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OSME BULLETIN 22

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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 Editors. Contributions for the next bulletin should be sent to the Editors by 15 August 1989.

Illustrations

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

S. M. Andrews: Masked Shrike (cover), White-eyed Gull (p.15), Blackstart (p.117), Blue-cheeked Bee-eater (p.46), Black-bellied Sandgrouse (p.60).

P. J. Powell: Grey Hypocolius (p.20).

Craig Robson: Curlews, Slender-billed Curlews and Whimbrels (p.50).

A NEW RAPTOR WATCHPOINT AT THE BOSPHORUS

Nigel Tucker

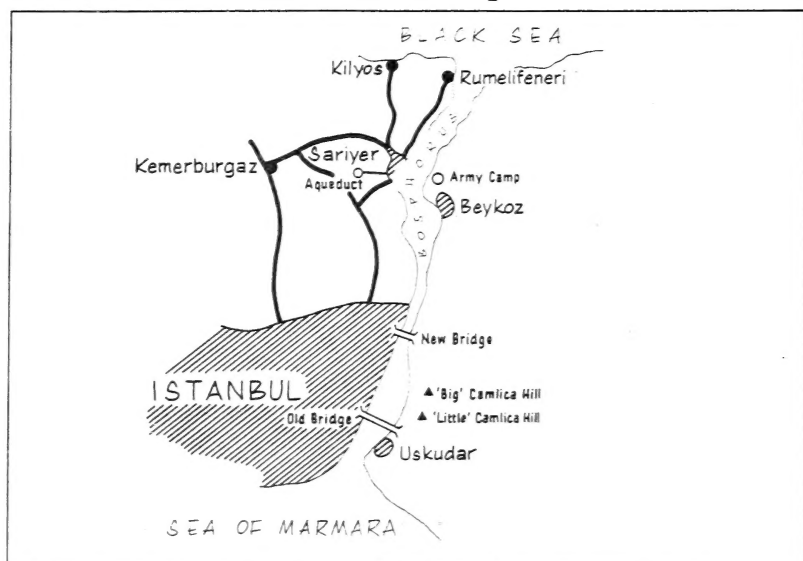
During September 1988, Hugh Miles and I visited the Bosphorus to film bird of prey migration for a sequence in a forthcoming television programme on European raptors. From 16 - 24 September, we concentrated our efforts on either 'Big' or 'Little' Camlica Hill. These two hills have traditionally been the places to witness large numbers of birds passing overhead. Each day we were disappointed with the numbers seen and with the distance at which we saw them, though there was the occasional group or individuals which came closer and lower; and we also saw quite large and close flocks of storks.

From 'Big' Camlica, we had seen many birds crossing the Bosphorus to our north, almost on the edge of vision. We also learned from other birdwatchers of a place north of Istanbul, on the European side, which was forested, and where large numbers of eagles and storks had been seen 'putting down for the night'. On 25 September, we decided to investigate other areas. Ideally, we wanted footage of large numbers of eagles crossing the Bosphorus, coming head-on and passing overhead. First, we tried to find another migration crossing point on the Asian side. We travelled as far north as Beykoz and tried to follow the coast road north, but, just out of the town, the way is blocked by an Army camp. So, we decided to look for the place in the forest on the European side.

About 15 km north of Istanbul is the town of Sariyer (Map 1), set on the edge of the Bosphorus. A road inland from Sariyer leads to an old aqueduct, just to the south is an area of higher ground where a reasonable view over the forest can be obtained. After more than an hour's wait, the sky in the west became dark with birds, coming straight towards us. During the next hour, approximately 4,500 birds passed overhead in a continual, broad stream. While the birds were still in view, we attempted to follow them and find their crossing point over the Bosphorus. Eventually, we found a way up the right hill - naturally called Sariyer Hill (Map 2) - and found a good position to watch the continuing migration. From the hill, the view of the Bosphorus is superb, and the birds came straight towards us, passed overhead and then, using the thermals from this narrow ridge, headed across the Bosphorus to another high ridge on the Asian side - so losing very little height. We judged the opposite ridge to be in the army camp we had found earlier.

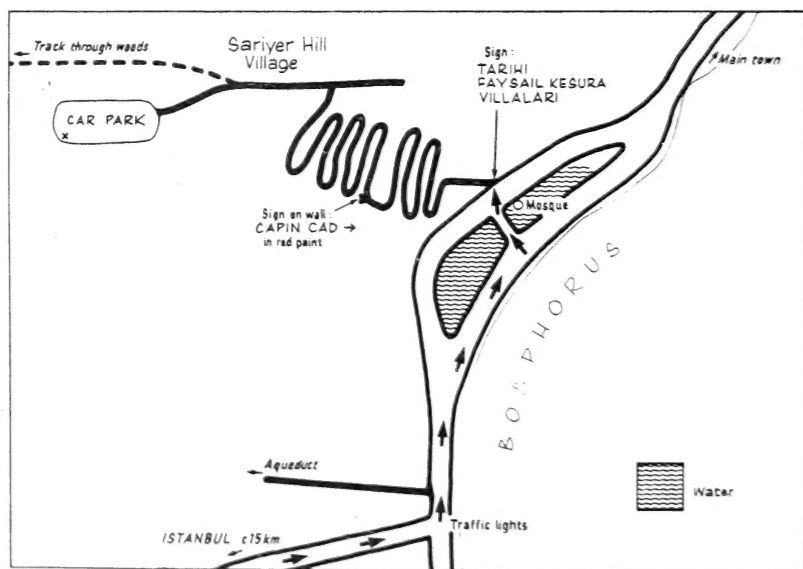
We were staying in Harem on the Asian side of Istanbul in a hotel packed with birders. On our return, we learned that it had been another poor day on 'Little' Camlica, the hill from which most people were now watching. We had not only seen many more birds, but also a greater variety than at any time on the Camlica Hills: five species of eagle including Imperial and White-tailed, and both Peregrine and Lanner.

The following day, we returned to Sariyer Hill, this time with three Dutch and two Belgian birders; a coach full of Belgians followed later.



Map 1. Bosphorus region of Turkey.

Map 2. Sariyer Hill, Turkey.



We were not the only birders there: two Danes were already watching. They had found the hill a week to ten days earlier, in the same way that we had. They told us of the numbers of birds they had been seeing: many times more than we had seen from Camlica during the same period. The migration over Sariyer Hill is quite different from that at Camlica. From the time we arrived (0900), there were birds in the air: 173 in the first hour (Table 1), then a dull period between 1000 - 1200, with under 100 birds seen. From noon, the numbers steadily grew, with the peak time between 1500 and 1600. We left at 1700 to get back to the hotel, but there were still more birds coming through at that time; some were putting down in the forest.

Time:	0900	1000	1100	1200	1300	1400	1500	1600-1700
Honey Buzzard					1			
Black Kite					1			
Egyptian Vulture							1	3
Griffon Vulture							4	
Short-toed eagle	11	20	13	8	10	19	48	57
Sparrowhawk	3	2	7	4	7	5	2	1
Levant Sparrowhawk					7			
Buzzard	25	17	10	68	200	254	279	432
Lesser Spotted eagle	131	17	6	20	143	150	1113	215
Booted Eagle		2	1		4	3	5	1
Hobby	2	1	2	3	2	2	2	2
Black Stork	1			2		2	18	69
Totals	173	59	39	105	375	435	1472	780 = 3438

Table 1:

Numbers of birds seen per hour from Sariyer Hill, 26 September

September 27 was our 'big day' (Table 2), and the pattern was the same, with birds flying as soon as we arrived (0740), a dull spell between 1000 - 1200, and picking up in the afternoon; and again when we left there were still a great many birds coming through.

Time:	0740	0800	0900	1000	1100	1200	1300	1400	1500-1600
Honey Buzzard		1	2						
Black Kite									1
Egyptian Vulture							1	6	7
Griffon Vulture			1						1
Short-toed Eagle	1	48	32	7	11	52	73	103	128
Sparrowhawk	2	2	1		2	2	3		
Levant Sparrowhawk	4	4	1		1	1		9	3
Buzzard	33	150	22	5	14	291	286	560	405
Imperial Eagle						1			
Spotted Eagle			1					1	
Lesser Spotted Eagle		402	1479		26	394	1259	771	1281
Booted Eagle		4	1			5	8	4	3
Hobby	4	1							
White Stork	4								
Totals:	45	876	1539	12	54	760	1633	1514	1849 = 8282

Table 2:
Number of birds seen per hour from Sariyer Hill, 27 September 1988.

The differences between Sariyer and Camlica Hills are quite striking. Camlica this year was basically no different to my other two visits (1982 and 1983). There is little point in getting to Camlica before 1000, and quite often there is very little movement before 1200; then if there is good passage it is usually over by 1500 - 1600 (the peak time at Sariyer).

There are many more eagles of a greater variety at Sariyer, but harriers seem scarce, whereas they were regular over Camlica. Sariyer seemed to have fewer Levant Sparrowhawks, but the main passage may have already been over, as our highest number over Camlica was on 20 September (Table 3). Numbers of storks seem greater over Camlica (357 Black storks at Sariyer on 27th, but over twice that number were seen from Camlica on the same day).

September:	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
Hill	BC	BC	BC	BC	BC	BC	LC	LC	LC	SH	SH	SH
Honey Buzzard	2				1	3	2	2	1	4	1	3
Black Kite			1		2	3	3			1	1	1
White-tailed Eagle										1		
Egyptian Vulture	2				31	21	7	3	1	7	4	14
Griffon Vulture					3					1	4	2
Short-toed Eagle	1	6	4	24	33	21	25	11		127	186	455
Marsh Harrier	6		4			4						
Hen Harrier			2									
Montagu's Harrier	1								1			
Goshawk	1	1					5		1			
Sparrowhawk	10	1	11	2	4	3	3	11	4	11	31	12
Levant Sparrowhawk		60	70	63	407	86	299	66	5	114	7	22
Buzzard	2		1	9	32	118	75	202	60	3676	1285	1766
Imperial Eagle										1		
Spotted Eagle												2
Lesser Spotted Eagle	5	46	53	54	77	228	150	50	44	2069	1795	5612
Booted Eagle	3	2			2		1	4		6	16	25
Lanner										3		
Peregrine		1								4		
Eleanora's Falcon									1			
Hobby	4	3	5	12	4	6	13	6	9	2	16	5
Red-footed Falcon			4									
Kestrel	1	1	2	2	2		1		1			
White Stork	1		2	1	72	4	11					4
Black Stork		2	40	12	544	220	280	43		24	92	357
	39	123	199	179	1211	720	875	398	128	6051	3438	8282

BC = Big Camlica, LC = Little Camlica, SH = Sariyer Hill.

Table 3: Summary of migration between 16-27 September 1988.

Sariyer appears to have very well defined migration paths, which do not depend on wind direction or wind strength. In the early morning, the majority of birds cross the Bosphorus a little to the south of the hill, making a longer crossing over Sariyer Bay, but they are not as high. As the temperature climbs, they alter their course so that between about 1300 - 1500 they are passing directly overhead; then as the day begins to cool the birds tend to pass more to the west and go behind the hill. Wherever the birds are, good views are obtained, especially when they pass low and close overhead.

A few words about the approach to the hill are necessary. The route shown in map 2 is very steep and potentially dangerous: there is a lot of development along this road, and Turkish drivers are not the most cautious. It is worth investigating the track which runs west of the village of Sariyer Hill, which must come out on the road between Sariyer and Kilyos. This is reached from the centre of Sariyer, but we did not have time to check on this. Apparently, there are few, if any, good hotels in Sariyer; but there are several in Kilyos, on the Black Sea, and, of course, Sariyer is not far from Istanbul where there are many various priced hotels - the only problem is the traffic.

Having said how good Sariyer Hill is, there could be a future problem. As mentioned above, there is a lot of development up the side of the hill, and this is true of all the slopes overlooking the Bosphorus - there are houses and estates going up literally everywhere. The village of Sariyer Hill at the summit does not cover the whole area, and at present no new houses are being built on that west side, but I believe it is only a matter of time. The X marked on the map 2 is on a corner of cleared land which looks like a car park - but has no cars! This spot, from the point of view of watching the migration, is ideal and would probably be the last part to be developed as it has the most restricted view over the Bosphorus.

I hope that the members of OSME, together perhaps with the Turkish conservation societies and ICBP, can find a way of preserving this site. Because it is a site for people rather than birds, the solution has to be more than just conservation. I believe that the only viable plan is to build a field centre there - it does not have to be grand. It could be staffed by local society members and could be an attraction for local people as well as visiting birdwatchers. The woodland adjacent to this site extends for several miles and could attract visitors during the spring and summer - it could also help preserve some of the unique Bosphorus habitat, which is disappearing at an alarming rate.

This site is clearly important. The numbers of raptors and storks counted here and over the Camlica Hills give an indication of the populations in Eastern Europe and Western Russia. It could be that population estimates based on the Bosphorus over the last few years will need revising in the light of Sariyer Hill being discovered. Help is needed this autumn.

