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

Details of expeditions, availability of expedition reports, news of members, other societies, ornithological events, letters and any other items of interest to birdwatchers and conservationists concerned with the OSME region may be printed free of charge, subject to the discretion of the Bulletin Editor. Accompanying photographs and line-drawings will also be welcomed. Bird names follow Birds of the Middle East and North Africa. Contributions for the next Bulletin should be received by 15 February 1991.

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

S M Andrews: Cover; Nile Crocodile 5; Great Black-headed Gull 10; Dunn's Lark 27; Greater Flamingos 35; Great Knot 42; Broad-billed Sandpiper 43; Terek Sandpiper 45.

P J Powell: Caspian Plovers 44.

Hilary Welch: Egyptian Geese 3; Djibouti Green-winged Pytilia 18; Bankouale Palm 19.

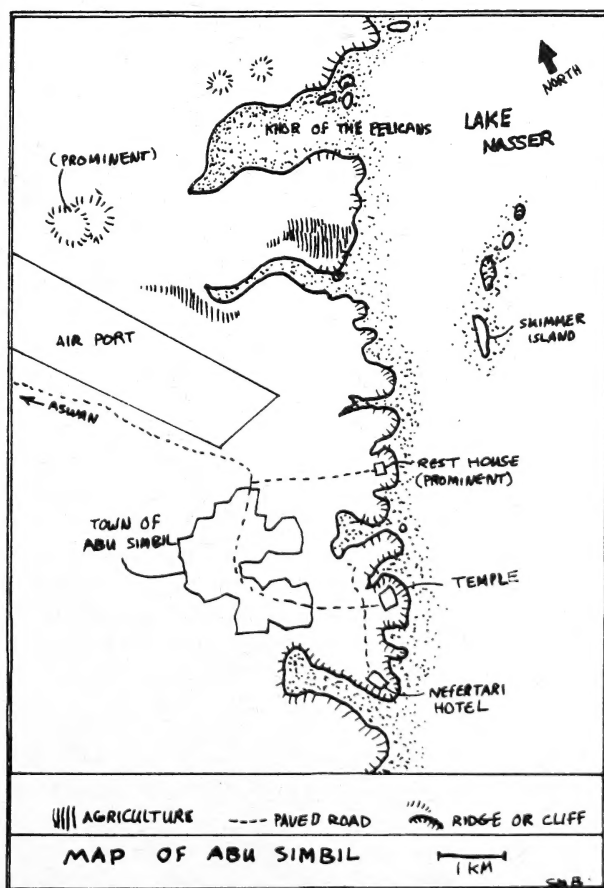
The Abu Simbil experience

Sherif and Mindy Baha El Din

Despite the relatively large number of birdwatchers and ornithologists visiting Abu Simbil, primarily for its famous temple, only a few manage to spend any time to look around for birds. Indeed, Abu Simbil should be of special interest to any visitor to Egypt because of the opportunities it provides for catching a glimpse of African birdlife.

Location, ecology and habitats

Abu Simbil is the southernmost Egyptian settlement along the Nile Valley, situated approximately 20 km north of the Sudan border on the western shore of Lake Nasser.



The nearly 25-year-old man-made lake has created many new habitats for birds in the Nile Valley between Aswan in the north and Wadi Halfa (Sudan) in the south. On the other hand, it has destroyed natural habitats which has lead to the disappearance of several breeding species, such as Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus* and Fulvous Babbler *Turdoides fulvus* (Goodman and Meininger 1989).

The shores in the vicinity of Abu Simbil (and around most of the lake) are steep and rocky, offering little suitable feeding habitat for most birds, although many nesting species, such as Black Kite *Milvus migrans*, Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus* and Pale Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne fuligula* have been most successful here. Numerous khors (bays) and islands are found throughout the lake, and the suitability of these for birdlife is governed strictly by the constantly changing water level in the lake. Generally speaking, the innermost shores of the khors are the most interesting because they usually slope gently and tend to have the richest vegetation.

The fluctuating water level is the single most important factor influencing the ecology of the lake. The water level reaches its highest during the winter months, then gradually recedes to its lowest levels during the summer. Another larger pattern is determined by the cycles of rainfall and drought in the Abyssinian region and other Nile sources. At the gently sloping inner khors, the shoreline is very mobile. Between November 1989 and June 1990, the shoreline of one of the khors to the north of Abu Simbil receded by at least 3 km, leaving extensive grassy banks and muddy pools behind.

The natural vegetation along the shore of the lake in the vicinity of Abu Simbil consists almost exclusively of Tamarisk *Tamarix nilotica*. This appears to be the only plant capable of tolerating being nearly completely submerged for part of the year and exposed to the scorching heat and drought of the Nubian Desert for the other part. Extensive growths of aquatic vegetation are found in the shallow areas. This forms a thick and biologically rich layer along the inner khor shores when the lake water recedes.

All attempts at establishing agriculture along the shores of Lake Nasser have been only marginally successful because of the fluctuating water levels. However, around the temple and the town at Abu Simbil there are many trees and gardens, as well as cultivated plots, and to the east of the airport along the lake, the Lake Nasser Development Authorities have created a large and successful agricultural area.

The birdlife

Because of its southerly location, many African species such as African Collared Dove *Streptopelia roseogrisea*, Abyssinian Roller *Coracias abyssinicus*, Yellow-billed Storks *Mycteria ibis*, Pink-backed Pelican *Pelecanus rufescens*, and Bataleur *Terathopius ecaudatus* have been reported at Abu Simbil. Other species found in northern Sudan and which reach Wadi Halfa could be expected as well.

During spring and autumn, there is an influx of migrants, particularly passerines, into vegetated areas; and a visible passage of waterbirds, such as White Pelicans *Pelecanus onocrotalus* and gulls and terns along the lake. In November 1989, during a visit sponsored by the Egyptian Ministry of Agriculture to study the problem of Egyptian Geese as pests to agriculture in the Lake Nasser region, a large number of wintering waterbirds were found, including Spoonbills *Platalea leucorodia*, Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea*, Gull-billed Terns *Gelochelidon nilotica*, White-winged Black Terns *Chlidonias leucopterus*, Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus*, White-tailed Plover *Chettusia leucura*, and many waterfowl species (primarily dabbling ducks) such as Wigeon *Anas penelope* and Teal *Anas crecca* (Baha El Din *et al.* 1989). While it was true that Egyptian Geese caused some damage to crops, they were seen feeding along with other wintering waterfowl, amongst the partly submerged Tamarisk bushes. This was a favourite habitat for most waterfowl: during June 1990, Egyptian Geese were seen feeding exclusively on grassy banks of the inner khors.

In summer, a visitor to Abu Simbil Temple might have the impression that there is very little birdlife of interest in the area. The reason for that is the lack of any suitable habitats in the vicinity of the temple itself. An excursion to neighboring khors might prove more beneficial. During a survey of the khors to the north of Abu Simbil on 17 June 1990, 114 Yellow-billed Storks and 64 Pink-backed Pelicans were seen. These are the largest numbers of both species recorded in Egypt. There was some evidence of a regular northward movement of both species, when small flocks were observed flying over the town or occasionally low over the waters of Lake Nasser. A total of 266 Egyptian Geese, some



with broods ranging between recently hatched to recently fledged young, were also counted during this survey. Grey Herons, Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta*, and Night Herons *Nycticorax nycticorax* were widespread along the lake shore, but no evidence of their breeding was obtained.

On the same day, 12 pairs of African Skimmers *Rhynchops flavirostris* were found breeding on a low sandy island to the north of Abu Simbil (one additional pair was seen nesting on a nearby island farther north). Six pairs of Little Terns *Sterna albifrons* (perhaps *S. a. guinea*) were discovered breeding on the same island, representing the southern-most breeding record in Egypt. Around 20-30 pairs of Kittlitz's Plovers *Charadrius pecuarius* and a similar number of Spur-winged Plovers *Hoplopterus spinosus* were found in the vicinity with chicks and fledglings, along with two pairs of Senegal Thick-knees *Burhinus senegalensis*.

In addition, during the summer visit (14-18 June 1990) an interesting number of late migrants were observed, including Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*, Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*, Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*, Black-eared Wheatear *O. hispanica*, Isabelline Wheatear *O. isabellina*, European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* and Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus*.

The non-aquatic breeding avifauna of Abu Simbil resembles, to a large extent, that of the Western Desert Oasis, described by Goodman *et al.* (1986). The most common breeding birds are White-crowned Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga*, Pale Crag Martin, Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*, Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida*, Graceful Warbler *Prinia gracilis*, Palm Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*, House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, Brown-necked Raven *Corvus ruficollis* and Black Kite. Rufous Bush Robin *Cercotrichas galactotes*, Hoopoe *Upupa epops*, Spotted Sandgrouse *Pterocles senegallus*, Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo*, Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*, Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus* and Sooty Falcon *F. concolor* were also found breeding in smaller numbers.

Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis* are seen at Abu Simbil all year round, but their breeding status is unknown. Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* may nest in the area, as they are seen throughout the year and some courtship display was observed in November 1989 near Ostol, southeast of Abu Simbil. Lappet-faced Vultures *Torgos tracheliotus* are regularly seen on the road between Aswan and Abu Simbil. The vultures feed on camel carcasses left behind by the camel trains from Sudan. The African Pied Wagtail *Motacilla aguimp*, considered by Goodman and Meininger (1989) to be a rare breeder along the shores of Lake Nasser, was not recorded during our visits to Abu Simbil, although there are recent records during other seasons, especially in winter and spring.

Other wildlife

One could safely say that Abu Simbil, or for that matter the whole of Lake Nasser, is ruled at night by the Horned Viper *Cerastes cerastes*. Thousands of tracks of this snake are to be found almost everywhere in the vicinity of the lake.

Nile Crocodile *Crocodylus niloticus*, Nile Monitor *Varanus niloticus* and Nile Soft-shelled Turtle *Trionix triunguis* form an important part of the fauna of the region. In June 1990, two large (2-3 m) Nile Crocodiles were seen in the vicinity of Abu Simbil, and the shells of two Soft-shelled Turtles were found with local fishermen (length 50-75 cm).

At more desolate khors, some Dorcas Gazelle *Gazella dorcas* might congregate, and Jackals *Canis aureus* and Striped Hyaenas *Hyaena hyaena* might be found.



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The Crab Plover in Kuwait and the northern Arabian Gulf: a brief review and some new counts

P J Cowan

The Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola* is an aberrant maritime wader, endemic to coastlines of the Indian Ocean region. It feeds in the intertidal zones of mudflats, coral reefs and estuaries, and nests in burrows in coastal colonies (Cramp and Simmons 1983). Nesting colonies have been found in the Farasan Islands of the Red Sea (Jennings 1988), in Somalia on the Gulf of Aden (Benson and Benson 1986), on Masirah Island, Oman (Rogers 1988), in the Strait of Hormuz region of southern Iran (Carp 1980, Ticehurst *et al.* 1925) and, apparently, on the northern Red Sea coast of Saudi Arabia (Hollom *et al.* 1988). Breeding is suspected in the Suakin (Sudan) and Dahlak (Eritrea) archipelagos of the Red Sea, in Sri Lanka and in the Gulf of Kutch, Western India (Benson and Benson 1986, Palmes and Briggs 1986). Distribution in the non-breeding season (northern hemisphere winter) is far more widespread, occurring on the African coast of the Indian Ocean south to Natal and on various Indian Ocean islands with a few reaching southern Thailand (Ali and Ripley 1980, Benson and Benson 1986, Swennen *et al.* 1987). Vagrants have reached the Mediterranean Sea coast of Turkey (Bouwman 1987) and a site 60 miles inland in India (Bharucha and Samant 1984).

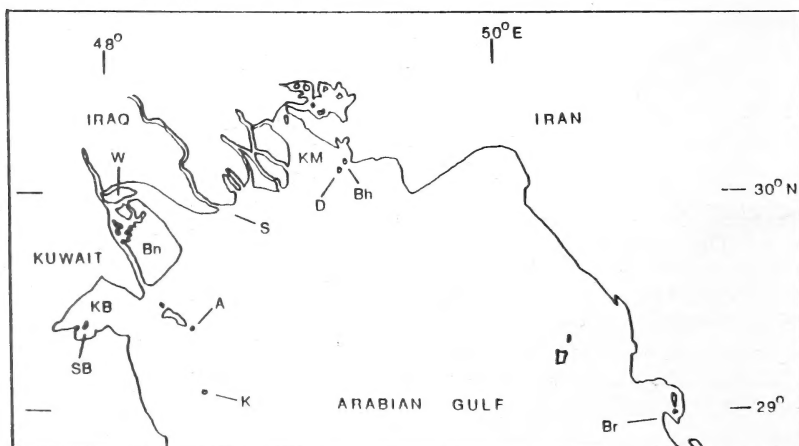


Figure 1. The northern Arabian Gulf. A Auhah, Bh Boonah, Bn Bubiyan, Br Bushehr, D Dara, K Kubbar, KB Kuwait Bay, KM Khor Musa, S Shatt Al-Arab, SB Sulaibikhat Bay, W Warba.

Breeding colonies of the Crab Plover have been reported on various islands in the northern Arabian Gulf (figure 1): in Kuwait, on Auhah and Warba and, in Iran, on Dara and Boonah in Khor Musa and on islands near Bushehr (Ticehurst *et al.* 1922, 1925, 1926). It probably has also bred on Kubbar island, Kuwait (Ticehurst *et al.* 1925). Breeding occurred on Aulah in 1942 (Dickson 1942), but subsequently there has been no indication of the Crab Plover breeding on either Aulah or Kubbar (CWT Pilcher pers comm.). The Crab Plover presumably still breeds in the northern Arabian Gulf (eg Sales, in Gallagher 1971), for example, perhaps on Warba and Bubiyan islands, Kuwait, but, unfortunately, likely breeding sites appear inaccessible to ornithologists at present. Farther south in the Arabian Gulf, in Saudi Arabia, the Crab Plover is apparently only a passage migrant (Bundy *et al.* 1989).

The shoreline of the northern Arabian Gulf is characterised by mudflats (Clayton 1986). In Kuwait, extensive mudflats, including expanses of soft, high productivity mud, occur in Kuwait Bay and farther north (Al-Sarawi *et al.* 1985, 1988). On the Kuwait mudflats, the Crab Plover is present all year, becoming very common in the non-breeding season from autumn to spring (Gregory 1988, Haynes 1979). To get a better indication of local numbers, I counted Crab Plovers at a roost site in the southwest corner of Sulaibikhat Bay, a bay within Kuwait Bay, from late October 1989 to early March 1990 (figures 1 and 2).

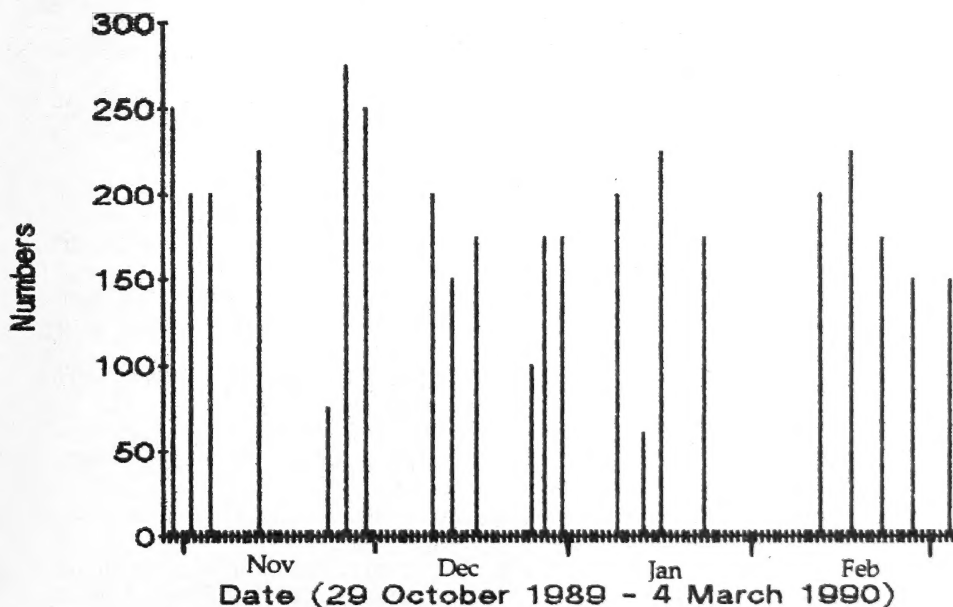


Figure2. Crab Plover counts, southwest Sulaibikhat Bay, 1989-1990.

Counts were made in the high-tide period with the aid of binoculars and telescope. This appeared to be the main, but not the only, roost site in Sulaibikhat Bay. Perhaps 300 Crab Plovers roosted in the Bay over the winter, but whether these birds were solely those feeding on the Sulaibikhat mudflats or included birds from farther afield is not known.

The diet of Crab Plovers consists mainly of crabs, though other invertebrates and mudskipper fish have been recorded (Cramp and Simmons 1983). Crabs and mudskippers are extremely numerous inhabitants of Kuwait's mudflats (Clayton 1986, Clayton and Vaughan 1988, Jones 1986), and some potential Crab Plover prey there are listed in Appendix 1. DA Clayton has observed Crab Plovers catching Ocypodid Crabs *Cleistostoma kuwaitense* on the Kuwait mudflats (Clayton 1988 and pers comm.).

Acknowledgments

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Appendix 1

Some potential Crab Plover prey, Kuwait mudflats (Jones 1986).

