering haunts of this species. Please send any observations and any relevant information on habitat, hunting pressure, etc to Mike Rands, who is co-ordinating the project.

ANNOUNCEMENTSXX International Ornithological Congress 1990

The XX International Ornithological Congress will take place in Christchurch, New Zealand, from 2-9 December 1990. Professor Charles G Sibley (USA) is President and Dr Ben D Bell (NZ) is Secretary-General. The anticipated Congress programme will include plenary lectures, symposia, contributed papers (spoken and posters), workshops, discussion groups and films. There will be a mid-Congress excursion day. Pre- and Post-Congress excursions are planned to interesting ornithological sites in New Zealand and adjacent regions. Requests for the First Circular and suggestions regarding Congress organisation should be addressed to:

Dr Ben D Bell, Secretary-General, XX International Ornithological Congress, Department of Zoology, Victoria University of Wellington, Private Bag, Wellington, New Zealand.

Colour-marked Waders from Dubai

As a part of continuing studies to evaluate the importance of Khor Dubai to migrating and wintering waders several species will be colour-marked this autumn. The species involved will be Kentish Plover Charadrius alexandrinus, Lesser Sand Plover C. mongolus, Greater Sand Plover C. leschenaultii, Little Stint Calidris minuta, Curlew Sandpiper C. ferruginea, Dunlin C. alpina and Broad-billed Sandpiper Limicola falcinellus.

Birds will be dyed (yellow, red or blue) in combination with (or without) temporary leg-flags around the metal ring. We would be grateful if observers could send details of sightings (date, locality, number and species of other waders present) to Chris Thomas, Department of Zoology, University of Durham DH1 3LE, Great Britain.

In addition we are very interested in any sightings (from this year or past years) of Broad-billed Sandpipers in the Middle East. If anybody has records we would be very happy to receive them in order to build up a clearer picture of the movements of this species through the region. All contributions will be fully acknowledged in any publications, as will sightings of dye-marked birds.

The Oman Bird List

(contributed by Michael Gallagher)

The Oman Bird Records Committee produces two lists, and a copy of both is in the OSME Library.

The first, called the Oman Bird List, is the official list of the birds of Oman, with Euring numbers and English and scientific names. It is annotated only with details of species, dates of occurrence, status and distribution which are additional to the standard regional work of reference, The Birds of Oman (Quartet Books, 1980).

It runs to eight double-sided pages of A4, and will be issued in a revised edition at the end of 1987. For those who only require a 'check-list' of the birds by number and English name, the four double-paged list in the observer's Report Form should suffice.

Application may be made (stating which is required) to: The Recorder, Oman Bird Records Committee, PO Box 246 Muscat, Sultanate of Oman. Those who have already applied will receive revised editions automatically.

### Change of Address

The address of the Foundation for Ornithological Research in Egypt has changed to c/o Peter L Meininger, Belfort 7, 4336 JK Middelburg, The Netherlands. The Foundation will continue to collect ornithological observations from Egypt even after publication of The Birds of Egypt so all records will be gratefully received.

### OSME NEWS

#### Officers of the Society 1987-88

Vice-Presidents:

Sir Derek Barber  
 Prof Dr W Buttiker  
 M D Gallagher  
 P A D Hollom  
 Dr H Kumerloeve

Prof H Mendelssohn  
 Dr G Tohme  
 W H N Wilkinson  
 Mrs N Yazgan

Council Members:

J S M Albrecht (Sales Officer)	D Parr (Sandgrouse Editor)
D J Brooks	Dr M R W Rands (Chairman)
Major D J R Counsell	N J Redman (Treasurer)
D J Fisher (Bulletin Editor)	Mrs F E Warr (Secretary and Membership Secretary)
M C Jennings	
R P Martins	G R Welch (Publicity Officer and Librarian)
W E Oddie	

Vice-Presidents - Old and New

The term of office for two long serving vice-presidents came to an end at the AGM: Stanley Cramp OBE\* and Sir Hugh Elliott. Both were regular attenders at Council Meetings (at which our vice-presidents are always welcome) and contributed greatly to the discussions. Stanley Cramp's contribution to British ornithology is legendary through his editorship of British Birds and Birds of the Western Palearctic. Sir Hugh is one of the worlds leading conservation gurus through his work, particularly for ICBP and IUCN.