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RAPTOR COUNTING: WHERE SHOULD WE GO FROM HERE?

Geoff and Hilary Welch

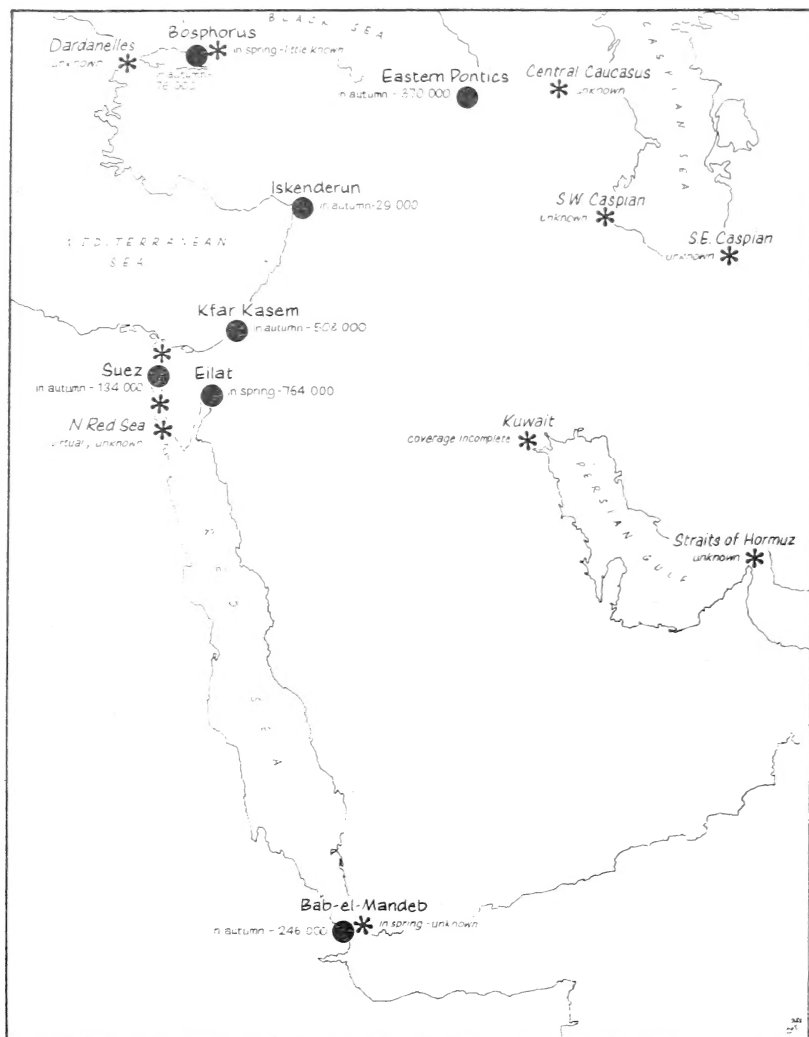
Over the last 20 years, much pioneering work has been carried out on raptor migration through the Middle East, and today several major concentration points are known. With one or two notable exceptions, however, most sites have not been covered for more than one or two seasons. Furthermore, when it comes to trying to interpret the data - to give some indication of raptor population sizes and of the routes used by particular species - we have not really progressed very far. Our present knowledge of raptor migration through the region can be likened to the pieces of a giant three-dimensional jigsaw, with odd bits from here and there. The pieces are widely scattered and often so dissimilar that it is difficult to believe they are from the same puzzle. With the added fourth dimension of Time, we are really working on several different pictures, so trying to make the pieces fit together is erroneous.

The obvious way significantly to increase our understanding of the migration is to have a series of co-ordinated standardised counts, and to concentrate resources at the two main entry points of birds into Africa, the Suez area and Bab-el-Mandeb. If information specific to Eastern European populations was required, the Bosphorus/Dardenelles complex would also need to be covered. The logistics of organising such counts, lasting for anything up to four months, are, however, somewhat daunting. Additionally, we should be no nearer to filling in the biggest gaps in the jigsaw, those between the major concentration points.

Away from the main concentration points, raptor movements are usually on a broad front, at great height and difficult to observe. Records therefore tend to be of small numbers of birds from a wide scatter of localities. If all these data could be collated, perhaps a fuller picture would begin to emerge. This is where you, and the rest of the OSME membership, come in. How many members have odd records of groups of migrating raptors, or perhaps of only individual birds, tucked away in a notebook? Or observations made under far-from-ideal conditions; from a bus or car, or during a 20-minute break whilst having lunch or changing a tyre? All these data, though not collected systematically, can be of great interest when added together.

In an effort to fill in some 'middle bits' of the jigsaw, we are proposing to establish a 'raptor database'; and invite OSME members, and others, to send us copies of those records which have never seen the light of day. Information submitted should relate to birds considered to be migrating, and should include details of species, number and age (if available), location (ideally co-ordinates), date, time, direction of flight, and weather conditions.

Key raptor migration sites in the Middle East



- - documented sites
- * - undocumented, little known or sites requiring coverage at another time of year

We should also like to focus attention on the sites which need further coverage; the obvious contenders are shown on the map. Visits need not be major expeditions: they could be a spring visit to Istanbul, a week touring the deserts of the north Red sea, a few days on an Intourist trip to Tbilisi in the central Caucasus, a few hours sailing through the straits of Hormuz; but if the data are collected in a systematic fashion, they are all valuable. We also suggest that anyone planning a detailed raptor count should ensure that the data are collected in such a way as to allow the figures to be compared with other sites and with future counts. To this end, we have drawn up a list of suggested guidelines based on our experiences in Djibouti.

This brief article is largely a result of discussions with Richard Porter about how raptor migration information can best be gathered in the Middle East. We hope that it will help provide a focus for future work and enable those who are interested to make a useful contribution. We look forward to hearing from you.

ARABIAN WARBLERS IN JORDAN IN APRIL 1963

D. I. M. Wallace

On 23 April 1963, I. J. Ferguson-Lees and I saw three large Sylvia warblers in acacias near the agricultural settlement of Safi, about 5km south of the Dead Sea, Jordan. On the day, we were unaware of any Arabian Warblers S. leucomelaena nearer than the Southern Red Sea region and although the birds struck us as different from the several undoubted migrant and/or breeding Orphean Warblers S. hortensis seen in the nearby highlands from 13 - 30 April, they were logged as that species. Only after the publication of the discovery and proven breeding of the Arabian Warbler in the western sector of the rift (Zahavi and Dudai 1974) did I suspect that we had missed something important and hence my eventual listing of the three birds as "more likely to have been S. leucomelaena" (Wallace 1984). I should have liked to have gone further, but I could not match my memories of the birds, assisted by some brief notes and a small sketch of one, to any then extant description or skin of the Arabian Warbler's nominate race from southwest Arabia. With both my personal gurus - the late Colonel Meinertzhagen and the late Kenneth Williamson - agreeing that the species was a Sylvia so like Orphean as to be separable only on structure, the only safe course was to offer an option to later observers.

Time and the experience of others move on, however, and research into the Arabian Warbler in Israel has now produced apparently a new subspecies, negevensis, described from 20 birds collected between the Southern Dead Sea and the Gulf of Eilat (or Aqaba) by Shirihi (1983) and a full statement upon the identification of the species by Shirihi (1989). The description of the holotype and the further notes on the Israeli birds

convince me that the male bird seen first and closest at Safi - through 9 x 35 binoculars at c.15-20m in the centre of an acacia canopy - was an Arabian Warbler. I have no reason to doubt that the other two were as well.

The only comment made in my 1984 paper on the birds' appearance was that they were "noticeably bright and contrasting". My notes on the first were actually "puzzlingly bright and contrasting for Orphee, virtually black head contrasting with white throat and clean grey back, noticeably pale underparts without dirty flanks, odd balance with legs set forward or apparently long tail". All these characters are obvious in the photographs of perched birds in Shirihai (1989). In the rush of our exploration, I did not look at the birds for long, and I have no mention nor recall of eye-ring or eye colour. Nevertheless, my small sketch does have a resemblance to a Sardinian Warbler S. melanocephala. It is Shirihai's mentions of just such a recall in his papers, his stress on the Israeli birds' relative cleanness and the remarkably evocative photographs that now make me certain of the Arabian Warbler's presence in a small area of Jordan in 1963.

It is worth stressing that all three birds were in acacias - the tree sine qua non of the species - and no farther than 3km from the Jordan/Israel border (to the west and ecologically irrelevant to any bird). By all accounts, their distribution down the western side of the rift is continuous, and there must be every chance that the Arabian Warbler occurs throughout the acacia scrub of the depression. As far as I know, its Jordan (eastern) sector remains unexplored. Perhaps some modern observers will forsake the beaten path in Jordan and define the full range of what may be the Western Palearctic's newest subspecies.

References

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BIRDWATCHING IN THE SINAI

Mindy Rosenzweig

The Sinai Peninsula, situated at the intersection of two continents, is one of the best locations in the Western Palearctic to observe migrating

birds. Autumn migration (September to October) through the Sinai is particularly spectacular. One of the most impressive sights is migration along Sinai's Mediterranean coast. The Protected Area at Zaranik on Lake Bardawil is the ideal site to see migrants. One can sit at Zaranik and watch tremendous flocks of herons, ducks, waders, gulls and terns, flying along the shore. On the beach, passerines, kingfishers and quails take refuge in the scrub, while pelicans and raptors can be spotted soaring overhead. Zaranik is not open to the general public, but access can be arranged through the North Sinai Governorate Environmental Office. If this is not possible, there are many other areas along Sinai's northern coast which birdwatchers can explore.

In the autumn, migrating birds are found throughout the Peninsula, especially on the Gulf of Aqaba and Suez coasts. Passerine migrants occur in nearly all vegetated areas, even in remote desert oases, such as St Catherine. Birds work their way south to the tip of the Peninsula and then cross over to the Eastern Desert coast by way of the chain of islands lying at the mouth of the Gulf of Suez. In the vicinity of Sharm El-Sheikh and Ras Mohammed, large numbers of raptors and storks can be seen riding the thermals overhead as they cross the Gulf. The tip is also a bottleneck, with many birds stopping to feed and rest before continuing their journey south. Birds of prey and other exhausted migrants roost in the trees near the sewage pond located between Na'ama Bay and Sharm El-Sheikh and in the coastal mangroves.

Spring migration (March to April) is also a good time to watch birds in the Sinai, but more information is needed about migration through the Peninsula during this season. As in the autumn, large numbers of birds migrate along the Mediterranean coast. Spectacular numbers of storks have been recorded at Zaranik in the spring, as well as a variety of raptors and passerines. Other birds enter Sinai at narrow points along the Gulf of Suez, for example at Gabel Tor. Ras Mohammed, at the tip of the Peninsula, is also an important migratory route, as thousands of birds of prey cross into the Sinai and then migrate up the coast to Eilat.

In addition to migrants, interesting resident species occur in the Sinai. Cream-coloured Coursers and a variety of larks and wheatears can be seen while driving through the desert, especially in wadis and vegetated depressions. Sinai is also home to a number of rare resident species, such as Houbara Bustard, Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse, Hume's Tawny Owl and Temminck's Horned Lark. Since the Peninsula is a transition point between the Middle East and North Africa, there are a number of birds resident in the Sinai found nowhere else in Egypt, such as Tristram's Grackle, Sinai Rosefinch, and Orange-tufted Sunbird. Red Sea species, such as Western Reef Heron and Green-backed Heron, occur on the beaches and in the mangroves in the south, and White-eyed Gull and Brown Booby, breeding on nearby islands, frequently appear along the southern coasts.

Furthermore, birdwatching in the Sinai can be rewarding all year round. Many European species winter in the coastal cities and cultivated areas in the northwest corner of the Peninsula. Unusual winter visitors have also been recorded; for example, there is a recent record of Dead Sea Sparrow at Nuweiba'. In summer, Sooty Falcons can be found breeding in southern Sinai and Verreaux's Eagle has attempted to breed in the mountains. Sinai, due to its strategic location, is an excellent place at any time of year to discover interesting vagrants. This autumn, a Dusky Warbler was seen at the pumping station at Na'ama Bay, the first record for Egypt. Earlier in the spring, a juvenile Bateleur was spotted at Ras Mohammed, and a Goliath Heron was observed feeding in the mangrove channel there this winter.

While the Sinai desert is rich in bird life, very scenic with beautiful beaches, reefs and mountains, and inexpensive, it has been largely unexplored by birdwatchers. This is surprising since the Sinai can easily be reached from Cairo or through the Israeli border at Taba and Rafah; there is even a ferry between Jordan and Nuweiba', as well as a ferry between Hurghada and Sharm El-Sheikh. Cheap public transport runs between all major cities in the Peninsula, and taxis can be rented. For the more daring birdwatcher, rental cars can be leased in Cairo. A wide variety of accommodation can be found in the Sinai, from inexpensive tenting villages to five-star hotels; or, for those on a limited budget, camping is permissible in most areas.