Crabs

Ocypodidae

Uca lactea anulipes

Uca sindensis

Cleistostoma kuwaitense

Tylodioplax indica

Macrophthalmus depressus

Macrophthalmus pectinipes

Macrophthalmus grandidieri

Ilyoplax stevensi

Ilyoplax frater

Dotilla blanfordi

Grapsidae

Metaplex indica

Portunidae

Portuna pelagicus

Xanthidae

Eurycarinus orientalis

Mudskippers

Gobiidae

Scartelaos viridis

Periophthalmus koelreuteri

Bolocephthalmus boddarti

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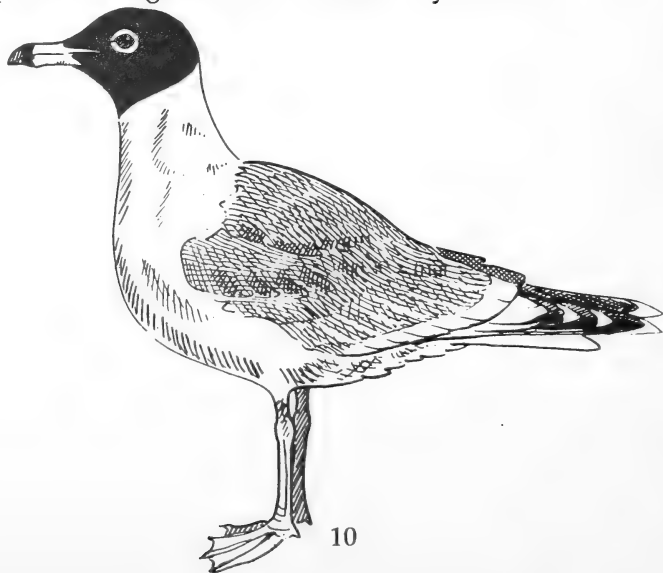
The occurrence of Great Black-headed Gulls in Bahrain in winter of 1989/90

Erik Hirschfeld

Not much is known of the migration pattern of Great Black-headed Gulls *Larus ichthyaetus* in Arabia. Nightingale and Hill (in prep) state that they are late migrants in Bahrain, seldom seen before mid-December, increasing in January to peak in mid-February, whereafter they decrease until most are gone by mid-April. In some springs, an increase has been recorded in mid-March, presumably of migrants that have wintered farther south and which pass Bahrain on their return migration. Bundy *et al.* (1989) mention it as a fairly regular visitor in coastal waters of eastern Saudi Arabia from December through to March, when their numbers reach a peak.

During more than 50 days in the field in Bahrain from December 1989 to April 1990, I recorded and aged 1,047 individuals between 8 December and 19 April. Peak numbers, of 98 and 115, were recorded on 23 and 24 February respectively. The first flock numbering more than 30 was seen on 30 January (35), while the last was recorded on 27 March (40).

In figure 1, I have calculated the mean number of Great Black-headed Gulls observed per excursion during 10-day periods. This should negate large fluctuations in numbers resulting from the variation of the intensity of my activities. Counts were made between one and five times per 10-day period, the lower number during March and April when passerine migration also attracted my attention.



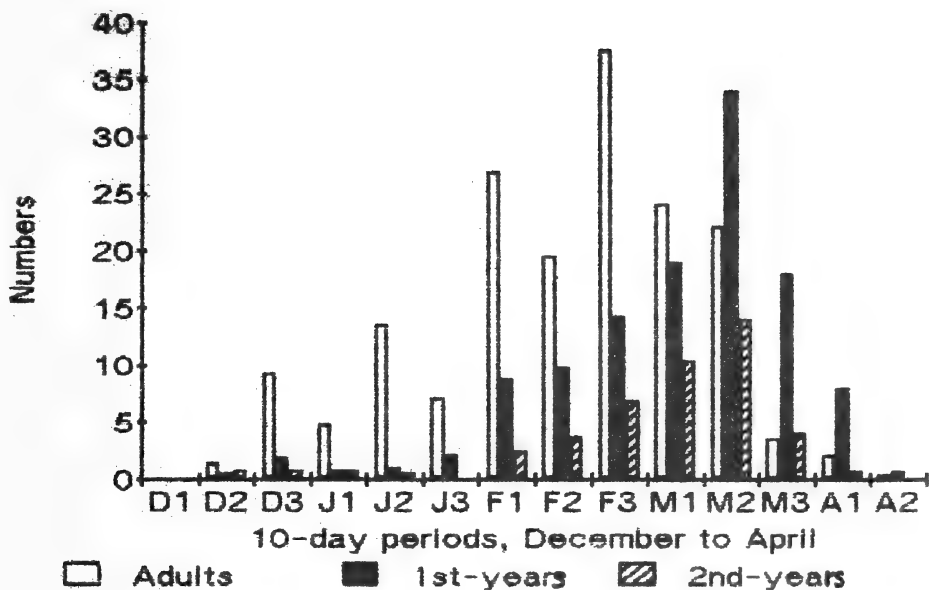


Figure 1. Mean counts of Great Black-headed Gulls in 10-day periods from December 1989 to April 1990.

Adults

670 recorded between 15 December and 16 April. The peak (37) was at the end of February. After that, the decline was rapid and immature birds dominated the flocks.

First-winters

349 recorded between 8 December and 16 April. Peaked in mid-March, after which most of the adults had left.

Second-winters

138 between 16 December and 3 April. The pattern is similar to that of first-winters, with a peak in mid-March.

Discussion

Adults predominate among wintering Great Black-headed Gulls in Bahrain until the end of February, when they seem to leave quite quickly. Immatures increase throughout the winter, to reach their peak in mid-March. The reason for this could be that they winter farther

south and visit Bahrain on their return migration, but this seems unlikely as they are not recorded in larger numbers on their southward migration in early winter. Instead, it is more likely that they spend the earlier part of the winter in more northerly latitudes and slowly make their way south to Bahrain in March, before returning north.

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Comments on the breeding range of the Armenian Gull

Werner Suter

The Armenian Gull *Larus armenicus* has usually been treated as a subspecies of the Herring Gull *L. argentatus*, or has been included in the form *cachinnans*, which in turn was considered a race of *L. argentatus*. The new views on Herring Gull systematics, put forward mainly by Continental authors (see J. Haffer, in Glutz von Blotzheim and Bauer 1982), split the Armenian form and all relatively dark-mantled and primarily yellow-legged populations as two species, *L. Armenicus* and *L. cachinnans*, from the true Herring Gulls *L. argentatus*. This practice is followed only reluctantly by British authors, who prefer to speak of 'groups' rather than valid species (Cramp and Simmons 1982; Grant 1986; Ferguson-Lees *et al.* 1986). The new Russian handbook (Yudin and Firsova, in Ilychev and Zubakin 1988) is even inconsistent in accepting *armenicus* as a taxon on its own, although Dementiev and Gladkov (1967) and Stepanyan (1975) had already recognised the form on the subspecific level.

Eventually, the recognition of three full species needs to be corroborated by behavioural, biochemical and genetic studies, and by a better understanding of the respective ranges of contact zones, and differences in morphology, moult and voice. Although decisions must be based on taxonomic criteria, some practical side effects should also be considered. Upgrading the forms to full species would draw attention to those gulls, and stimulate people to collect distributional data. Treating the forms as 'groups' of *L. argentatus* prevents those bird-



Second-summer (above) and third-summer (below) Armenian Gulls, USSR, May 1986 (*photograph Werner Suter*)



watchers who are unfamiliar with the specialised literature, or who are interested in only true species that can be 'ticked', from collecting such data. This seems to be the case particularly with *L. armenicus*.

Western limit

Bertault, Dubois and Fremont (1988) reported several hundred Armenian Gulls from the Diyarbakir area as the westernmost observations in Turkey; but a colony of 'Herring Gulls' with about 500 pairs was found in 1969 at Tuz Golu, Central Anatolia, some 600 km west of Diyarbakir (H. Lehmann *et al.* in Vittery *et al.* 1972). Beaman *et al.* (1975) noted that the 'Plateau breeding population resembles *L. argentatus armenicus*' and Beaman (1978) repeats the view that inland breeding birds are probably *L. a. armenicus*. That they indeed are *armenicus* is shown by an excellent colour picture of a breeding adult by A. Limbrunner in Pforr and Limbrunner (1981; p. 292, labelled *L. a. cachinnans*). This photograph was taken on an island in Tuz Golu, on 25 May 1974 (A. Limbrunner in litt.). M. Beaman (in litt.) confirms that all breeding 'Herring-type' Gulls he has seen since 1978 in interior Turkey, including the Central Plateau, have definitely been *armenicus*.

Northern limit

Lake Sevan (1,900 m asl) is the main breeding site in Armenia. The average spring population is estimated at 800 individuals. Only one other colony is currently known in the Armenian SSR, at Lake Arpa in the extreme northwestern corner of the republic. Armenian Gulls also occur (apparently in the breeding season) along the rivers Arax, Rasdan and Achuryan. They regularly visit the fishponds in the Ararat plain, but do not breed there (Airumyan *et al.* 1987). Yellow-legged Herring Gulls *L. cachinnans* may, however, also reach Lake Sevan (on migration from the Caspian?): J. Wittenberg (in litt.) recorded about 30 individuals together with some 30 Armenian Gulls on 22 July 1986.

L. cachinnans, which breeds in the Black and Caspian Seas, is therefore expected to occur on migration along the Kura river, between the Caucasus and the Armenian highland. East German visitors recorded 'Herring Gulls' there in August (eg 40 near Tbilisi on 8 August 1975; Gnielka 1980), but not in May-June (von Knorre 1971, Schmidt 1986). I was surprised to find adult Armenian Gulls along the Kura river in spring 1986. On 23 May, one or two individuals were patrolling up and down the river below Uplisziche, near Gori, some 90 km west of Tbilisi; and about five were counted near Soganlug, a few kilometres southeast of Tbilisi, on 27 May. No other gulls were present. Two months later, J. Wittenberg (in litt.) did not see any gulls along the Kura river on an identical itinerary. Although these two places are situated only 40 km north and 70 km east of the northernmost lakes in the Georgian highlands, breeding along the Kura river cannot be dismissed entirely.