We welcome five new vice-presidents to serve for ten years: Sir Derek Barber (chairman of the Countryside Commission), Professor William Buttiker (editor of the Fauna and Flora of Saudi Arabia), Major Michael Gallagher (a conservation adviser to the Oman Government and author of the Birds of Oman), William Wilkinson (chairman of the Nature Conservancy Council and a past chairman of OSME council) and Nergis Yazgan (president of the Turkish Wildlife Protection Society). Their breadth of knowledge and experience as well as their geographic spread will add greatly to OSME's influence.

\*We have just learned of the sad death of Stanley Cramp - an obituary will appear in the next Bulletin.

Thanks to retiring members of councilRichard Porter

The 9th AGM of OSME saw the retirement by rotation of Richard Porter as chairman. His deep and long-standing commitment to ornithology and conservation in the Middle East, coupled with his considerable field experience and skills, made Richard an outstanding chairman of the society. Under his dynamic leadership OSME has consolidated its membership, increased its contact with countries throughout the region, sponsored a wide range of bird conservation activities in selected priority countries (ranging from the provision of conservation education materials to supporting species/habitat surveys) and organised its own expedition to North Yemen.

Richard's personal qualities, especially his efficiency, enthusiasm and humour have played a substantial role in shaping OSME over the past few years. These qualities have also ensure that Council meetings have been productive, entertaining and action packed occasions. His experience and personality will be affectionately missed. Despite retiring from Council Richard will remain closely and actively involved in both the society and Middle Eastern birds, and we hope that his freedom from administration will enable him to become still more involved in action to study and conserve birds and their habitats in the region and promote the society.

Lindon Cornwallis

Dr Lindon Cornwallis retired from Council by rotation this year. Lindon is an outstanding field scientist with a very high standard of excellence and perfectionism. Consequently, when coupled with his long periods of field experience in the Middle East (especially Iran), these abilities have meant that Lindon has played a significant part in shaping a number of OSME's activities,

especially the content of Sandgrouse and some of the conservation research work we have supported. He is one of the few Council members who has actually worked in the region during his term of office and as such has added a freshness to Council's awareness of the problems facing Middle Eastern birds.

We wish Lindon the very best of luck with his latest 'field' venture (he has just bought a small farm in Oxfordshire) but hope he will have time to think of OSME between harvests.

### Ninth Annual General Meeting

Accompanied by the now customary summer heatwave, the 9th AGM was held at the British Museum (Natural History), London on 4 July. Despite the heat there was a record attendance of over 90 members and guests and once again everyone was treated to an enjoyable and informative afternoon.

Bill Oddie started the meeting with a personal view of Cyprus, concentrating on the Greek section of the island, and particularly the western and southern coastal strip. From the shimmering expanse of Akrotiri Salt Lake to the snowy upper reaches of the Troodos mountains, the island has a rich flora and fauna. Besides the obvious attraction of the "endemic" Cyprus Warbler Sylvia melanothorax and Cyprus Pied Wheatear Oenanthe (pleschanka) cypriaca, the island also holds Black Francolin Francolinus francolinus, Griffon Vulture Gyps fulvus, Masked Shrike Lanius nubicus and Cretzschmar's Bunting Emberiza caesia to name but a few of the breeding species. Because of its location at the eastern end of the Mediterranean, it is an idea spot for observing spring migration and certainly attracts a bewildering variety of warblers, wheatears and flycatchers - enough to satisfy, and confuse, most birdwatchers! Unfortunately like so many other Mediterranean areas, there is a strong tradition of hunting birds on the island, with

somewhere in the region of 4 million trapped each year. Bill gave a frank but well-balanced view of the current situation and there is certainly hope for the future, through a growing interest in wildlife among the younger generation.

The other two talks during the afternoon were 'double acts'. Firstly Vincent van den Berk and Tom van der Have gave details of the work their Dutch team has been carrying out on the Seyhan and Ceyhan deltas in southern Turkey. This work is part of a larger wader and waterfowl research project, co-ordinated by Werkgroep Internationaal Wad-en Watervogelonderzoek (WIWO), to examine the relative importance of, and any possible link-ups between, the Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean flyways for migrating birds in spring and autumn.

An extensive mark and recapture programme on the waders using these areas has demonstrated that considerable numbers of birds pass through and that there is a rapid turnover of birds during the course of the season. The work has also shown that the timing of migration through the deltas is markedly different for the three main species - Dunlin Calidris alpina, Curlew Sandpiper C. ferruginea and Little Stint C. minuta. Turkish counterparts took part in the project and this local involvement bodes well for the continuation of the work in future seasons and for the long-term conservation of wildlife in Turkey. Besides work on the waterbirds, research was also carried out on the passerines breeding in, and migrating through, the surrounding areas. This project was assisted by an OSME grant.