The following is a selective list of birds seen during three trips to the Sinai in the autumn and winter: Zaranik Protected Areas at Lake Bardawil, 22-24 September 1988; South Sinai, 9-15 October 1988; and North Sinai, 12-15 January 1988. On the North Sinai trip, many observations were contributed by Dave Farrow, who has been working in Egypt for several months and birding throughout the country. It is hoped that this article will encourage more birdwatchers to visit Egypt and especially the Sinai, to help increase our ornithological knowledge of the country.

The Ornithological Society of Egypt is compiling a data bank of all bird sightings in Egypt and would greatly appreciate records from past or future trips to Egypt being sent to OSE via Mindy Rosenzweig, ICBP Co-ordinator, Executive Business Services, Cairo Marriott Hotel, P.O. Box 33, Zamalek, Cairo, Egypt.

Great Crested Grebe Podiceps cristatus One, diving offshore, Zaranik 23/9/88.

White Pelican Pelecanus onocrotalus Flock of 75-100, flying in a south-western direction, Zaranik 24/9/88.

Night Heron Nycticorax nycticorax Flock of 15, flying along the coast at Zaranik 22/9/88; and seven, roosting in the mangroves at Ras Mohammed, 13/10/88.

Squacco Heron Ardeola ralloides 30, several flocks migrating along coast, Zaranik 22/9/88.

Western Reef Heron Egretta gularis One, feeding on the coast at the Nuweiba' Holiday Village, 11/10/88; and several individuals seen from the car along the coast in the south.

Little Egret Egretta garzetta 100-150, flocks seen flying along the coast and feeding on the salt flats, Zaranik 22/9/88; and one at the sewage farm near Sharm El-Sheikh, 13/10/88.

Great White Egret Egretta alba Four, feeding on mud flats, Zaranik, 22/9/88.

Grey Heron Ardea cinerea 100-200, flocks flying along the coast and feeding in the salt flats, Zaranik, 22-23/9/88; one, sewage farm near Sharm El-Sheikh, 13/10/88; and one, mangroves, Ras Mohammed 13/10/88.

Purple Heron Ardea purpurea 50, several flocks flying along coast Zaranik, 22/9/88.

White Stork Ciconia ciconia 15, roosting near sewage farm at Sharm El-Sheikh, 12/10/88; 30-40 circling above road between Na'ama Bay and Sharm El-Sheikh, 13/10/88; and six, dead around pond at sewage farm.

Glossy Ibis Plegadis falcinellus One, in reeds at the pond at the sewage farm, Sharm El-Sheikh, 12-13/10/88.

Garganey Anas querquedula 100-200, flocks migrating along the coast at Zaranik, 22-23/9/88; and one, dead at the sewage farm, Sharm El-Sheikh.

Black Kite Milvus migrans 20, circling behind the Marine El Sharm Hotel, Na'ama Bay, and over Sharm El-Sheikh and the sewage farm, 12-13/10/88.

Egyptian Vulture Neophron percnopterus One, juvenile roosting in the trees, sewage farm, Sharm El-Sheikh, 13/10/88.

Griffon Vulture Gyps fulvus Two, soaring over the mountains along the main road near Nuweiba', 12/10/88.

Marsh Harrier Circus aeruginosus One, female, Zaranik, 23/9/88; and one, female, sewage farm at Sharm El-Sheikh 13/10/88.

Sparrowhawk Accipiter nisus Two, females, roosting in the trees, sewage farm at Sharm El-Sheikh, 12-13/10/88; and one, male, road between El Arish and Rafah, 13/1/89.

Levant Sparrowhawk Accipiter brevipes One, female, flying through the mangroves, Ras Mohammed, 13/10/88.

Steppe Buzzard Buteo buteo Five, several roosting in trees at sewage farm and scattered individuals circling overhead near Sharm I-Sheikh and Na'ama Bay, 12-13/10/88; and one, in desert near the Israeli border south of Rafah, 13/1/89

Steppe Eagle Aquila nipalensis 15, with Black Kites at Na'ama Bay and roosting in the trees at the sewage farm, 12-13/10/88.

Imperial Eagle Aquila heliaca One, sub-adult, spiralling overhead at sewage farm near Sharm El-Sheikh, 13/10/88.

Osprey Pandion haliaetus Two, feeding on lake, Zaranik, 23/9/88.

Red-footed Falcon Falco tinnunculus One, on telephone wires on main road between El Arish and Zaranik, 23/9/88.

Hobby Falco subbuteo Three, on telephone wires on main road between El Arish and Zaranik, 23/9/88.

Chukar Alectoris chukar Eight, central North Sinai, 14/1/89.

Sand Partridge Ammoperdix heyi Eight, resident, St Catherine, 14/10/88; and eight, desert, central North Sinai, 14/1/89.

Quail Coturnix coturnix Seven, coming in from the sea, in the scrub along the beach, and others trapped in quail nets, Zaranik, 22-24/9/88.

Oystercatcher Haematopus ostralegus One, flying along the coast and feeding in the salt pans, Zaranik 23-24/9/88.

Avocet Recurvirostra avosetta 100-200, flocks flying along the coast and feeding in the salt pans, Zaranik, 23-24/9/88.

Kentish Plover Charadrius alexandrinus One, feeding along beach, Zaranik, 22/9/88; and 10, Uyun Musa, 15/1/89.

Spur-winged Plover Hoplopterus spinosus One, sewage farm near Sharm El-Sheikh, 12-13/10/88.

Lapwing Vanellus vanellus Two, sewage farm near Sharm El-Sheikh, 12/10/88; and one, mangrove channel, Ras Mohammed, 13/10/88.

Sanderling Calidris alba 50-100, flocks migrating along the coast and feeding along shore, Zaranik, 22-23/9/88.

Little Stint Calidris minuta 10, feeding along beach, Zaranik 23/9/88; and two, Uyun Musa, 15/1/89.

Dunlin Calidris alpina 50-100, flocks migrating along the coast and feeding along shore, Zaranik, 22/9/88; one, feeding on the mud flats, Dahab, 12/10/88; and 30, Uyun Musa, 15/1/89.

Curlew Numenius arquata Two, feeding near beach, Zaranik, 23/9/88.



White-eyed Gull Larus leucophthalmus One, flying along beach, Na'ama Bay, 12-13/10/88.

Slender-billed Gull Larus genei 100, flocks migrating along the coast, Zaranik, 22-23/9/88; and three, roosting on mud flats, Dahab, 12/10/88.

Gull-billed Tern Gelochelidon nilotica Two, roosting on mud flats, Zaranik, 23/9/88.

Caspian Tern Sterna maxima One, roosting on mud flats, Dahab, 12/10/88.

Common Tern Sterna hirundo 50-100, several flocks migrating along the coast, Zaranik, 22-23/9/88.

Black Tern Chlidonias niger One, roosting on beach, Zaranik, 23/9/88.

White-winged Black Tern Chlidonias leucopterus 100-200, flocks migrating along the coast, Zaranik, 22-23/9/88; and one, feeding at the pond, sewage farm near Sharm El-Sheikh, 12-13/10/88.

White-breasted Kingfisher Halcyon smyrnensis Two, one feeding along the beach, and the other in the fields near coast, Rafah, 13/1/89.

Kingfisher Alcedo atthis Seven, feeding along the shore, Zaranik; one, with wing feathers torn out by quail-trappers and left to die, 22-23/9/88; and two, in mangroves, Ras Mohammed, 12/10/88.

Bee-eater Merops apiaster 30, in the trees, sewage farm near Sharm El-Sheikh, 12-13/10/88.

Roller Coracias garrulus One, startled from the trees, sewage farm near Sharm El-Sheikh, 13/10/88.

Wryneck Jynx torquilla One, in the compound at the Nuweiba' Holiday Village, 11/10/88.

Desert Lark Ammomanes deserti Nominat race, common desert resident throughout Sinai.

Hoopoe Lark Alaemon alaudipes Common resident in desert areas in North Sinai, seen south to Ras Matarna.

Short-toed Lark Calandrella brachydactyla Small flocks feeding in the scrub along the beach, one individual in cage with quails, Zaranik, 23/9/88.

Skylark Alauda arvensis 12, in field near Multi-National Headquarters near Rafah, 13/1/89.

Rock Martin Ptyonoprogne fuligula Common desert resident, South Sinai.

* Richard's Pipit Anthus novaeseelandiae One, Nuweiba' Holiday Village, 11/10/88.

Tree Pipit Anthus trivialis One, on tree limb, Nuweiba' Holiday Village, 11/10/88.

Meadow pipit Anthus pratensis One, in parking lot next to the Marine El Sharm Hotel, Na'ama Bay, 13/10/88.

Red-throated Pipit Anthus cervinus Two, gardens at the Nuweiba' Holiday Village, 11/10/88; and a small flock outside the Marine El Sharm Hotel, Na'ama Bay, 12/10/88.

Yellow-vented Bulbul Pycnonotus xanthopygos Resident Nuweiba' and North Sinai along coast.

Robin Erithacus rubecula Three, winter visitor, El Arish and Rafah, 13/1/89.

Black Redstart Phoenicurus ochruros Five, winter visitor, El Arish and Rafah, 13/1/89.

Redstart Phoenicurus phoenicurus Five, Zaranik, 22/9/10; and one, St Catherine, 14/10/88.

Blackstart Cercomela melanura Two, resident at Nuweiba', 10-11/10/88; and one, St Catherine, 14/10/88.

Stonechat Saxicola torquata One, around pond at the sewage farm, Sharm El-Sheik, 13/10/88; and very common winter visitor to North.

Wheatear Oenanthe oenanthe 50, in scrub on beach; and several taken from quail nets and put into cage, Zaranik, 22-23/9/88.

Isabelline Wheatear Oenanthe isabellina One, Na'ama Bay, in parking lot near Marine El Sharm Hotel, 13/10/88.

Black-eared Wheatear Oenanthe hispanica One, male, western race, in scrub on beach, Zaranik, 23/9/88.

Desert Wheatear Oenanthe deserti Common resident throughout Sinai, especially in the North.

Hooded Wheatear Oenanthe monacha Three, along main road between Taba and Nuweiba', 10/10/88.

White-crowned Black Wheatear Oenanthe leucopyga Common resident in South.

Graceful Warbler Prinia gracilis One, heard at Rafah, 13/1/89.

Scrub Warbler Scotocerca inquieta Six, resident in St Catherine, 14/10/88; and two, wadi, central North Sinai, 14/1/89.

Reed Warbler Acrocephalus scirpaceus Large number in reeds at sewage farm near Sharm El-Sheikh; one individual had been attracted at night to the lights and was rescued from the giftshop on the beach at the Marine El Sharm Hotel, 12-13/10/88.

Olivaceous Warbler Hippolais pallida One, in the scrub along the beach, Zaranik, 23/9/88.



Sardinian Warbler Sylvia melanocephala One, in the palms along the beach at Na'ama Bay, 12/10/88; one, in palms along the beach at El Arish 13/1/89; and one, in tree at Rafah, 13/1/89.

*Barred Warbler Sylvia nisoria One, juvenile, in the trees at the pumping station, Na'ama Bay, 13/10/88.

Lesser Whitethroat Sylvia curruca Eight, in scrub along the beach, Zaranik, 23/9/88; five, in trees around the pumping station at Na'ama Bay, 13/10/88; and 20, feeding in trees at St Catherine, 14/10/88. Several individuals were seen feeding in the acacias along the coast road in the South.

*Dusky Warbler Phylloscopus fuscatus One, feeding on ground in the vegetation around the pumping station, Na'ama Bay, 12 - 13/10/88.

Wood Warbler Phylloscopus sibilatrix One, feeding in trees at the Nuweiba' Holiday Village, 10/10/88.

Chiffchaff Phylloscopus collybita Two, Zaranik, 23/9/88; and one, St Catherine, 14/10/88. Fairly common winter visitor along the north coast.

Willow Warbler Phylloscopus trochilus 13, Zaranik, 23/9/88; and 10, at the pump station at Na'ama Bay, 13/10/88; and a large number were feeding in the trees in the garden at the Monastery, St Catherine, 14/10/88.

Spotted Flycatcher Muscicapa striata One, Zaranik, 23/9/88; and five, Na'ama Bay, 13/10/88.

Golden Oriole Oriolus oriolus One, female, in the scrub, Zaranik, 23/9/88.

Red-backed Shrike Lanius collurio Eight, in scrub along beach, Zaranik, 23/9/88; and a very common migrant in South, especially near Sharm El-Sheikh. Every acacia tree seemed to have a red-backed shrike perched on a limb.

Great Grey Shrike Lanius excubitor One, Zaranik, 23/9/88; and one, on telephone wires on main road between El Arish and Rafah, 13/1/89.