The river is rather broad in both areas and repeatedly splits into several arms, thus providing large shingle banks which might be suitable for nesting.

Acknowledgments

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Djibouti - six years on

Geoff and Hilary Welch

Since March 1984, we have made six visits to Djibouti, ranging from two weeks to two months, carrying out survey work on the country's wildlife. Our initial interest in the country was to search for migration, especially of raptors, across the Bab-el Mandeb straits - at 22 km the narrowest point on the Red Sea. From maps, it appeared that the birds migrating south through the Arabian peninsula would be channelled towards the straits and hence into Djibouti; this was confirmed when counts were made in the autumns of 1985 and 1987 and totals of 80,732 and 246,478 migrating raptors were recorded respectively. In both cases, the principal species were Steppe Buzzard *Buteo buteo vulpinus* and Steppe Eagles *Aquila rapax*, with maxima of 98,339 and 76,586. Both counts have covered mainly October and early November, so there is still a need for counts at other times (ideally from late August to late November), and would probably reveal in excess of 500,000 migrant raptors.

This is not, however, a task to be undertaken lightly. In August and early September, temperatures are frequently in excess of 40°C with a relative humidity of over 95% - there is little natural shade.

We are becoming increasingly interested in determining the routes used by birds to reach Djibouti. Assuming that they originate from central Russia, do the birds enter Arabia through the Caucasus, around the top of the Persian Gulf or across the Straits of Hormuz? There is valuable evidence for and against each of these routes, and it is likely that all three are used by different populations. We are also interested in the less common species passing through Djibouti:

Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* - generally regarded as a scarce winter visitor to tropical Africa, yet over 2,000 were recorded in 1987.

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus* - during a light aircraft flight over the Straits in September 1987, c1,000 birds believed to be this species were observed. In the following 38 days, only 17 were recorded. Do significant numbers go through in earlier autumn?

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* - where do they all go in autumn? Nowhere in the Middle East has documented an autumn movement comparable with the numbers recorded in spring - could Djibouti hold the answer?

Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraetus pennatus* - generally regarded as non-migratory, with no records from tropical Africa, the species being replaced by the African Hawk Eagle *Hieraetus spilogaster*; yet five have now been recorded on migration across the Straits, and the species breeds in Djibouti.

Djibouti is internationally important for more than just its raptor migration. The country has an endemic gamebird, the Djibouti Francolin *Francolinus ochropectus*, and it was our agreeing to undertake a search for this species which made our first visit possible. The species was discovered in 1952, but even today we know very little of its biology or conservation requirements. It is restricted to dense cover in forested areas above 700 m. Until 1985, the francolin was believed to be restricted to the Goda Mountains, principally the Forêt du Day; but during our second expedition a second population was found 60 km to the east, in the Mabla Mountains. Although this second population is thought to be very small, it offers some hope that the species can be saved from extinction - the habitat on Mabla is quite different from the primary forest area of the Forêt du Day, and appears to be currently under less threat from human activities.



Djibouti Francolin, Djibouti, March 1984 (Photograph Geoff and Hilary Welch)

Any work to conserve the francolin must also concentrate on protecting the Forêt du Day. This is a relict Mediterranean-type forest surviving as a mist oasis, receiving much of its moisture from early morning low cloud. The primary tree species is *Juniperus procera* but this is in decline because of climatic change, attack by a honey fungus and lack of regeneration. The whole of the forest area is suffering from human activities, especially removal of firewood and severe overgrazing. Since 1967, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the

United Nations has been working in the Forêt du Day, to improve the living standards of the 2,000 local inhabitants, but with very little success. A recent survey showed that there is currently five times more livestock grazing the forest than the area can support, but still there are only two family groups which have enough livestock for self-sufficiency. Clearly, alternative enterprises and a drastic reduction in grazing pressure are needed if the forest is to be saved. The forthcoming production of a long-term management plan for the forest offers some hope and the opportunity for some conservation input towards saving this unique natural resource.

Surrounding the primary forest at lower altitudes is a large area of secondary forest, consisting of various *Acacia* species; this area is very rich in birdlife. It was whilst surveying secondary forest on Mabla in November 1985 that we discovered what may eventually turn out to be Djibouti's second endemic, a melba finch. Whilst clearly related to the Green-winged Pytilia *Pytilia melba*, the Djibouti birds differ in having bright yellow (not red) faces, and both sexes have yellow (not deep red) tails. All of the 13 races of *P. melba* have red faces and red tails. As we did not take a specimen, our description of *Pytilia (melba) flavicaudata* has not been accepted by the taxonomic community.



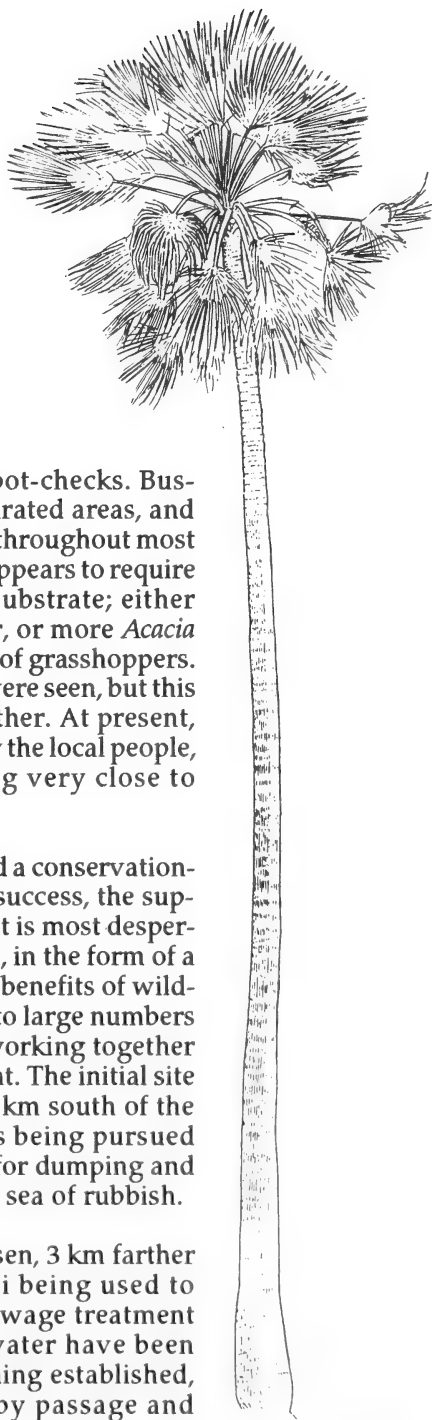
Besides its birds, the Goda massif also supports a significant proportion of the world population of the Bankouale Palm *Livistona carinensis*, a species found only in Djibouti, Somalia and southern Yemen. Djibouti supports about 400 mature trees. A tall, distinctive species, growing to heights of 25 m, the palm occurs only in areas with surface water - a scarcity in Djibouti. It produces large numbers of seeds which germinate readily in moist conditions, but grazing by livestock and flash floods ensure that virtually none survives.

As with the francolin, very little is known of the palm's biology and the species could very easily come to the verge of extinction if conservation measures are not instigated soon.

Djibouti's other international conservation responsibility rests with its small population of Arabian Bustards *Ardeotis arabs*. In 1985, we surveyed much of the southwest of the country for bustards. Potential sites were located from the air and then surveyed using transects and spot-checks. Bustards were present in four widely separated areas, and further work has shown them to occur throughout most of the country. In Djibouti, the species appears to require the following: a fine sand or gravel substrate; either scattered *Acacia* and a good herb layer, or more *Acacia* and fewer herbs; and a plentiful supply of grasshoppers. More often than not, only fresh tracks were seen, but this spring we saw up to seven birds together. At present, the species appears to be unmolested by the local people, and the birds were observed feeding very close to habitation.

Our work has increasingly incorporated a conservation-education element. For any long term success, the support of the local people is vital and what is most desperately needed is an educational resource, in the form of a reserve, near to Djibouti City; here the benefits of wildlife conservation can be demonstrated to large numbers of people. To this end, we have been working together with a French ex-patriate, Alain Laurent. The initial site was the old salt-pans at Waramous, 4 km south of the city. However, whilst the matter was being pursued with the authorities, the site was used for dumping and had now literally disappeared under a sea of rubbish.

In autumn 1988, a second site was chosen, 3 km farther south, at Petite Douba, a small wadi being used to channel purified water from a new sewage treatment plant out to sea. The effects of the water have been dramatic: vegetation is rapidly becoming established, and the area is already being used by passage and



wintering waders. Furthermore, the wadi is surrounded by almost pristine *Acacia* steppe in an area known to have previously supported Arabian Bustards. If the proposed boundary could be extended to include a significant part of the steppe, the reserve could assume international importance.