The final talk, by Stan Howe and Bish Brown, was entitled "Two Birdwatchers in the Gulf" and gave a fascinating insight into the birdlife of this region. From mist netting migrant passerines in Stan Howe's back garden to the impressive seabird colonies on the numerous islands scattered throughout the Gulf, the richness and

variety of birds using this region was illustrated by a selection of very good slides. However, political unrest and increasing human disturbance in many areas has inevitably led to the disappearance of some birds. One frightening example was of the Socotran Cormorant Phalacrocorax nigrogularis whose breeding colonies used to number tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of birds but which are now down to a few thousand or even hundreds - have they moved elsewhere or are they lost forever?

The 'formal' business of the AGM included the election of two new members of Council - Bill Oddie and Major David Counsell - and also the appointment of a new Chairman, Dr Mike Rands. As his first official duty, Mike paid tribute to the retiring Chairman, Richard Porter, whose dedication to OSME and conservation in the Middle East in general has seen OSME grow in stature and international recognition throughout his five year spell as Chairman. As a token of OSME's appreciation of Richard's hard work and commitment, he was presented by Phil Hollom with an original drawing of Cattle Egrets in North Yemen by Keith Brockie. For once, Richard was actually lost for words! Richard will be greatly missed by OSME but we are sure he will remain deeply involved in the Middle East.

#### Tenth Annual General Meeting

OSME's 10th AGM will be held on Saturday 9th July 1988 at the British Museum (Natural History), London and will be accompanied by a programme of short talks and slide shows. We hope that this early announcement of the date will enable a good number of our overseas members to join us. Further details will be given in the next Bulletin.



Member's Publications

All members who paid a subscription of £7 (£10 airmail) for 1986 should have received Sandgrouse 8 and Bulletins 16 and 17. Members who joined the society this year can order these and other previous publications from the Sales Officer (see sales list). Those having paid a subscription of £7 (£10 airmail) for 1987 should have received Bulletins 18 and 19 and will shortly be receiving Sandgrouse 9 (currently expected in September).

Reduced Subscription to British Birds for OSME Members

OSME members can subscribe to the monthly magazine British Birds at 75% of the normal cost. For members living in Britain and Europe or by surface mail elsewhere the reduced subscription is £18.75 instead of £25.00. There is no reduction on the airmail rate. The magazine includes papers and articles on a wealth of subjects of interest to birdwatchers all over the world and is thoroughly recommended.

For further details see the enclosed leaflet or contact Mrs Erika Sharrock, Fountains, Park Lane, Blunham, Bedford MK44 3NJ, Great Britain.

Notes from the Sales OfficerNew Publications on the OSME Sales List

Birds of the Riyadh Region by Arthur Stagg. A useful check-list published in February 1987. Price: £4.25 surface mail and £6.00 airmail.

ICBP Study Report 18: Bottleneck Areas for Migratory Birds in the Mediterranean Region by Rob G Bijlsma. Price £4.00 surface mail and £6.00 airmail.

ICBP Study Report 21: An Account of the Illegal Catching and Shooting of Birds in Cyprus during 1986 by Gernant Magnin. Price: £4.00 surface mail and £6.00 airmail.

ICBP Flying Visitors Wallchart (see Bulletin 18: 16). Price: £2.50 surface mail and £3.50 airmail.

Zoology in the Middle East: Volume 1 Edited by R Kinzelbach and M Kasperek (see page 40). Price: £12.00 surface mail and £14.00 airmail.

### Birds of Turkey

There have been a number of enquiries as to when Birds of Turkey 5 will appear. I am informed by Max Kasperek that it is in preparation and will cover Kulu Golu. We hope that publication will not be long delayed and that we shall have more positive news for the next Bulletin.

### Dr Yusuf N Merivani

We were very sorry to learn of the death of Dr Yusuf N Merivani who was killed by armed bandits in northern Iraq on the 9 April. Dr Merivani was one of our few native Iraqi members. Our sympathies go to Dr Merivani's family.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Mike Hodgson for his cover illustration of a Spur-winged Plover Hoplopterus spinosus.

# ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF THE MIDDLE EAST

c/o THE LODGE, SANDY, BEDFORDSHIRE, ENGLAND.

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

## Aims

1. To collect, collate and publish ornithological data on the birds of the Middle East.
2. To encourage an interest in and conservation of the birds of the Middle East.
3. To develop a mutually beneficial working relationship with all environmental and conservation bodies and natural history societies in and concerned with the Middle East.

Membership is open to all and spans over 40 countries.

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



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

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