Brown-necked Raven Corvus ruficollis Very common desert species, found in all areas, especially near human habitation.

Tristram's Grackle Onychognathus tristramii Four, resident near the Monastery, St Catherine, 14/10/88.

Starling Sturnus vulgaris 40, flocks flying south over the desert near Rafah, 13/1/89.

Spanish Sparrow Passer hispaniolensis Very common migrant in large flocks in South, and scattered individuals and small flocks wintering in the North.

Chaffinch Fringilla coelebs 50, scattered individuals and flocks in trees around Rafah, 13/1/89.

Linnet Carduelis cannabina 10, flock on road from Suez to El Arish, 12/1/89.

Trumpeter Finch Bucanetes githageneus 12, in wadi along Suez to Nuweiba' Road, 9/10/88.

Sinai Rosefinch Carpodacus synoicus Six, two males, resident near Monastery and on Mount Musa, St Catherine, 14/10/88.

Cretzschmar's Bunting Emberiza caesia One, male, in scrub along beach; and several unidentified juvenile buntings, Zaranik, 23/9/88.

*Official Egyptian rarities

Executive Business Services, Cairo Marriott Hotel, P.O. Box 33, Zamalek, Cairo, Egypt.

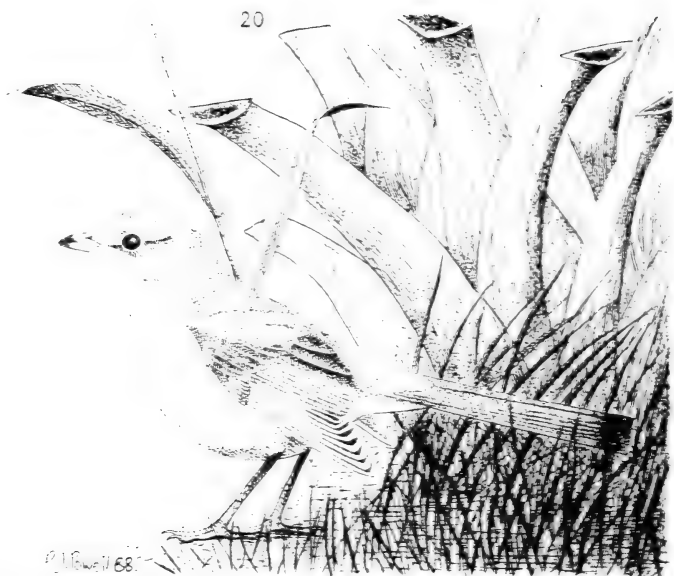
A FEW BIRD DROPPINGS FROM BAHRAIN

Tom Nightingale

The year 1988 has been one of mixed fortunes for the birds of Bahrain; loss of habitat continues. Spring witnessed the clearance of all thorn bushes and trees from one of two known roosting sites of the Grey Hypocolius, the area being replanted with young date palms. Judging by the number (maximum 450 during winter 1987/88) of hypocolius counted at dusk on their roosting flights (from their main feeding ground in a large and secluded garden of mixed vegetation), other roosting sites on the island do exist, although I have yet to find them. The maximum count during winter 1988/89 of these splendid visitors totalled 161, an indication that numbers are indeed highly variable between years.

Spring also saw the clearance of old date palms adjacent to the Adhan' Gardens, and thus the loss of an important roosting site for Little Egrets.

The autumn provided no respite: bulldozers were at work again uprooting some of Bahrain's few remaining mangroves in the Jurdab pool and removing all adjacent palm trees, thus destroying a night heron roost site, which at times during past winters had sheltered several hundred birds.



Finally, to add insult to injury, Jurdab pool, one of the few remaining brackish pools on the island was filled in, leaving Little Bitterns, Water Rails, Moorhens, assorted ducks, and Bluethroats to seek alternative accommodation.

On a more cheerful note, the Government has made available to the Natural History Society a sewage stream adjacent to the United Building Factory. This small site has declined in recent years through human interference. It is hoped with careful management that new life can be given to the dying reed beds, and that, once water levels are restored and access restricted, the UBF stream can regain its former modest glory, continuing to provide a home for the majority of our breeding population of moorhens and the few little bitterns that have stuck it out in the diminishing reedbeds come hell or low water.

An extensive programme of tree planting, and a continuing trend towards converting barren land to agriculture on this small, crowded island, augurs well for the long term, and should provide welcome habitat for many migrant birds in spring and autumn. Loss of wintering habitat, which is however at a premium should be the cause of some concern.

Nevertheless, Bahrain continues to provide splendid birdwatching in all seasons. Personal highlight of year must be accorded to a flock of 13 Dotterels which spent Boxing Day and the remaining days of 1988 on farmland belonging, appropriately enough, to the President of Bahrain's Natural History Society.

DEMOISELLE CRANES IN ISRAEL

A. R. M. Howes

At about 13.00 hours on 21 March 1988, a party of eight birdwatchers led by myself entered the eastern end of a wadi known as En Zafzafa, to the west of Route 90, at a point eight kilometres south of Ein Gedi on the western shore of the Dead Sea.

Our attention was drawn to a flock of 126 crane-like birds flying north across the wadi. The birds were in two groups: 102 individuals followed closely by 24 more. They flew in a ragged formation, but otherwise fairly straight. Their necks were extended forwards, and their legs trailed well beyond the tail.

All appeared to be of the same size and species, although there were no other birds with which to compare size. In the bright sunshine, visibility was excellent.

We saw that each bird had a completely black neck, extending back to a point either level with or just behind the leading edge of the wing. The remainder of the underbody was grey, and there was a clean demarcation between this and the black on the neck and upper breast, eliminating any suggestion of shadow. An identical grey colour extended through the forewing-coverts, tapering gradually to a point on the leading edge beyond the carpal joint. The hand and flight feathers throughout the trailing edge of the wing to the body were black. The legs appeared dark, too.

The birds were in view for up to a minute as they flew overhead at a distance of less than 200 metres above ground; they did not call. Within the next few minutes, a flock of over 300 White Storks Ciconia ciconia also passed overhead in the same general direction. They were two or three times higher than the Cranes, but their black-and-white markings were clearly visible.

Most members of the group were using Zeiss 10 x 40 BGAT binoculars.

Demoiselle Cranes Anthropoides virgo have previously been recorded in Israel, but infrequently and then only in small numbers. This record has been accepted by the Rarities and Distribution Committee of Israel.

13 New Forest Close, Wigston Magna, Leicester LE8 2RW, Great Britain.

DONALD PARR MBOU: 1921 - 1988

Don Parr's name, probably more than any other, is linked to the creation and establishment of the Ornithological Society of the Middle East. He was not only the editor of the first ten issues of Sandgrouse, but also the Society's first Secretary; after being the last Secretary of the Ornithological Society of Turkey, OSME's predecessor.

I first met Don in 1973, when I joined his Hersham Ringing Group at Kempton Park, Surrey. My first impression of him was of someone with a tremendous capacity for early starts and long, hard days, an ability from which he never faltered while I knew him. Even with the renowned keenness of a rookie ringer and with my being a generation his junior, I found the greatest difficulty in matching his vigour and enthusiasm. Just when the day had worn me out, Don would decide to move camp to some other site, where we might catch a few migrants, flick-net Swifts, or process the contents of 40 nest-boxes. His patient teaching and attention to detail was an extremely good example and a very firm base for myself and many others who passed through his capable hands. Rejoining Hersham Ringing Group after Saudi Arabia in 1977, Don introduced me to the Ornithological Society of Turkey and, in his persuasive way, got me to take over the duties of Treasurer and Membership. Not an onerous task because, in late 1977, paid-up membership had sunk to a dismal 30. Very much due to Don's efforts as Secretary of OST, the Society gradually dragged itself together and, within five years, now as OSME, had reached a membership of 600 or more, a level at which it has remained, more or less, since. He took over the task of editing Sandgrouse after OSME had been badly let down on the editorial side after its formation. Had Don not been able to get three issues of Sandgrouse out in his first twelve months as Editor, and thereby catch up what was owed to members, the Society may well have collapsed before it got off the ground. Since those dark days, Don has taken Sandgrouse from strength to strength, each issue seeing an improvement on the last in format, presentation and content. At Council meetings as Secretary and Editor, his experience, attention to detail and downright common sense won great respect, and had much influence on the procedure, business and enterprises of the Society.

Apart from our mutual interest in Kempton Park, Turkey and OSME, we travelled together on three surveys in Egypt. In 1982, we both took part in a raptor survey at Suez. Don's old traits of energy and determination came to the fore here. Not content with a full day on his back looking at the sky for raptors, he had to trudge doggedly through every likely patch of vegetation and stagnant water early morning and late evening to catch up on elusive passerine migrants and waders that might just be there. Endearingly for a chap who had spent many years in the field, he still got a tremendous thrill out of seeing a 'lifer' - or even the mere chance of seeing one. In 1983 and 1984, we returned to Egypt in spring and autumn, respectively, to survey breeding seabirds on the islands in the Gulf of Suez. On these trips, shuttered together on little boats, sleeping rough or trudging across desolate islands, personality traits came to the fore. Don was a basically serious man, with a touch of the dourness of his native Yorkshire, but at the same time he was able to enjoy a joke, although not always if it was on him. He was practical, pragmatic, liked straight talking and liked his dealings to be procedural. These attributes could be an impediment when travelling in the Middle East, and in Egypt, for example, I found that he had little notion or patience for the contortions of the oriental mind, the perfection of the local bureaucracy or for the finer points of protracted haggling, all of which we met in great abundance.

Don was a man of many parts: by profession he was a Civil Servant and retired in the late 1970s, when working for the Health and Safety Executive. In retirement, he had a wide range of interests: gardening (especially herbs), jazz, classical music as well as renovating a large Victorian house. Effectively, however, he retired to birds, which had, it seems, already taken up the majority of the free time of his adult life.

His considerable overseas ornithological experience, especially of the Middle East, had been gained initially from his pioneering work as an ornithological tour leader in the 1960's. His tours took him to Turkey, Israel, Hungary, Greece, Rumania and many other countries. He was also much involved in more formal overseas studies; leading a BTO ringing expedition to Portugal in 1973, taking part in the pathfinding raptor migration surveys in northeast Turkey in 1979-80, an extensive bustard survey in Turkey in 1981 and ringing studies in Israel. His last organised overseas survey was to Ecuador in 1985. At home, he threw himself into local ornithology wherever he was. Spending much of his life in Surrey, he was a founder, in 1957, of the Surrey Bird Club and held high office in that body until his death. He was the BTO representative for Surrey for very many years and founded Herisham Ringing Group in 1967; he had been a ringer since 1951. He edited the classic county ornithology Birds in Surrey (1900-1970) in 1972. When he moved to Malvern, Worcestershire, after retirement, he soon became very deeply involved in organised ornithology there, too. He chaired Wychavon Ringing Group from 1985, was a committee member of the Hereford Ornithological Club from 1986, ran not one but two Constant Effort ringing sites in Worcestershire and two Common Bird Census sites at Malvern and Radnor. Elected to the Board of Malvern Hills Conservators in 1987, he chaired its wildlife advisory group. He was also a local Department of the Environment Wildlife Inspector from 1982.

Don died on 4 December 1988 after a short illness. He leaves a wife, Joyce, son, Martin, and daughter, Vivien, to whom our deepest sympathy is extended.

Michael Jennings

OSME was represented at Don's funeral by the Honorary Secretaries. Don requested that there should be no flowers at the funeral and instead invited donations to the Woodland Trust. OSME has sent £100, and The Woodland Trust has informed us that by 9 February £428 had been received in memory of Don. Any members wishing to send a personal contribution should address it to The Woodland Trust, Autumn Park, Dysart Road, Grantham, Lincs NG31 6LL, Great Britain.

LIBRARY REPORT

Geoff and Hilary Welch

Recent items received in the OSME library include the following which may not have come to the attention of all members.

Lavee, D. (1988). Why is the Houbara Chlamydotis undulata macqueenii still an Endangered Species in Israel? Biological Conservation 45: 47-54. An interesting paper detailing a study of the population in the NW Negev from December 1981 to June 1985. Despite protection, low predation pressure on adults and an abundant increase in plant food, the population was found to have remained virtually stable since the 1970s. Results suggest that livestock movements in the nesting area resulted in low productivity and hence prevented an increase in numbers.

Jennings, M. C. (1988). A Note on the Birds of the Farasan Islands, Red Sea, Saudi Arabia. Fauna of Saudi Arabia 9: 457-467. Based on the authors observations of March 1985, together with unpublished information and a literature review, this paper represents the first account of the birds of this island group. Details are given of the 30 species known or suspected to breed on the islands, together with notes on topography, vegetation and conservation recommendations.

Buttiker, W. (1988). Trapping of Turtle Doves (Streptopelia turtur Linnaeus, 1758) in Saudi Arabia. Fauna of Saudi Arabia 9: 12-18. This paper gives details of the two main trapping methods employed, an estimate of the number of birds captured, and speculates on the possible impact that this practise is having on the Turtle Dove. Perhaps as many as 100,000 are caught annually.