There is a growing concern for the protection of the environment in Djibouti; but there is also a greater increase in the desire to exploit the country's wildlife. Although all wildlife in Djibouti is protected, a walk along the tourist street market this spring showed an abundance of wildlife products on sale; from Ostrich eggs to Leopard skins, turtle carapaces to Cheetah cubs. Most, if not all, of these items would have originated in Ethiopia and Somalia, but are sold in Djibouti. There is even talk of removing the hunting laws, and it seems inevitable that the situation will get worse before it gets better.

Our research has revealed much about this little-known country, but it is not complete. Together with Alain Laurent, we are currently working on a distributional atlas of Djibouti's birds. The reserve idea is still being pursued and, most excitingly, as part of Sheraton Hotel's Going Green initiative, we are working on a sites inventory of Important Bird Areas in Djibouti.

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Hotamis - are the wetlands still there?

Guy Kirwan

According to Grimmett *et al.* (1989), the Hotamis area still contains a large wetland complex, harbouring a number of species of birds which are scarce on both a national and an international scale. A fuller and distinctly less optimistic overview has been published recently (Grimmett and Jones 1989).

Formerly, the area was regularly visited; it was well known as the only breeding site within Turkey for White-tailed Plover *Chettusia leucra*. However, two inter-related factors have combined to remove Hotamis from the birding map, and few birdwatchers now seem to incorporate it into their itineraries. This is despite the fact noted by Brace and Webb (unpub.) that the site has long been known to be subject to the vagaries of drought and local irrigation schemes and thus could still be worth exploring. Nevertheless, the fact that few observers have even man-

aged to locate the once extensive marshland in recent years and the specific lack of published records of White-tailed Plover since 1986 (Telfer unpub.) will have deterred many visitors.

In addition, the discovery and subsequent exploration of the marshes at Eregli, only 50 km to the east, which have proved to be perhaps the equal of Hotamis, has provided birders with an easy alternative.

On 15 June 1990, in the company of D. Ross and M. Roxby, I visited the Hotamis area. Unfortunately, we had no access to DHKD's recent aerial photographs and instead had to rely on comparatively small-scale, and probably outdated maps (especially that published by Ravenstein 1985/6), in conjunction with rough sketch maps and drawings made by other birders. We were, however, able to explore a quite wide area in the Hotamis-Salzipinar region, mostly from the two major gravel roads which dissect this area, marked on the map printed by the Defence Mapping Agency, Aerospace Centre, St Louis Air Force Station, Missouri 1982. We also drove on a number of farmers' tracks which run north and west from the road directly south of Hotamis, in an effort to find the large lake marked. This search failed, as did similar efforts to locate the large reedbed between the villages of Salzipinar and By Aslama looked at by Webb *et al.* in 1986.

Our usual procedure was to scan the surrounding land at intervals of 1 km, both from ground level and from the roof of the car, for any areas of wetland or other indications (eg lush vegetation or birds normally associated with water) that such areas might still exist. In addition, we asked a number of local people if they knew of any marshes in the surrounding region where we could find and watch birds. This produced negative results until, in the first village south of Hotamis (about 10 km south), we met a man who directed us to an area of marsh just to the south of the village of By Aslama. We got the impression (perhaps falsely) that this reedbed was the only sizeable one in the locality. However, in total area, the one lagoon we found, and its associated reedbed, covered an area of only around 1 km x 1 km. We spent approximately three quarters of an hour, during which time we recorded species typical of the habitat, such as Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*, Great White Egret *Egretta alba*, Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*, Spur-winged Plover *Hoplopterus spinosus* and Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*; as well as a colony of Lesser Kestrels *Falco naumanni* at By Aslama itself.

In summary, we covered by road the area indicated by Beaman (1986) as being the centre of the Hotamis marshes. We drove south from Route 80 (linking Konya and Eregli) to Salzipinar and then to By Aslama, diverting from the main track westwards for 5 km here,

before returning to it and continuing to drive first eastwards and then northwards for a further 14 km to the village of Hotamis itself. While we were obviously unable to ascertain how far drought - this being one of the factors identified by Grimmett *et al.* (1989) as being a potential threat to the area - might have affected the area, circumstantial evidence from the marsh we found would suggest that it is not a problem. Here the vegetation appeared quite luxuriant and green, and the water level on the only visible pool was obviously high. In addition, both cereal farming, mainly wheat, and goat and sheep grazing were well in evidence. We could not determine whether any permanent reclamation work had been undertaken for the farming to continue and expand; but the field systems did appear well established.

A detailed survey of the Hotamis area would still be valuable and would provide an essential update to OSME's Sites Register Scheme. This survey should concentrate not only on the area we covered, but should also spread its catchment, as the Hotamis marshes have appeared to be fully drained before, notably in 1974 (Brace and Webb unpub.). Nevertheless, it should be remembered that the eastern end of Hotamis may indeed have been permanently reclaimed, as the recent maps, especially those published by Hildebrand (1989) and Kummerley and Frey (1988), the research of Grimmett and Jones (1989), and a visit by D. Rushforth in 1988 all suggest. Rushforth was eventually able to find a large marsh which still provided good birding, even though he was unable to get very close to it. Nonetheless, among the large numbers of the more common waterbirds he also saw species such as Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus* and Marbled Teal *Marmaronetta angustirostris*, as well as hearing no less than 10 Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris*.

It may well be that the major wetland site of Hotamis has not been irrevocably lost, but as comprehensive a survey as possible is urgently needed. Would-be survey workers would require at least three full days adequately to cover the area by car; or a week minimum without a vehicle. Anyone interested in participating in such a scheme, or in organising it, should contact OSME's Turkish Officer c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire. OSME would be grateful for any other information on the site.

Note. All place names have been Anglicised.

Acknowledgments

I should like to thank D. A. Rushforth for providing his recent information on Hotamis, and Rod Martins for placing his extensive Turkey file at my disposal. Chris Bowden also made helpful contributions towards this note.

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The wetlands at Eregli, Turkey

Guy Kirwan

In the past, Eregli marshes supported a similar range of species to that at Hotamis, despite covering considerably less than half the area of the latter. Recent reports from British birdwatchers (notably Telfer in 1988) suggest that Eregli is now far more important than Hotamis, both for breeding and migrant birds.

We were able to spend the evening of 16 June and all of 17 June 1990 birdwatching in the large wetland region of Eregli. This comprises two major habitat zones: a large shallow mud and reed fringed lake; and a large *Phragmites* reedbed interspersed with deeper lagoons. The area can be approached from several directions, and we concentrated our efforts on two areas representative of the two habitat zones. We could not detect any major differences in habitat area or quality from those reported by Telfer in 1988, but without detailed reference material, such comparisons can only be subjective.

The lake area was the most productive, and was reached from the grazing marshes by the village of Tatlikuyu. The surrounding area seemed to be relatively untouched by agriculture, barring a few goats. The local population are to some extent aware of the importance of the region for birds, through having frequently met birdwatchers in the area. This contact may partly explain why the habitat still seems to be of a high quality.

The northern side of the lake in the Tatlikuyu area was inaccessible owing to soft mud, but birdwatching from the eastern side was excellent, and included the following species and maximum counts.

Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus* 50
 White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* 70
 Dalmatian Pelican *Pelecanus crispus* 2
 Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* 60
 Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* 100
 Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber* c.1600
 Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* 40
 Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* 7
 Gadwall *Anas strepera* 2
 Teal *Anas crecca* 15
 Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* 10
 Pintail *Anas acuta* 1
 Garganey *Anas querquedula* 2
 Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* 5
 Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* 2
 Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* 10
 Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* 6
 Common Crane *Grus grus* 2
 Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* 80
 Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* 20
 Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* 40
 Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* 15
 Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* 15
 Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* 5
 Spur-winged Plover *Hoplopterus spinosus* 30
 Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* 50
 Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* 12
 Dunlin *Calidris alpina* 17
 Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* 1
 Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* 23
 Redshank *Tringa totanus* 10
 Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* 4
 Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* 9
 Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* 6
 Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* 5
 Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* 10
 White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* 3

The vast marsh associated with this lake is best approached via the gravel track which runs on a roughly east-west axis parallel to the reedbed, to the west of the village of Bogecik. We drove down this track for about 7 km, and the reedbed continued in the distance - unfortunately away from the road. Immediately to the south of this road there is a line of small hillocks, and there are a number of quarries in the hillside. There were some wheat fields between the road and the marsh, but also some grass for cattle grazing. We saw the following species in this area.

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* 3
 Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* 10

Pygmy Cormorant 200
 White Pelican 100
 Dalmatian Pelican 1
 Squacco Heron 10
 Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* 50
 Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* 2
 Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* 10
 Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* 2
 Greylag Goose *Anser anser* 5
 Mallard 100
 Red-crested Pochard 20
 Pochard *Aythya ferina* 5
 Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* 4
 White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* 7
 Marsh Harrier 30
 Hobby *Falco subbuteo* 3
 Coot *Fulica atra* 40
 Little Tern 2
 Whiskered Tern 40
 White-winged Black Tern 1
 Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* many
 Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* many

In conclusion, Eregli remains one of the richest bird areas in the region, despite the threats of drainage, reed burning and hunting outlined in *Important Bird Areas in Europe*. As with Hotamis, the area needs a thorough survey, particularly around the northern end, for which a four-wheeled-drive vehicle would seem essential. Such a survey would take a car-driving fieldworker at least a week; but it would be a week well spent.