Bennett, C. J. L. (Ed.) (1988). Cyprus Ornithological Society (1957) 33rd Annual Report. This report, for 1986, follows the format of earlier editions. Information is given on the 237 species recorded during the year. These included the first records of Sociable Plover and Pied Stonechat, and second island records of Red-necked Grebe, Red Kite and Spotted Eagle. The report also contains a Weather Summary of 1986 and two papers: Considerations on the species richness detected along an ecological succession of Cyprus (Massa, B. & Catalisano, A.); and Some Biometric data of birds taken in Cyprus in Autumn 1986 (Magnin, G). Further details of obtaining the report, and of membership of the society, are available from its Editor (P.O. Box 4319, Nicosia, Cyprus).

de Bruin I., P., & S. (1988). Turkey July-August 1988. A privately produced trip list, giving details of 210 species recorded whilst travelling from Edirne in the NW to Birecik in the SE. The most exciting

observation was of a Spotted Sandpiper Actitis macularia on the Gökusu delta on 2 August (full details are apparently to be published in Dutch Birding). The report also includes a useful series of site maps and general hints on accommodation, food, travelling etc. The authors can be contacted at Coendersweg 73-2., 9722 GD Groningen, The Netherlands.

Schlorf, M. and Völker, R. (1988). Yemen 9.9 to 6.10.88. Another privately produced list, detailing observations made whilst travelling extensively throughout North Yemen. A total of 166 species was observed, including what would appear to be the first Yemen record of Manchurian Red-footed Falcon Falco amurensis. The authors can be contacted at An der Lohé 10, 2000 Hamburg 61, West Germany.

Richardson, C. (Ed.). 1988. Dubai Bird Report No. 5. This is the latest in a series of well-produced reports containing records from members of the Emirates Natural History Group and the Dubai Natural History Group. This one covers the period July-September 1988. As well as detailing the more interesting observations made in the period, the report contains several attractive illustrations by Bill Morton. Any members resident in or visiting the Dubai area are urged to send their records to Colin Richardson, P.O. Box 2825, Dubai, UAE.

van den Berg, A., Bison, P., & Kasperek, M. (1988). Striated Scops Owl in Turkey. Dutch Birding 10 (4): 161-166. This short paper details the species' occurrence in Turkey since 1982, and covers such aspects as vocalisation, behaviour and field identification. It is accompanied by a series of excellent photographs, in colour, of Striated Scops Owl in Turkey.

Gaucher, P., Petit, T., & Symens, P. (1988). Notes on the study of the Sooty Falcon Falco concolor during its breeding season in Saudi Arabia. Alauda 56 (3): 277-283. A short paper in English (with French abstract) detailing breeding observations from a Red Sea island near Al Lith. Nest descriptions are given together with information on prey remains, predominantly birds. This paper is worth getting for the accompanying colour photographs alone!

RECENT LITERATURE

F. E. Warr

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GAZETTEER OF NATURAL HISTORY ORGANISATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

This is an updated version of the list of natural history organisations active in the region, that was published in Bulletin 20. Several organisations have provided additional information which may be of use to members, and OSME will be happy to include similar additions from other groups in future editions of the Bulletin. Those marked (*) are members of OSME.

Bahrain

- (*) Bahrain Natural History Society
 Contact Tom Nightingale: P.O. Box 20336, Bahrain. Tel. Bahrain 530702
 Publications: monthly newsletter, excepting July & August; issues of selected bird records twice a year; sporadic biennial report.
 Meetings: monthly except July and August.
 Other information: Honorary President, Shaikha Noora Bint Essa Bin Sulman Al Khalifa.

Cyprus

- (*) Cyprus Ornithological Society (1957)
 Contact the Honorary Secretary, Charles J. L. Bennett, P.O. Box 4319, Nicosia, Cyprus.
 Publications: monthly newsletter and annual report.
 Meetings: monthly field meetings throughout the southern part of the island.
- Cyprus Ornithological Society (1979) c/o P. Neophytou, Kanaris Street 4, Strovolos 105, Cyprus.

Egypt

Egyptian Wildlife Service, Giza Zoo, Cairo, Egypt.

Ornithological Society of Egypt,
c/o Mindy Rosenzweig, Egyptian Wildlife Service.

Publications: Courser.

Meetings: monthly, plus field trips

Other information: membership US \$5.00 annually, members entitled to sticker and Courser. Can provide information on where to watch birds in Egypt.

Iran

(*) Dept of the Environment, P.O. Box 15875-5181, Tehran, Iran.

Iraq

(*) Natural History Museum, University of Basrah, Post Box 432, Basrah, Iraq.

Israel

(*) The A. D. Gordon Agriculture and Nature Study Institute, Deganya A 15-120, Israel.

Israel Bird Ringing Center, Queen Helena 13, P.O. Box 930, Jerusalem 91 008, Israel.

(*) Israel Raptor Information Center

Contact Yossi Leshem or Ofer Bahat: Har Gilo FSC, Doar Na Harei, Jerusalem 91 076, Israel. Tel. 02-741661, 02-741784, 03-375063.
Publications: Torgos twice yearly; booklets, posters, postcards etc.
Other information: 1,000 subscribers to Torgos, plus 9,000 raptor enthusiasts on file. Carries out research projects on soaring bird migration with Israeli Air Force; nesting and wintering raptors surveys; educational projects; practical conservation projects.

Israel Trust for Ornithology

Contact Hadoram Shirihai. P.O. Box 4168, Eilat 88102, Israel.
Other information: deals with the distribution of birds and the occurrence of rarities in Israel.

Nature Reserves Authority Birdwatching Centre, P.O. Box 774, Eilat, Israel.

(*) Society for Protection of Nature in Israel

Contact Peggy Brill or Yael Chaver (Editor, Israel Land and Nature): 4 Hashfela Street, Tel Aviv 66186, Israel.

Publications: Israel Land and Nature (quarterly, in English); Teva VaAretz and Research Centre's publications on relevant subjects.

Other information: membership of 45,000 in Israel and abroad. Concerned with nature conservation; 26 Field Study Centres provide a nationwide educational framework; participation in national and local planning procedures; Data, Information and Research Centres (mammals, raptors, reptiles, insects, plants, caves).

Tzufit, contact Ofer Bahat. c/o SPNI

Israel Ornithological Center, c/o SPNI.

United Kingdom Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel, c/o Anglo-Israel Association, 9 Bentinck Street, London W1M 5RP, Great Britain.

Jordan

- (*) Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature.
Contact Maher Abu Jafar (Director General, RSCN), P.O. Box 6354, Amman, Jordan. Tel. 811689.
Publications: El Reem magazine, quarterly.

Kuwait

Kuwait Natural History Group, c/o Prof. C. W. T. Pilcher, Dept of Pharmacology, Faculty of Medicine, P.O. Box 24923 Safat, Kuwait 13110.

Environment Protection Council of Kuwait, P.O. Box 24395 Safat, Kuwait.

Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, P.O. Box 24885 Safat, Kuwait.

Lebanon

Friends of Nature, P.O. Box 11 8281, Beirut, Lebanon.

Society for Protection of Nature and Natural Resources in Lebanon, P. O. Box 11 5665, Beirut, Lebanon.

Oman

- (*) Office of the Advisor for the Conservation of the Environment, P.O. Box 246, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman.

The Historical Association of Oman, Hon. Secretary, P.O. Box 6941, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman.

Oman Bird Records Committee, P.O. Box 246. Muscat, Sultanate of Oman.

Oman Natural History Museum, P.O. Box 668, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman.

Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen)

No contacts.

Qatar

Qatar Natural History Group, c/o Bryan Eccleston (Chairman), P.O. Box 7660, Doha, Qatar.

Saudi Arabia

Arabian Natural History Association, P.O. Box 6336, Dhahran, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Desert Ramblers, c/o Michael Denton, Saudi Telephones, P.O. Box 6350, Riyadh 11442, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Meteorological and Environmental Protection Administration, P.O. Box 1358, Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

- (*) National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development, Contact Mohamed al Salama: P.O. Box 61681, Riyadh 11575, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Tel. Riyadh 4418700.
Other information: sponsors The Phoenix and Fauna of Saudi Arabia.

National Wildlife Research Centre, P.O. Box 1086, Taif, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabian Natural History Society,
Contact John Ady, c/o The Bursar, The Continental School, P.O. Box 6453, Jeddah 21442 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Publications: Journal of the Saudi Arabian Natural History Society (annual).

Meetings: first Saturday evening of each month from October to June at the Continental School.

Saudi Biological Society, General Secretary, College of Science, University of Riyadh, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Syria

No contacts.

Turkey

- (*) Biyoloji Enstitüsü, Dr I. Kızıroğlu, Hacettepe Üniversitesi, Beycepe Kampüsü, Ankara, Turkey.
(*) Dogal Hayati Koruma Dernegi, PK 18, Bebek, Istanbul, Turkey.

United Arab Emirates

Dubai Natural History Group, P.O. Box 9292, Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Dubai Wildlife Research Centre, P.O. Box 11626, Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

- (*) Emirates Natural History Group (Abu Dhabi),
 Contact Ted Garside (Chairman)(tel. 770302) or Jo Fowler (Secretary)
 (tel. 326600) c/o Centre for Documentation and Research, P.O. Box
 2380, Abu Dhabi, UAE.
 Publications: monthly members' newsletter and a bulletin three times
 a year.
 Meetings: open to all, held 1st & 3rd Monday of each month, excepting
 July & August, at the Cultural Foundation, Abu Dhabi.
 Field trips September-April with smaller-scale research trips
 throughout the year.
 Other information: established 1977. Patron, His Excellency Sheikh
 Nahayyan bin Mubarak al Nahayyan.

Emirates Natural History Group (al Ain), P.O. Box 16027, Al Ain, Abu
 Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen)

Nature and Ornithological Society of Yemen c/o Mrs M. Higgins, c/o
 British Veterinary Project (Sana'a YAR), FCO Bagroom Sana'a, 14 King
 Charles Street, London, SW1A 2AH, Great Britain.

Middle East

Holy Land Conservation Fund, c/o Bertel Bruun, 969 Park Avenue, New
 York, New York 10028, USA.

LETTERS

Dear Sir

As another of the many people who once saw the first Fieldfare Turdus
pilaris for Iraq (Ibis 101: 171; OSME Bull. 20: 42), may I also point
 out that the problem of waning freshness in report from the Middle East
 described by Stephen Marchant (OSME Bull. 21: 29) is by no means confined
 to single species, but also applies to whole checklists? Thus, for
 example, his letter was immediately followed by a review of a New list of
the birds of Masirah Island, Sultanate of Oman, which omits to mention
 that a similar typed checklist was first compiled by M. J. Strickland in
 1971, as reported in the back of the original duplicated version of the
 "new" list in 1975, and that Mike Strickland has also published an account

of the seabirds in Sea Swallow (22: 16-19). It seems about time that the search for novelty in this area, demonstrated for example by the use of three expensive pages of Sandgrouse (8: 113-116) for routine descriptions of well-known American species which could perfectly well have been placed on record in a local newsletter, was replaced by more attention to the inadequately studied native birds.

While commenting on things that have been overlooked, possibly I should also confess that, in my recent list of notable past observations of migration around Arabia by members of the Royal Naval Bird-watching Society (OSME Bull. 20: 3-5), I also overlooked a previous summary by Captain G. S. Tuck (Sea Swallow 17: 41-42). It included a report of huge flocks of possible 100,000 White Storks flying south at 30-45 m as far as the eye could see across the mouth of the Gulf of Suez from G. Hammon Sayid Musa towards Ras Shukheir by Captain P. P. O. Harrison on 31 August 1957, where Cdr J. N. Humphreys also saw some still passing the next day. The 5-10,000 White Storks previously reported to have been seen here in the spring of 1962 by Cdr M. B. Casement were apparently flying N 30°E at 450 m from Gebel Leit towards Sheikh Rujak on 3 April. Among other records, Cdr Humphreys also reported a swirling spiral of raptors soaring at 300 m over Perim Island on the east side of the Strait of Bab-el Mandeb on 9 November 1963.

Dr W. R. P. Bourne, 3 Contlaw Place, Milltimber, Aberdeen AB1 ODS, Scotland.

Dear Editor

The Ostrich in Oman

In my note in Sandgrouse 10, I said that I had been unable to trace any reports of the finding of Ostrich eggshell in graves in Oman. The following report has just reached me from Paul Yule and Gerd Weisberger (of the German Mining Museum, Hanover), who are conducting excavations around the Samad oasis (22°48'N 58°09'E) in the Sharqiyah district.