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A second breeding site of the Purple Gallinule in southern Turkey

Arjan Ovaas and Rene Vos

Although the Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio porphyrio* used to be a common breeding bird in suitable areas in Turkey, the distribution in recent decades was restricted to the Göksü Delta in southern Turkey (Kasperek *et al.* 1989). A bird census project in that delta during spring 1989 revealed a breeding population of 50-70 pairs at Akgöl alone (Baris *et al.* in prep).

During spring 1990, the sixth joint DHKD-WIWO project was executed in Turkey in the Çukurova Delta, south of Adana. Primary aims

of this project were migrant wader studies for the Eastern Mediterranean Wader Project 1990 (OSME Bull. 24:30-31). Because the presence of the Purple Gallinule was strongly suspected in this area, some time was spent searching for breeding sites of the species. A suitable area seemed to be on the shore of the Akyatan Lake, 40 km south of Adana, here a meandering and broad stream, bordered by dense vegetation of reeds *Phragmites*, flows into the lake. Several attempts to find the species during March and April, on one occasion with a small boat, failed. However, on 8 May an adult bird was seen with a single chick. The next day, one was seen and five more were heard along the stream. On 15 May, the morning was spent examining the number of territories on both sides of a branch of the stream for about 2 km. There proved to be at least seven territories, with at least nine adults and 10 chicks. Since the total suitable area is at least three times the size of the examined area, the estimated number of territories is 20.

The birds clearly had grey heads and throats, and so belong to the subspecies *seistanicus* or *caspius*. As there are no known records of *caspius* in this region (Cramp and Simmons 1980), the birds are presumed to be *P. p. seistanicus*: this is the subspecies breeding in the Göksü Delta.

The Akyatan Lake and a 500 m zone around it are protected against hunting by Turkish law. However, people visiting the area in winter mention large-scale hunting (eg. L.J. Dijkzen *et al.* WIWO Report 21 1989). It is vital to protect this area, including the marshes, in a more effective way to save this second breeding site of the Purple Gallinule in Turkey.

Acknowledgments

As this project was a co-operation of the Turkish Society for the Protection of Wildlife (DHKD) with the Dutch Working Group for International Wader and Waterfowl Research (WIWO), we would like to thank both organisations for making this research possible. We would also like to thank Vincent van den Berk for providing much additional information.

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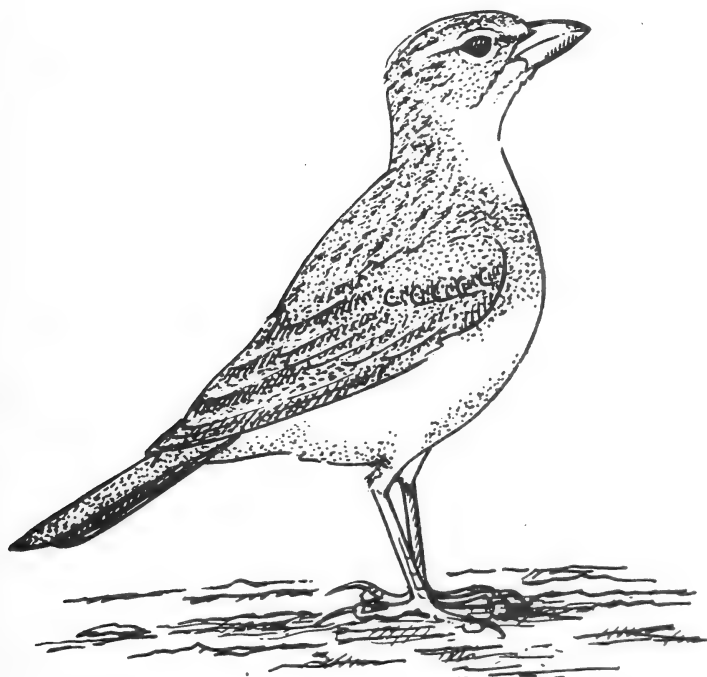
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Dunn's Lark breeding in Egypt

Sherif M Baha El Din

At least four singing Dunn's Larks *Eremalauda dunni* were noticed on 8 May 1990, approximately 35 km southwest of El Arish, north Sinai. They were performing their distinctive song flight, and later several other individuals were seen defending territories and carrying food. More than 10 Dunn's Larks were seen at the same locality on 1 January 1990. The only previous record from Egypt was of a single individual just north of Nekhal in March 1981 (Goodman & Meininger 1989).



The birds were found on a wide (+10 km) gravel plain with numerous sandy patches, situated between the coastal dunes of north Sinai to the north and the hills of Gebel Maghara and Gebel Halal to the south. The plain had a good vegetation cover, dominated primarily by *Fagonia arabica*, *Anabasis articulata*, *Stipagrostis ciliata*, *Panicum trigidum* and *Erodium pulverulentum*. The larks fed regularly on the seeds of the last species.

Four other lark species were observed in association with Dunn's Larks at the same locality. Bar-tailed Desert Larks *Ammomanes cincturus* were particularly numerous; their association with Dunn's Lark

is noteworthy and is commonly observed in other areas. Temminck's Horned Lark *Eremophila bilopha* was also numerous in the area, while only a few Hoopoe Larks *Calandrella cinerea* were seen. All four species were actively engaged in song flights and defending territories.

This is the first known breeding of Dunn's Lark in Egypt. The plentiful rains of the previous winter, reported by locals, perhaps encouraged this nomadic species to nest in the area, but it is most likely that it has been overlooked in the past, and it is expected to be found elsewhere in north Sinai.

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Behaviour and status of Black-winged Kite in Egypt

Derek J Evans

On 27 June 1989, I stopped towards sunset at Sadat City, 80 km from Cairo on the desert road to Alexandria. This is a 'new town', developed on land reclaimed from the desert. To advertise its presence, lawns, shrubs and trees have been planted along the main desert highway which runs to the south of the town.

House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* were gathering to roost in a line of ornamental bushes, when a Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus* flew horizontally at great speed into the centre of a thick bush, and emerged clutching a sparrow. The raptor flew from the panic stricken roost to a nearby telegraph pole to consume its prey.

The Birds of Egypt refers to a recent recovery in numbers of Black-winged Kites in Egypt since an apparent decline perhaps caused by pesticides. My own observations during the last three years confirm the species to be fairly common and widespread in the Nile Valley and Delta. However, *The Birds of Egypt* also refers to the population at Wadi el Natrun, a desert oasis 15 km west of Sadat City as 'presumed to be locally extirpated'. The observations recorded here may be interesting

for two reasons. First, the increase in agricultural land and associated habitat reclaimed from the desert in Egypt may be encouraging an increase in Black-winged Kites both into these new areas and perhaps back into adjacent former breeding areas such as Wadi el Natrun. Secondly, the House Sparrow is not specifically recorded as a prey item for Black-winged Kite in *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*, nor is the 'horizontal-dash' hunting technique into dense shrub.

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Honey Buzzard behaviour

Derek J Evans

On 20 May 1989, I was birdwatching on the beach of Ain Sukhna on the western side of the Gulf of Suez, 50 km south of Suez, Egypt. It was near noon and 33°C, when I disturbed a Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*, a common spring migrant at this site, which had been resting on the sandy shore. It landed again a little farther on and cautiously moved down towards the water's edge. Before it got to the water proper it took two mouthfuls of sand and sea-water in a scooping motion of its head, then flew up to join a second Honey Buzzard circling over the sea.

The original bird then circled very low over the sea for two or three minutes, with its legs extended downwards as if trying to trail them in or land on the water. Eventually, it landed on the water and tucked up its wings behind as if trying to keep them dry. It stayed motionless for about one minute until disturbed by White-eyed Gulls *Larus leucophthalmus* and Lesser Crested Terns *Sterna bengalensis*. The Honey Buzzard rose from the water without difficulty and flew away. Throughout most of the period of observation the bird had been panting.

The Birds of the Western Palearctic makes no mention of the species drinking, swimming or bathing.

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OSME News

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Thirteenth Annual General Meeting

The thirteenth AGM will be held on the afternoon of Saturday 20 July 1991 in the Lecture Theatre, Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, South Kensington, London. Further details will be published in the spring Bulletin.

Twelfth Annual General Meeting

The Twelfth OSME AGM was held on 2 July 1990. It was well attended, and was generally hailed as one of the best yet. The talks were all of a very high standard and the business part of the meeting passed smoothly and quickly.

This year, the contributors have been asked to submit copies of their talks for publication in the Bulletin, and that of Geoff and Hilary Welch is reproduced here as 'Djibouti - six years on'. Mike Jennings gave an account of the progress that has been made on the Atlas of Breeding Birds of Arabia, and surprised many people with his assertion that a survey of an area the size of an English county was quite possible in a morning - providing the habitat was fairly uniform desert. Mike has promised an update of the project for the next Bulletin.

Paul Doherty stepped in at the last minute to provide a feast of superb photographs, mainly of raptors in Israel. He concentrated on the bewildering plumage variations shown by Steppe Buzzards (see Paul's article and colour photographs with H Shirihai in *Birding World* 3(1):10-14), but he also showed many other species. Paul's talk was very well received, but the Bulletin could not do it justice. Instead, Paul has promised some tips on bird photography in Middle Eastern conditions for the spring issue.

In the AGM itself, OSME's Chairman, Mike Rands, announced two ambitious initiatives: the Society's second expedition, to southern Yemen in 1992 or 1993; and a project to gather data for and eventually publish a sites inventory - 'Important Bird Areas in the Middle East'. Both of these will receive greater coverage in the Bulletin in due course.

At this year's AGM, two Council members who have given stalwart service to OSME over the years retired: Dave Fisher and Mike Jennings. Indeed, they are the only two members to have completed two spells on Council, and thus have helped steer the Society through its formative years.

In addition to their wise counsel, Dave has almost singlehandedly edited the OSME Bulletin and maintained its very high standard; whilst Mike has ensured close contact with Arabia and the all-important Atlas of Breeding Birds of Arabia (ABBA) project, to which many members have contributed. We are sure that it won't be long before they are back helping OSME again.

Conservation Research on vacation

Guy Kirwan, who has kindly agreed to compile *Around the Region*, has two other main articles in this issue: reports on Hotamis and Eregli Marshes, Turkey. Before his visit, Guy contacted OSME to discover whether his birding holiday could be more useful than simply his submitting records to the Turkish Bird Report. Through the Conservation Research Committee and OSME's connections with DHKD, the Society recommended that Guy tried to discover the extent to which the two wetland areas still existed and whether they still held any importance for birds.

There is no doubt that a full-scale investigation of the two areas would still be useful, but Guy's contributions show how useful purely amateur birdwatching trips can be, particularly if given some direction.

If you would like direction from OSME as to how to spend your holidays usefully in Turkey or other Middle Eastern countries, please write to the Conservation Research Committee, as far in advance of your proposed trip as possible.

Subbuteo Natural History Books Ltd

We are pleased to announce that this company has agreed to continue the sponsorship of colour plates in *Sandgrouse*. With colour printing being such a familiar part of our everyday lives, it is easy to forget just how expensive the process is. Without this support, colour could never be a guaranteed feature of the journal.

Special Offer

Sandgrouse volumes 6-10 can now be purchased as a set for £25. This is a saving of £13.50. Get yours now while stocks last! Orders to OSME *Sandgrouse* Offer, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, UK.

Bird Songs of Israel and the Middle East

This is now being distributed by Bird Recordings Limited and should be readily available. The company has kindly agreed to donate 5% of the retail price of any cassette ordered through this Bulletin (see advertisement at the back) to OSME's Conservation Research Fund.

OSME tour to Egypt

Next spring, OSME will be operating its first birdwatching tour, in co-operation with the birdwatching tour company, Sunbird. The tour will

run from 24 March to 3 April 1991 and will be led by ex-OSME Council member, David Fisher, and the well-known Egyptian ornithologist Sherif Baha el Din. The tour will visit most of Egypt's well-known birdwatching sites, including Suez, Wadi Natrun, the Nile at Luxor and Aswan, Abu Simbel, and Hurghada on the Red Sea. Spring migration will be at its peak, and the tour should see a good variety of migrating raptors, waders and passerines, as well as Egypt's resident birds. Likely Egyptian specialities include Black-shouldered Kite, Painted Snipe, Senegal Thick-knee, Kittlitz's Plover, Sooty and White-eyed Gulls, Crested and Lesser Crested Terns, Senegal Coucal and Nile Valley Sunbird.

The tour will also visit the main historical sites, including the Valley of the Kings, the temples at Philae, Abu Simbel and Karnak, the Great Pyramids and the Sphinx. OSME members qualify for a 10% discount on the tour price, reducing it to about £1475. In addition, OSME members receive priority booking, and until 1st November only OSME members may book for the tour.

We hope that the tour will provide OSME members with an opportunity to birdwatch in a structured way in one of the most ornithologically famous of the Middle Eastern countries. OSME will also benefit financially from this trip. For full details of the tour write to David Fisher, Sunbird, PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 1DF. Telephone 0767 682969. Please ensure that you mention your OSME membership when making your booking or enquiry.

OSME expedition to the Republic of Yemen

The Society is currently planning its second expedition, which is destined once again for Yemen. This time efforts will be concentrated in the south of the country, in the area that was, until the recent merger of the two Yemens, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY).

The time will be eight weeks from February to April, 1992 or 1993, depending on the necessary permissions being granted. More details will appear in Bulletin 26, but in the meantime any member who is likely to be interested should write to the expedition leader, Richard Porter, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, UK. Please give brief details of the ornithological and other experience that an expedition might find useful (eg, are you a botanist, car mechanic, first aider, photographer etc?). Expedition members will be expected to spend at least a month in Yemen and be prepared to make a £500 contribution to the cost.

Turkey Report

OSME will shortly be preparing Turkish distribution maps for Black Vulture *Aegypius monachus* and Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*. Both species are included in *Birds to Watch: the ICBP world checklist of threatened birds* (Collar & Andrew 1988); and an EEC/ICBP Management Plan is being prepared for Lesser Kestrel.

To assist in the production of the maps, please send any records of either species (both old and new) which have not previously been submitted to the Turkey Bird Report to Richard Webb, Turkey Officer, c/o OSME.

Once the maps have been prepared, OSME hopes to organise fieldwork to review the current status of both species in selected areas.

In addition, OSME is updating the list of species for which Turkish records are particularly required. Members visiting Turkey are invited to write to Richard Webb for a copy of the list. (See Harrap, S and Martins, R 1986. Turkish Bird Report: Notes for contributors. *OSME Bull.* 17:37-43)

Requests

Pink-backed Pelicans in 1989 north of their normal distribution

Fourteen records of Pink-backed Pelicans *Pelecanus rufescens* were reported during May to November 1989, in Central Europe (11), Egypt and Israel (3), but only as unconfirmed reports. It seems that an influx of Pink-backed Pelicans into Central Europe may have taken place. Please send any reports of Pink-backed Pelicans (or other unidentified pelicans) outside their normal range (Africa south of the Sahara and the Red Sea north to 23°) in 1989 to: Michael Kuhn, Coloniastr. 64, D-55303 Bornheim 3, West Germany. Please include full details and, if possible, supporting photographs.

Midwinter wildfowl counts in Turkey

For the past five years, IWRB has subsidised a Dutch team counting waterfowl in midwinter on the major Turkish wetlands. For the last

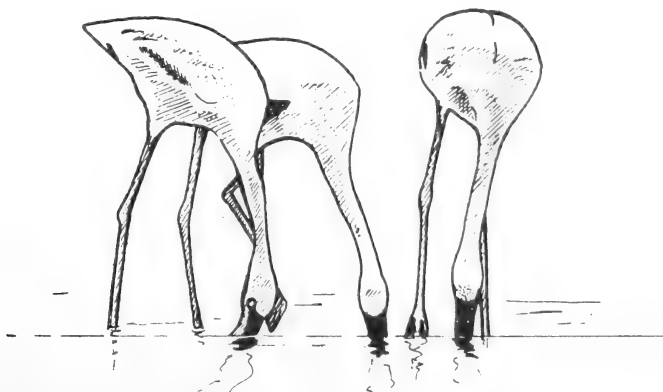
two winters, this was done in co-operation with members of the bird group in the Society for the Protection of Wildlife (DHKD) in Istanbul. From 1991 onwards, IWRB's financial support will stop. DHKD will start a monitoring program on a number of the most important sites. Not all wetlands counted previously can be included, and geese will probably not be counted at all. If you are planning to visit Turkey in January 1991 and you are willing to count one (or more) wetlands, please contact the national co-ordinator: Lieuwe J Dijkse, Fonteinsweg 9, NL-1797 RK Den Hoorn Texel, The Netherlands.

Hotamis Marshes

Guy Kirwan is in the process of collating information on the Hotamis Marshes of southern Turkey and would be pleased to receive any previously unsubmitted records from this area. Please send any records to Guy Kirwan, c/o OSME.

Sightings of ringed Flamingos

Since 1977, over 12,000 Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber* chicks have been ringed on the western Mediterranean, with coded plastic legbands. These have been engraved in black with alpha-numerical codes of three or four digits. French rings (yellow or white) from the Camargue are placed on the right tibia, and Spanish (orange) from Fuente de Piedra (Malaga) on the left tibia. The black line engraved between the first two digits of the Spanish rings must be recorded to avoid confusion with some codes. These birds may be encountered in all Mediterranean countries, in western Asia and in West Africa. All sightings will be acknowledged with the bird's life history. Please send details to: Alan R Johnson, Station Biologique de la Tour du Valat, Le Sambuc, 13200 Arles, France; or Juan Calderon, Estacion biologica de Donana, Pabellon del Peru, Avenida Maria Luisa s/n, 41013 Sevilla, Spain.





Library Report



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

Bennett, CJL (Ed) 1990. The Cyprus Ornithological Society 34th Annual Report. Cyprus Ornithological Society (1957), Nicosia.