"Worn fragments (maximum diameter 50mm) of Ostrich eggs have been found in one grave (Samad 2174) datable to the Bronze Age; another (2184) datable to the Bronze Age with an Early Iron Age secondary burial; and a third datable to the Bronze Age with a Late Iron Age re-use (101110). Other finds have been made during excavations this year (1989). It is not possible to say what use these eggshells had, but the sherd from grave 2174 shows faint traces of blue painted decoration. The sherds are stored with the Department of Antiquities, Ministry of National Heritage & Culture, Muscat" (inventory numbers respectively DA 10380, DA -, and DA 5902)".

Michael Gallagher, Natural History Museum, P. O. Box 668, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman.

REVIEWS

A Field Guide to Birds of Prey in the Middle East, by Bertel Brunn and Assad Serhal, illustrations by Arthur Singer and Sherif Baha, maps by Peter Bruun. Arabic. 1988. 95 pages. Holy Land Conservation Fund and Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon. \$10 post free from SPNL, P. O. Box 11-5665, Beirut, Lebanon.

A hearty welcome for this well-produced, slim and attractive guide, clearly printed in classical Arabic. A real pocket book, it measures barely $7\frac{1}{2}$ x $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and is only $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick, yet has an astonishing 95 pages.

The interest of most Arabic readers will be in the details of identification, but these do not start until page 31, when 57 species of diurnal raptors which occur in the Middle East, Europe and Africa are well described, with details of habitat, field characters, food, movements, breeding and voice.

The text is accompanied by 48 black-and-white thumbnail sketch maps, showing each species' breeding range. These maps lack national boundaries and omit islands as important as Bahrain and Socotra. The real criticism here is that the information shown is in some cases out of date; taking Oman as an example, the breeding of Lappet-faced Vulture and Golden Eagle (both published in 1982) are omitted, and an old and disproved record of the nesting of Steppe Eagle is shown by '?'.

Fourteen of the 18 colour plates are very successful reproductions from The Hamlyn Guide to Birds of Britain and Europe, though the 300+ individual illustrations are small and have had to be packed closely to each plate (there are 29 of harriers on page 75). This may be a disadvantage to new-comers. The remaining four plates, by Sherif Baha, are of equally good quality.

The introductory chapters take up 24 pages, and deal thoroughly and clearly with use of the book, geography, classification, plumage and physical characters, breeding, migration, birds of prey and Man (an impassioned plea to protect raptors), and an essay on falconry. The selected bibliography is in English and curiously omits such additions in Arabic as Tuyur Oman (1985).

Faced with the dilemma of whether this guide should be for beginners (in birds and written Arabic) or for the better-educated observer and student

of birds, the authors have plumped for the latter, and have provided a comprehensive guide which will surely meet their declared aim of helping to increase interest in and protection of these magnificent birds. It will delight a great many and deserves to succeed.

Youssif Bakhr and Michael Gallagher

HÖLZINGER, J. (ed.) (1988): Kartierung mediterraner Brutvögel 1. 28 pages. 8 illustrations DM 10. Obtainable from the Editor, Auf der Schanz 23/2, 7140 Ludwigsburg, FRG.

This new periodical publication will be a place to publish faunistical analyses from the Mediterranean area. Its editor is also editing the similarly produced journal "Ecology of Birds", which includes similar articles although not restricted only to Mediterranean themes. This first issue contains five very short articles on the Greek avifauna: Jerrentrup found the first breeding Black-headed Gulls in Greece; Goutner speculates about a possible hybridisation between Lesser Crested and Sandwich Terns; Schmid & Reichenecker publish a checklist of breeding birds in part of the Pindus mountains; and Hölzinger reports on the distribution of Ring Ouzel and, especially, the vertical distribution of the Rock Partridge in Greece, both papers containing grid maps. More comprehensive contributions on Greek and Yugoslavian breeding birds are announced for future issues. Only Goutner's article is published in English and is the only one by a Greek author. I feel that it would be of much more interest for ornithologists working in the Mediterranean to publish future articles in English, or at least in a major Mediterranean language, as I fear that very few Greek ornithologists read German.

T. Salathé

NEWS AND INFORMATION

(compiled by Simon Albrecht)

The object of this section is to inform our readers about events in the OSME region. It is not intended as a definitive report or write-up of the projects concerned, and consequently only those organisations directly involved are mentioned in the text. Most of the projects are sponsored by various agencies whose support is appreciated but this is generally not the place for them to be acknowledged by name.

OSME at ICBP European Section Conference: 15-20 May 1989

The International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP) is holding its European section conference in Adana, Turkey, during 15-20 May 1989. The development of bird conservation in Turkey is critical from both European and Middle Eastern perspectives. The Adana conference will doubtless focus attention on many bird and conservation problems in the area. OSME

has decided to send to the conference as its representative its Hon. Secretary, Hilary Welch. We look forward to reading her report in the next Bulletin.

Turkey - Investigation into falconry and bird hunting

The report of Gernant Magnin's 1987 survey will be published in April by ICBP. "Falconry and hunting in Turkey during 1987", ICBP Study Report No 34, will cost £5.00 from ICBP, 32 Cambridge Road, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0PJ, Great Britain.

Important Bird Areas of Europe

Publication of this book (OSME Bull. 21:39) has unfortunately been delayed. We expect to receive it during the spring.

Atlas of Breeding birds of Greece

Anyone who is able to participate in 1989, or who has records from previous years, should contact Hartmut Heckenroth, Hoppegartenring 90, D-3012 Langenhagen, West Germany.

The ICBP Migratory Birds Programme

The ICBP Conservation Programme for Migratory Birds grew out of the European Committee against Mass Killing of Migratory Birds, which was founded in 1978. Much of the work of the last 10 years has been directed towards education at all levels, from school children to political decision-makers. This has included the production of audio-visual material, wallcharts, leaflets and native-language popular bird books on which we have previously reported.

At an early stage, it was realised that migratory birds are not threatened merely by hunting and persecution, but by the increasing loss of their habitat, especially important feeding areas such as wetlands. This has occurred throughout their summer, passage and winter ranges.

The ICBP Migratory Birds Programme has increasingly focussed on strategically placed countries along the main flyways between Europe and Africa. In the east, these have included Turkey, Cyprus, Egypt and Sudan. For many of these countries, the conservation of wetlands (and other natural habitats such as woodland and grassland) is essential for their own agricultural and industrial development, so the ICBP programme has been directed at the conservation of these resources as well as of the birds.

In both Egypt and Turkey, ICBP has appointed a project co-ordinator to collaborate and consult both with governmental agencies and ministries and non-governmental organisations.

Overall responsibility for the programme rests with Tobias Salathe at ICBP in Cambridge, England, but the links with other countries are being strengthened.

Egypt

Following agreement between ICBP and the Egyptian Wildlife Service (EWS) (see OSME Bull. 20: 57-58), Mindy Rosenzweig has been working on an ICBP contract in Egypt for the past year, with the aim of promoting conservation education in the country.

Last summer, Sayed Gamei, the newly appointed conservation education officer for EWS, attended the conservation education training course run by the International Centre for Conservation Education (ICCE), near Cheltenham, England. Among other things, he prepared books on basic ecology and on conservation in Egypt, as well as a number of posters and other publicity material. These are now being assessed by school and university teachers in Egypt.

The establishment of a conservation education centre at Giza Zoo is also underway, and is expected to run its first workshop for school teachers, government environment officers and others in September 1989.

The Egyptian Wildlife Society, a non-governmental organisation, has been formed to promote conservation. Further information can be obtained from Dr Nael, Egyptian Wildlife Society, c/o Egyptian Wildlife Service, Giza Zoo, Cairo, Egypt.



The Ornithological Society of Egypt (OSE) has been revived and hopes to publish Courser volume 2 by October 1989. For further information about OSE, write to Mindy Rosenzweig at the address below.

If anyone plans to visit Egypt, and wants information or suggestions as to where to visit, they are welcome to write to Mindy Rosenzweig at: Executive Business Service, Cairo Marriott Hotel, P. O. Box 33, Zamalek Cairo, Egypt.

Shooting packages from Malta to Egypt

Bird-hunting package tours to Egypt are being run from Malta according to the latest RSPB Birds magazine. The price includes a porter for each participant to carry dead birds. Brochures guarantee bags of hundreds of ducks, Turtle Doves, Stone-curlews, plovers and 'every species of bird one can image' in the Fayoum area, and illustrate earlier groups, standing beside Egyptian ruins, surrounded by literally hundreds of dead birds. Egyptian Geese are 'unusual' birds on offer. Conservationists in Malta identified protected species, and bird skins were confiscated as groups returned from Cairo; but the tour organiser claimed to have licences 'irrespective of whether these were protected species', and said that the dead birds were vermin. The skins were returned to the hunters by the authorities, who chose to disregard the wildlife legislation.

Turkey

Göksu Delta - damaging tourist development

The southern coast of Turkey has seen much tourist development during the last 10 years. Recently, we reported the development at Dalyan Beach (OSME Bull. 20:56). Development has also been taking place in the Göksu Delta since at least 1986. According to Dogal Hayati Koruma Dernegi (The Society for the Protection of Wildlife, Turkey), however, a new holiday village just north of Paradeniz Gölü is a serious threat to the whole area. The main concerns are that the drainage around the village will affect the water balance of the whole wetland, and that the increased number of visitors will cause unacceptable disturbance. A bridge has been built over the channel that connects Ak Gol to the sea, so hunters can now circle the whole area in four-wheel-drive vehicles, something previously impossible.

Since the Göksu Delta is one of the most important bird areas not only in Turkey but also in the eastern Mediterranean, as well as being an important nesting area for sea turtles, DHKD has requested that people write letters of protest to the Turkish Government. In addition to the above, it is important to stress that the construction of houses north of Paradeniz Gölü should be stopped immediately, and that no further development should take place until the conservation status of the area has been fully assessed and the area given proper protection. Since Europeans are increasingly going to Turkey for their summer holidays, it is not inappropriate that they should express concern, so that Turkey avoids the mistakes that were made in holiday developments in the European Community. Turkey has a marvellous potential for tourism, but it needs to be a carefully planned, sustainable development, based on the principles of the World Conservation Strategy and the Brundtland Report.

Letters should be sent to:

His Excellency Dr Turgut Ozal and/or
Prime Minister
Bakanliklar
Ankara
Turkey

His Excellency Dr Adnan Kahveci
Minister of State and Environment
Bakanliklar
Ankara
Turkey

DHKD has asked that copies of letters be sent to OSME for forwarding on to DHKD in Istanbul.

Southeast Anatolian Project (GAP)

The Southeast Anatolian Project (or GAP in Turkish) is one of the largest irrigation projects ever attempted. The total area is about 74,000 square kilometres. Upon completion, it is projected that 1.65 million hectares of land will be irrigated, and 26 billion kilowatt hours per year of net energy will be produced. The project involves 15 dams and 18 power stations on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

This area has a unique bird fauna, connected with the hot dry summers and the riparian habitat along the river valleys. Much of this will be drowned if the rivers are dammed, and the dry habitats will be lost through irrigation. DHKD is concerned that GAP will affect the already-threatened Bald Ibis, for which Turkey has international responsibilities, as well as Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, Ménétries's Warbler, two species of sandgrouse and See-see Partridge among others.



It is not certain that a thorough environmental impact assessment has been carried out by the Turkish authorities. It seems relevant that the Soviet Union has recently changed its ambitious irrigation projects after re-assessing the potentially harmful impact they would have had on the environment.

It is not at all clear that the estimated 5,000,000 tonnes of fertilisers or 300,000 tonnes of pesticides will improve either the soil or the other biological and ecological resources of the area. Turkey has a rare opportunity to develop Southeast Anatolia sustainably. It is hoped that it will take the opportunity to learn the lessons from other dry land developments in Turkey and elsewhere before committing itself to a costly and potentially damaging project.

International finance and aid organisations could usefully finance a thorough survey of the area together with a sustainable development plan. The Tigris and Euphrates valleys, together with their ecosystems, are part of the world heritage. The world thus has a responsibility to assist in their sustainable development.

Bald Ibis at Birecik

A meeting between representatives of the Turkish Forestry and National Parks Departments, DHKD, WWF (Worldwide Fund for Nature) and ICBP at Birecik on 9 February 1989 discussed necessary improvements to the wild and captive breeding populations of the Bald Ibis. The decisions have included concentrating on improving the breeding success of the wild birds because captive-bred birds fail to migrate. The traditional nesting ledges have become unsuitable, and are being replaced with specially designed wooden nestboxes for the 1989 season. The housing and diet of the captive population is to be improved in consultation with the Jersey Island Wildlife Preservation Trust. Since all the Bald Ibises in zoos world-wide are of Moroccan stock, it has been proposed that two pairs of Turkish birds are "loaned" to a European zoo to safeguard the genetic origin of the Turkish stock. We hope to report further on the outcome of these measures in the autumn bulletin.

Kusların in dünyası (Educational Booklet on Birds in Turkey - produced by Dogal Hayati Koruma Dernegi

This is an excellent 20-page, Turkish-language booklet, covering all aspects of the lives of birds, and aimed at primary-school children. It is packed with information, presented in a style attractive to young children, and features a cartoon bird who takes you through migration, breeding behaviour, anatomy, building a nestbox, etc. 72,000 copies have been produced with financial support from ICBP, the British Stop the Massacre Committee, the Danish Migratory Bird Committee and the Dutch Migratory Bird Committee. DHKD is combining the launch of the booklet with information days for teachers in certain areas of outstanding importance for birds.

For more information about the important conservation work of DHKD write to PK 18, 80810 Bebek, Istanbul, Turkey.

Turkey bans dancing bears

The Turkish government has announced a welcome ban on the use of dancing bears forced to pose and dance with tourists for photographs. Any future visitors to Turkey who witness this activity are urged to contact WWF (UK), who are in touch with the authorities.

Coastal survey for Sea Turtles

Turkey's Aegean and Mediterranean coast were surveyed in 1988 for turtle nesting areas and threats to them. The survey was organised by Max Kasparek and Dr I. Baran (from the University of 9th September, Izmir) on behalf of WWF (UK) and WWF Germany. Forty-six students both from Turkey and Germany took part in the field work, results from which will be published shortly. The report, in addition to turtle information, will describe coastal habitats in general and the bird life. We hope to report further in the next bulletin.

Slender-billed Curlew - Conservation Programme

Adam Gretton, the co-ordinator for ICBP's project on the Slender-billed Curlew Numenius tenuirostris, has been very active since his appointment (see OSME Bull. 21: 38) and has established contacts throughout the bird's range as well as collecting and collating many past records. The few records in 1988, despite intensive survey efforts by many people, confirm the extreme rarity of the species. Up to four were seen in Morocco in January and February. A maximum of 30 individuals was reported on spring migration (5/3 - 24/4) in Yugoslavia and Greece in 1988. In autumn (14/8 - 19/9), a maximum of six was seen in Hungary, Yugoslavia and Greece, and three were seen in Morocco in December. There is also a report of five in North Yemen in November, for which details are awaited.

The Evros delta in Greece is the most important known site in Europe for Slender-billed Curlew, but it is also seriously threatened. Discussions are taking place for the effective conservation of the delta.

The status of the species in the Middle East remains unclear because of the very low coverage by birdwatchers. It is possible that there is a wintering population in the region, so any observations, both positive and negative, would be appreciated. In Turkey, the Göksu Delta, Büyük Menderes, Tuz Gölü and the Eregli Marshes are the most important passage sites, but surveys are required at all major wetlands. It is likely that the wetlands of eastern Iraq are used in winter, and it is hoped that it will be possible to visit the area; a reconnaissance visit may take place next winter.

Anyone who is visiting the Middle East or any other part of the species' range, which may extend eastwards to Pakistan, and is able to assist should contact Adam Gretton at ICBP.

Because of the difficulty of obtaining the key reference books in many parts of the species' range, an identification sheet, with drawings by Craig Robson, has been produced and will be widely distributed. We reproduce the contents of the sheet and the line drawings below as a contribution to the conservation of the species.

Please write to: Adam Gretton, ICBP, 32 Cambridge Road, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0PJ, Great Britain. Tel: 0223-277318.

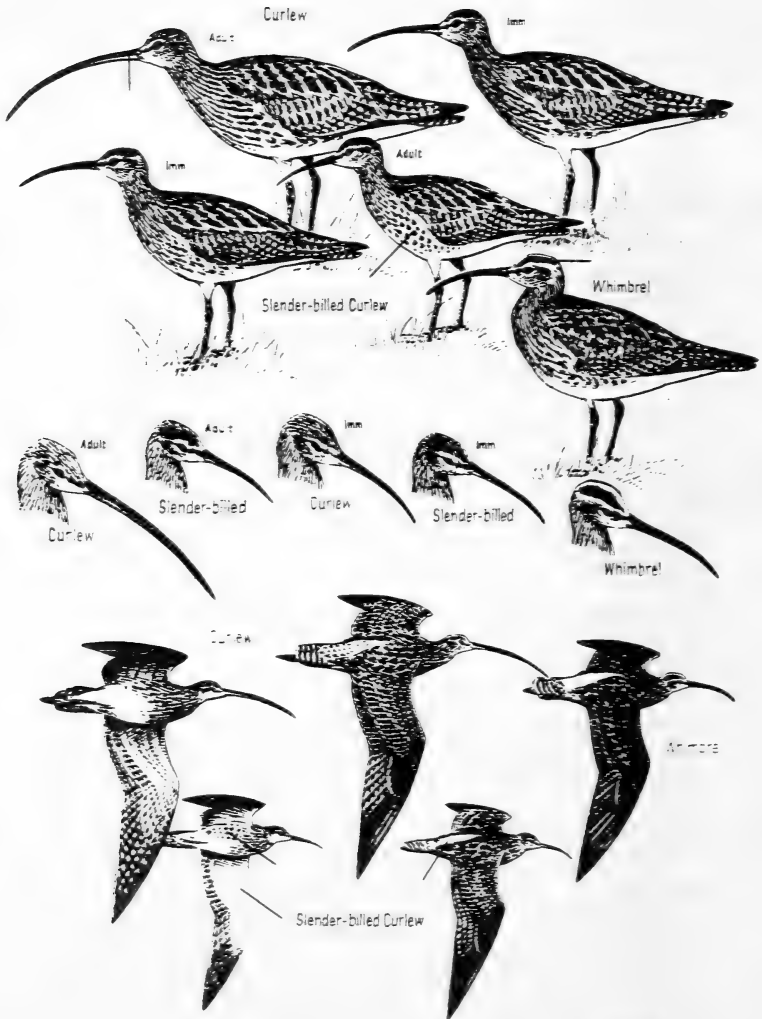
Identification of Slender-billed Curlew

Until recently, the identification of Slender-billed Curlew Numenius tenuirostris was hindered by the lack of accurate references. The standard European field guides are seriously misleading, with illustrations showing Slender-billed Curlew as decidedly long-billed (bill length intermediate between Whimbrel N. phaeopus and Curlew N. arquata). This, combined with the rarity of the species, resulted in a lack of clarity about the key identification criteria. Most recent works, such as BWP, Shorebirds and Birds of the Middle East and North Africa, are very accurate and have greatly reduced the confusion regarding this species. Excellent photographs and useful notes were published following observations in Morocco in the 1987-88 winter (van den Berg 1988). Previously published photographs are also relevant (Marchant, 1984; Porter, 1984).

These notes, which are based on recent observations in Morocco, are intended to summarise the key identification features (indicated by lines on the drawings).

The overall impression of Slender-billed Curlew is of a small, compact curlew with a very different "jizz" to Curlew. Body length is, on average, 70% that of Curlew (and slightly smaller than that of Whimbrel), whilst bill length is 55 - 60% that of Curlew (only 7 - 9cm). The bill is generally all dark, without the prominent flesh-coloured base to the lower mandible of Curlew. It is noticeably thinner at the base and tapers to a finer point than that of its congener. Slender-billed Curlew appears very "neat" and round-bodied, with short bill, neck and legs; in comparison, Curlew seems rather "gangly". Slender-billed Curlew's prominent round black flank spots are particularly obvious at close range. When walking, it has a distinctive "nodding" action of the head, which is reminiscent of Little Whimbrel N. minutus or Upland Sandpiper Bartramia longicauda. Although at times it runs rapidly, its movements can also be rather slow and deliberate. In flight, the short bill is particularly prominent as well as the very white flanks, underwing and rump/lower back.

Identification of Slender-billed Curlew



There should be little possibility of confusion with Whimbrel because of that species' distinctive head pattern and voice. The above features should allow confident separation from Curlew, particularly where the two species are seen together. Care must be taken, however, where Slender-billed Curlew is seen in isolation, particularly in autumn, as immature Curlew can be notably small and short-billed, whilst individuals of the eastern sub-species of Curlew (N. a. orientalis) can be quite pale, with white underwings.

References

- Berg, A. B. van den 1988. Identification of Slender-billed Curlew and its occurrence in Morocco in winter of 1987/88. Dutch Birding 10: 45-53.
- Marchant, J. H. 1984. Identification of Slender-billed Curlew. British Birds 77: 135-140.
- Porter, R. F. 1984. Mystery Photographs: Slender-billed Curlew. British Birds 77: 581-586.

Sultan Marshes and Seyfe Gölü receive full protection

Turkey's State Planning Organisation has now given full protection to both the Sultan Marshes and Lake Seyfe, in Central Anatolia. Both areas have been declared "strict nature reserves" under relatively new legislation, and are the largest wetlands so far to have been protected under these laws. It is hoped that the legislation is sufficient to deal with the various threats to the areas. The ornithological importance of the Sultan Marshes is described in "Die Sultanssumpfe" and of Seyfe Gölü in Birds of Turkey 2; both publications are available from OSME Sales. (Information supplied by Max Kasperek.)

Little Egret colony protected

Following the construction of a dyke and some years of low rainfall, the water level in Lake Bafa, southwest Anatolia, fell considerably after 1985. (see Der Bafasee, available from OSME Sales). The site of a Little Egret colony dried out, and the birds moved to an olive grove. The numbers (based on nest counts after the breeding season were:

	1987	1988
Little egret	97	247
Grey heron	3	47

The whitewash from the birds soiled the olive fruit, making it worthless. The owner, a relatively poor farmer, planned to destroy the colony, but Dr N. Koch from Malsch negotiated a lease on the orchard from the farmer and arranged for the site to be warded so that the site is not disturbed in the breeding season.

We wish to congratulate Dr Koch on a successful private initiative, which could serve as a model for others. (Information supplied by Max Kasparek.)

Zoology in the Middle East, Volume 2

Zoology in the Middle East Volume 2 has just been published. A review will appear in the autumn bulletin. The volume, which has the same format as number one, is in English and runs to 118 pages. Of the 21 papers on both invertebrate and vertebrate taxa, nine are on birds, covering some 40 pages. The volume is available on subscription from Max Kasparek (see enclosed leaflet) or from OSME Sales.

Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Arabia

The Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Arabia (ABBA) has recently found a major sponsor in the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development (NCWCD) of Saudi Arabia. According to the December issue of the Phoenix, ABBA's bulletin, the formal details had yet to be agreed. It was expected, however, that NCWCD sponsorship would meet the running costs, provide equipment and publish the results. Anyone who is visiting the Arabian Peninsula and is able to participate in the project should contact the co-ordinator, Michael Jennings, Moonraker Cottage, 1 Eastcourt, Burbage, Wiltshire SN8 3AG, Great Britain.

Conservation in Saudi Arabia (based on article by Faizi S. Hameed in Phoenix 5).

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In less than three years, the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development, Riyadh (NCWCD), has gone a long way in building the basis for the conservation and sustainable use of the natural resources of the Kingdom.

Of particular interest is the revival of a holistic approach to the conservation of biologically important areas. The country has a history of sustainable use of rangelands by designating them protected, either through law or convention. These traditional reserves, known as Hemas, were widespread until the recent past. The principles of the Hema system are compatible with the World Conservation Strategy and underlie the establishment of the new protected areas. Already, six areas, covering some 50,000 square kilometres and a variety of covering habitats, have been protected, and comprehensive management plans are being pursued. Work is in hand to bring another seven areas under protection.

The NCWCD is also active in conserving the Kingdom's diverse wildlife. This includes a captive breeding programme for Houbara Bustard and mammals such as the Arabian Oryx. Work is also in hand to establish legislation to protect both species and habitat.

Persecution of Migrant Eagles in the UAE - The Gazelle 3 (12), December 1988

Despite official protection by a federal decree-law of 1983, many migrant raptors are still being shot and trapped. The author, Colin Richardson, gives first-hand examples of this continuing persecution, which unfortunately must be quite widespread and probably the result largely of 'tradition' and ignorance. The species mentioned are Short-toed Eagle (one shot, another in a pet shop), Spotted Eagle (one caught but escaped, two injured (one apparently shot), one found dead), Steppe Eagle (three in cages, one found dead), Booted Eagle (one witnessed being shot) and Bonelli's Eagle (one injured after being shot, later recovered).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sinai Newsletter.

This is published by the Holy Land Conservation Fund and distributed free of charge to individuals and institutions with an interest in conservation in the Middle East. Initially limited in geographic scope to Sinai, it now covers the entire Middle East region. The Sinai Newsletter contains news items related to nature conservation in the area, as well as occasional short articles and book reviews. It is issued at irregular intervals, usually two or three times per year. The Sinai Newsletter can be obtained by writing to the editor: Bertel Bruun, Holy Land Conservation Fund, 969 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10028, USA.

REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

Colour-ringed Black Storks

In 1988, a research programme into the biology of Black Storks was started in the Latvian SSR. Juvenile storks were ringed with 6mm-high (red, yellow or dark green) and 10mm-high (pink or pale green) plastic rings as well as a metal 'LATVIA RIGA' ring. Please report all sightings to: M. Strazds, 229021 Salaspils, Miera Str. 3, Latvian Ornithological Society, Latvian SSR, USSR.

OSME NEWSOrnithological Society of the Middle East, 10th Anniversary,
A Celebration

S. M. Andrews and M. P. Whitehead

We can see the headlines now: "Sandgrouse spotted over Euston Station". Things are hotting up; perhaps the greenhouse effect has hit sooner than we thought.

Or perhaps not. A closer look reveals that the bird is on a banner proclaiming a birthday. The only global warming in this part of town isn't from the ozone; it's emanating from a bunch of birders celebrating the tenth anniversary of OSME.

The Ornithological Society of the Middle East is a decade young and commemorated the fact at a 'do' in London on 26 November 1988. Friends Meeting House, by Euston Station, was an appropriate venue.

A large winter flock of aviphiles entered the hall at lunchtime. Initial activity was intense: birders could tick birders (a Hollom here, an Oddie there); small groups engaged in competitive list displays; others selectively foraged through a wealth of trade stands that included Christopher Helm, Sanderling, Henry Sotherans, Sunbird, and Swarovski. Peripheral males pursued paintings by luminaries such as Keith Brockie, John Busby, Lars Jonsson, Bruce Pearson, John Reaney, Michael Warren and Martin Woodcock, whilst the braver individuals picked up quiz sheets with studied nonchalance.

Suddenly, the flock alighted. It settled like so many winter thrushes, in a large lecture hall. This was the SERIOUS BIT. Dr Mike Rands, OSME Chairman, introduced the day's proceedings. OSME had come a long way.

Sprung from the loins of the Ornithological Society of Turkey, it actively collected, collated and published ornithological data on the birds of the Middle East through its bulletins and journal. It also sought to encourage conservation initiatives within the Middle East.

It was fitting, then, that the first speaker, Resyt Akcakaya, came from Turkey. He spoke of conservation problems and priorities within the country. A sorry and all-too-familiar litany of habitat destruction and hunting followed: an inland lake threatened with drainage, irrigation and pollution; coastal areas at risk from hotel development and the burgeoning tourist trade; Loggerhead Turtles loathe to nest on disturbed beaches; and the plight of key species such as the Bald Ibis.

Sobering stuff. It was time to move south. Israel is a popular country for both birders and tourists. Unlike many Middle Eastern areas, it has a long-established conservation track record, for which the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI) can claim much credit.

Dave Cottridge was the tour guide, waxing lyrical about the Arava valley, a region spanning the Dead Sea to Eilat. He'd make a good courier: an unflappable 'man-for-all-seasons' speaker, with something for everyone. Sylvia warblers are Dave's pièce de resistance. He reviewed the finer details of their identification, shared numerous photographic tips with the audience and kept the anecdotes coming. One involved a hide, a camera, a Cyprus Warbler and an urgent call of nature: the bird would not play ball, frustratingly eluding the lens until exactly the moment when Dave's bladder could take no more. Seriously though, the photographic ends more than justified the means!

The collective birding bladder was bursting at this point, and the flock flew to the foyer. A chance to make and renew contacts, buy that new birding bible and, once again, eye up the artwork. A cream tea was served with scones and a variety of jams, all courtesy of Bungay WI.

It was 'get-your-bins-out' time now for a sneak preview of snippets from the excellent BBC television series, The Great Rift, highlights of this being breeding birds on Red Sea islands with Mike Jennings, superb bird's-eye views of migrating pelicans and storks over Israel and Steppe Eagles coming in off the Bab-el Mandeb with Geoff Welch.

Richard Porter, an OSME original, took to the platform for the final session. The tenth anniversary was nearly over; it was time to look forward.

Migration was the talk's mainstay. Raptor routes were discussed: some were known; others hardly covered. More sampling points (and samplers) were needed to ascertain numbers and trends in population dynamics. Raptors sit at the pinnacles of their food chains so their presence or absence within ecosystems indicate the environment's 'health'. Birding is, after all, a global phenomenon, and, in this respect, the Middle East represents a barometer, reflecting world trends. The challenge was clear, the gauntlet thrown down; OSME would continue to read the meter.

The raffle draw arrived with an excellent selection of prizes; first prize was a John Busby painting, quickly despatched, the recipient grinning like the Cheshire cat!

Chris Harbard's quiz presented a few problems judging by the answer sheet returns. The result? A tie - a flip of a coin - and the escorting away of a bottle of 'Famous Sandgrouse' whisky. Tony Marr nicely rounded off the day with a brief speech including some rather witty anecdotes about Richard 'does'nt-he-speak-good-English-for-a-Turk' Porter.

The day was a tremendous success, and no doubt enjoyable for all those who participated. The rather princely sum of £1,100 was raised for conservation projects in the Middle East, and we wish to thank all those who took part.

We should like to acknowledge the following with thanks for their part in this event: British Birds magazine, John Busby, Professor Buttiker, Dave Cottridge, Christopher Helm, Mike Jennings and T. & A. D. Poyser for the various prizes; all the artists, including Graham Groombridge and Mike Langman; Richard Porter for the Sali Acar prints; and all trade stand participants (we hope to see them again); and Bungay Women's Institute for the excellent cream tea.

10th Anniversary Quiz

As you will see from the write-up of the 10th Anniversary, part of the entertainment was a Middle Eastern quiz set by Chris Harbard: 20 far-from-simple questions as shown by the fact that no-one got them all right! Two people managed 18 (Steve Lister and Mike Jennings), and, by the luck of the draw, Steve won the bottle of 'Famous Sandgrouse' whisky.

Because of the shortage of time at the end of the afternoon, it was not possible to reveal the answers, so for those of you who pitted your wits and failed, and those of you who were unable to attend, below are the questions again, with the answers at the back of this Bulletin.

In all of these questions, 'Middle East' describes the OSME region.

1. Who wrote 'Birds of Arabia' in 1954?
2. What do the initials SPNI stand for?
3. What is the alternative English name for White-breasted Kingfisher?
4. In which year was Sandgrouse 1 published?
5. Which British bird has an isolated subspecies in W Arabia called asirensis?
6. In which Middle Eastern country do Mute Swans breed?
7. Kim's father gave his name to this Middle Eastern endemic.....
8.and gave his wife Dora's name to this one.
9. What is the longest flying bird in the Middle East (from bill to tail)?
10. Which species, now confined mainly to Iraq, used to breed at Lake Antioch, Turkey?
11. Which is the only species of woodpecker to breed in Israel?
12. How would you distinguish Ammomanes deserti azizi from A. d. annae?
13. Which of the following does not breed in Turkey? - Bearded Tit, Treecreeper, Great Grey Shrike, Rook and Siskin.
14. What is the bill colour of an adult Desert Finch?
15. How many species of gull breed in the Middle East?
16. Which two Sylvia warblers breed in Cyprus?
17. How can you distinguish between Indian and African Silverbills in flight?
18. In which country does Streaked Weaver breed as an escape?
19. Apart from House Sparrow, which other passerine breeds in every Middle Eastern country?
20. Which seaduck breeds in Turkey?

Eleventh Annual General Meeting

OSME's 11th AGM will be held on Saturday 15 July 1989 in the Lecture Theatre of the Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London, doors opening at 1.30pm for a 2.00pm start. Speakers will include Mark Cocker (author of a new book, to be published later this year, about Richard Meinertzhagen), and we await confirmation from Roderick Fisher (to speak on University College London's involvement in conservation in Saudi Arabia), and Michael Gallagher (to speak about Oman). In the event of Michael Gallagher being unable to be in England for the AGM, Geoff Welch has agreed to present an update on Djibouti.

We hope to see both familiar and new faces at the AGM - non-members are welcome - but please remember that to obtain free entry to the Museum you need to obtain a ticket in advance. Please write, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope and stating number of tickets required, to The Secretary, OSME, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, Great Britain. Due to our mailing arrangements with the Lodge, please allow 14 days for delivery when ordering tickets.

Thank you, QNHG

OSME would like to take this opportunity to thank the Qatar Natural History Group for its donation of £50.00 to the Society's fund. We are extremely grateful for this generous gesture of support.

Sir William Wilkinson

OSME sends congratulations to W. H. N. Wilkinson, the first chairman of Council and currently a Vice President, who was awarded a knighthood in the New Year's honours list for his services to conservation, and in particular his chairmanship of the Nature Conservancy Council, the advisory body on nature conservation matters to the British government.

British Birds

Will members please note that OSME is not participating in the British Birds Reduced Subscription Scheme this year, and therefore members are not entitled to the 25% reduction in subscription to this journal. British Birds has been unable to provide us with information as to just how many, if any, OSME members make use of this offer. Therefore, will members who are now unable to obtain British Birds at a discount because of this action please inform the Secretary so that an informed decision can be made as to whether or not OSME should apply to rejoin the scheme in the future.

Publicity requires help

The publicity 'dept' requests the help of any members visiting or resident in Middle Eastern countries to carry and/or distribute OSME membership forms, particularly if visiting birdwatching cores such as International Birdwatching Center, Eilat, or Birecik, Turkey.

If you are considering attending an international conference - particularly if doing so as a private individual - contact OSME Council to discover if attendance as a representative of OSME can be endorsed.

If any members feel that they can offer assistance with either of these or have other ideas for promoting OSME within the Middle East, please contact S. M. Andrews, c/o OSME, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, Great Britain.

Notes from the Sales Officer

After a thorough review of the costs of postage and packing materials, it is with reluctance that we have had to increase the prices of a few items on the Sales List. On the other hand, we are able to bring down prices of a couple of others; so it's not all bad news!

Sandgrouse 2 is now out of print and the remaining stock of Sandgrouse 3 is so low that volumes will be sold on a first come, first served basis. Bulletins 13, 14, 15 & 19 are now out of print. If there is sufficient demand for these, Council may consider reprinting.

New Publications on the OSME Sales List

Zoology in the Middle East. Edited by Ragnar Kinzelbach and Max Kasperek, Volume 2 is now available and costs £10 surface mail or £11 airmail. Volume 3 should be ready by the end of May, at £11 surface mail, £12 airmail.

Birds of Turkey: The birds of the Koycegiz-Dalyan area.

This is in an advanced stage of preparation and should be ready soon after the publication of this Bulletin. We are assuming that this will be No. 8 of the series. It is priced at £2 surface mail and £2.50 airmail.

A new List of the Birds of Masirah Island, Sultanate of Oman. By T. D. Rogers. 1988 (see OSME bull. 21: 29). Now available at £2.50 surface mail and £3 airmail.

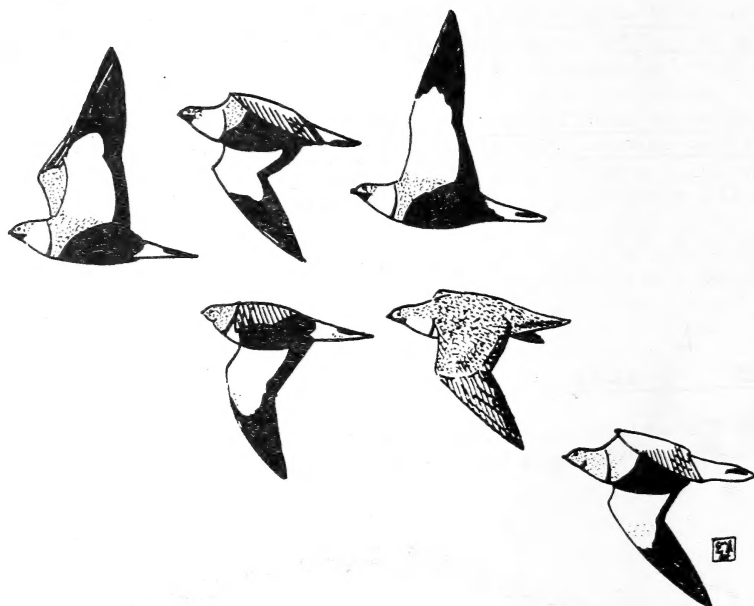
Studies on the Tihama: the report of the Tihama expedition 1982 and related papers. Edited by Francine Stone. Longman 1985. (see OSME Bull. 18: 25). A few copies of this beautifully illustrated work are available at £33 surface mail or £37.50 airmail.

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10th Anniversary Quiz Answers

1. Meinertzhagen
2. Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel
3. Smyrna Kingfisher
4. 1980
5. Magpie
6. Turkey
7. Philby's Rock Partridge
8. Arabian Woodpecker Dendrocopos dora
9. Dalmatian Pelican
10. Darter
11. Syrian Woodpecker
12. A. d. azizi is very pale, A. d. annae is dark
13. Great Grey Shrike
14. Black
15. Seven : Sooty, White-eyed, Mediterranean, Black-headed, Slender-billed, Audouin's and Herring
16. Cyprus and Spectacled Warblers
17. Indian Silverbill has a white rump, on African Silverbill it is black
18. Egypt
19. Crested Lark
20. Velvet Scoter

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.

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