This is the latest in the series of bird reports for Cyprus, covering 1987. The systematic list gives details of the 266 species recorded during the year. Of particular note are records of a small influx of Great Black-headed Gulls *Larus ichthyæetus*, the island's third record of Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*, and two female Hooded Wheatears *Oenanthe monacha*, the first since 1875. Additionally, there are papers on the feeding behaviour of Kingfishers *Alcedo atthis*, Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus*, the Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*, and the results of a census of Audouin's Gulls *Larus audouinii* breeding on the Klidhes Islands. The COS can be contacted at PO Box 4319, Nicosia, Cyprus.

Jennings, MC 1990. ABBA Survey no 8: Summary report of an ornithological survey of the Peoples' Democratic Republic of Yemen, October/November 1989.

This eight-page summary report details observations made during a visit to South Yemen from 23 October-9 November 1989, primarily to collect data for the Atlas of Breeding Birds of Arabia project. Useful contacts were also made by Mike on behalf of OSME to assist with Society's proposed expedition to southern Yemen in spring 1992. A very rigorous schedule allowed virtually the whole of the country to be visited, if somewhat hurriedly. Packed full of interesting observations, this is a taster of the full report to follow in due course. For more information and details of the ABBA project, contact Mike Jennings, 4 Croft Close, Brampton, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE18 8TJ.



Reviews

Zoology in the Middle East. Volume 3. 1989. Edited by Ragnar Kinzelbach and Max Kasperek.

This is the third issue of the journal which publishes original papers on morphology, zoogeography, faunistics, systematics, animal biology and ecology of the Middle East.

There are 12 papers in the 133 pages, with contents as follows: mammals (1), birds (1), reptiles (3), fish (1), molluscs (2), insects (2) and crustacea (2).

The bird paper, 'The Purple Gallinule, *Porphyrio porphyrio*, in the Eastern Mediterranean', describes the decrease in its Mediterranean population since the last century. The Gökşu Delta is important as the only known breeding location of the subspecies *seistanicus* in the Mediterranean. The authors put the Gökşu population at less than 30 pairs and disagree with a recent suggestion of 'possibly several hundred pairs' in the delta. It is clear, whatever the number, that the area is vitally important for the maintenance of the genetic diversity of the species as well as its survival in Turkey.

Simon Albrecht

Asian Waterfowl Census 1989. Compiled by Derek A Scott and Paul M Rose. International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau (IWRB) 1989. No price given.

This booklet presents data for a series of midwinter waterfowl counts in southern and eastern Asia during January 1989 for 20 countries. Of these, four - Bahrain, Iran, Oman and Pakistan - lie within the OSME region, and I shall restrict my attention to these. Following the introductory background and remarks on variations in coverage, data appear as tables, with complimentary text discussing features of national counts during 1989.

The following records are particularly noteworthy: in Iran, a disappointing total of 35 Lesser White-fronted Geese *Anser erythropus* in the southeast sector of the Caspian shoreline; 11,300 Marbled Teal *Marmaronetta angustirostris*, mostly at Shadegan Marshes in Khuzestan (an encouraging total); and seven Siberian Cranes *Grus leucogeranus*, which appear in the summary table for southwest Asian countries but, amazingly, are not mentioned elsewhere. Of interest in Oman were five Bewick's Swans *Cygnus columbianus*, 37 Indian Cotton Teal *Nettapus coromandelianus*, 27 Pheasant-tailed Jacanas *Hydrophasianus chirurgus* and 11 Pintail Snipe *Gallinago stenura*. The most significant record from Oman, however, is the discovery of hitherto unknown populations of 119 Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* at Barr Al Hikman. Taken together with the increasingly regular observations of this species in Pakistan (20 birds in 1989), it may be suggested that this species should be watched for along any northeast Indian Ocean shoreline.

Elsewhere, 23 Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus* wintering in Bahrain were of interest, while the observation of a mere single Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus* in southwest Asia perhaps illustrates how the census methods employed are unsuitable for some species and provides a reminder of how little-known the wintering distribution of this species remains.

Counts indicate a frightening future for White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala*: for the first time, none was recorded from the usual wintering area in the southeast Caspian and central Fars (Iran); in Pakistan, their numbers were the lowest for many years, showing a near 82% decline from 733 in 1987 to 187 only two years later.

Sections on 'Wetlands of International Importance and the Ramsar Convention' and 'Reliability of the Data' seem worth remarking upon. The site lists provide evidence from which potentially productive birding sites may be selected; many, however, will be inaccessible to visitors. The aim of providing an up-to-date and informative tool for conservation decision making is ably fulfilled by this publication.

Rod Martins

Birds of the eastern province of Saudi Arabia. By G Bundy, R J Connor and C J O Harrison. H F and G Witherby in association with Aramco 1989. 224 pages, 2 maps and 158 colour photographs. £35.

The eastern province of Saudi Arabia extends from the border of Kuwait in the north for some 1,200 km into the sands of the Rub'al-Khali (The Empty Quarter) in the south; and from the Arabian Gulf in the east, westwards across low desert plains for some 150 km, to the high dunes of ad Dahna. Until the late 1960s, the avifauna was little studied; birds were collected by the explorers Cheesman (1921 and 1923-4), Philby (1932 and 1938) and Ripley and Meinertzhagen paid short visits to the province in 1950. Since then, the oil-based economy of the Kingdom has prospered; and with it have come expatriot birdwatchers. Their contributions are now represented by this commendable work.

The first third of the book sets the scene for the systematic list: there are chapters on physical description, climate and vegetation. Then follows a chapter on the origins of eastern province birds, commencing in the Miocene period. This is a significant contribution to Arabian ornithology not, at present, likely to be found elsewhere. The remaining introductory chapters fully treat faunal subdivisions, birds and biotopes (including sections on adaptations to aridity and migration), and man and birds.

The bulk of the work consists of an annotated systematic list of 341 species. The book is not intended to be a field guide but here, at the start of most family sections, the authors have written a summary highlighting points of identification and typical habitat; this is very useful. Periods of passage, details of breeding, dates and locations, are all dealt with succinctly. The student of migration systems will find much here of interest: possibly several hundred Corncrakes *Crex crex* in grass crops deep in the autumn desert; Terek Sandpipers *Xenus cinereus* in good numbers on inland wetlands and irrigated fields, surely an indication that they cross the Arabian Peninsula.

The work concludes with appendices which include a systematic list; fine for quick reference, but rather redundant as all species have already been dealt with comprehensively. Next, and more useful, comes an appendix on 127 migrant species comparing their numbers in spring and autumn. The third appendix gives co-ordinates of locations mentioned in the text which may be plotted onto the rather bare maps. As some of these locations may be no more than a large circular field of alfalfa in the middle of the desert, their omission

from the map is understandable. The final appendix consists of meteorological graphs; there is also a neat bibliography.

The photographs are excellent, the book well designed and the print comfortable to the eye. This publication can be recommended, not only to birdwatchers in eastern Arabia but also to any ornithologists with an interest in the Middle East. I suspect that this product has been in the pipeline for many years, fortunately it has emerged in a highly refined state.

Tom Nightingale

The Torgos Vol/8, 1(16) Winter 1989. Eds O Bahat, Dr R Frumkin and Y Leshem. Ministry of Defence Press. Annual Subscription \$20.

This publication, the bi-annual production of the Israeli Raptor Information Center, is a special edition commemorating the group's tenth anniversary and its merger with the SPNI Ornithological and Raptor Information Centers. Virtually the entire text is in Hebrew, which must seriously detract from its ability to fully engage a non-Israeli audience. English summaries are, however, provided for all of the 13 papers and a particularly welcome innovation is the incorporation of a new feature entitled 'Bird News', which is printed in its entirety in both languages. This section contains among other items an update on the project to save the Israeli population of the Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus negevensis*, from which the journal derives its name. In addition, the journal has an English editorial and all illustrations and diagrams have English captions.

Naturally most of the papers concern birds within Israel, especially raptors, which account for six of them and migration studies which occupy another four. The only exception is a paper by Ron Frumkin that analyses the post-fledging and parasitic behaviour of the Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*, based on a study made in the UK.

The real highlight of the journal for me was the large number of stunning photographs, taken in the main by Israeli photographers, which are liberally interspersed with a number of almost equally impressive line drawings. For serious students of Israeli ornithology and arguably its most important aspects (its raptors and its migrations), a subscription to *The Torgos* is a must. Unfortunately, the relative lack of English language material, in comparison with journals such as *Dutch Birding*, is liable to prevent it from becoming more widely read. This would be a great pity, for *The Torgos* stands as due testimony to the current strength, vitality and expertise of Israeli ornithology.

Guy Kirwan

News and Information

Compiled by Simon Albrecht

The aim of the section is to inform readers about events in the OSME region. It is not intended as a definitive report or write up of the projects concerned. Most of the projects are sponsored; such support is appreciated but is not generally given acknowledgment here.

Oman

Good news for conservation

The government of Oman recently made a substantial donation to the Peter Scott Memorial Appeal for Conservation. The donation took the appeal past the £1 million mark, and in early June it stood at nearly £1.5 million.

The Peter Scott Memorial Appeal was launched in September 1989, in accordance with Sir Peter Scott's wishes, to raise money for conservation projects including environmental education and work on endangered species.

Oman has taken a leading role in conservation over the past 16 years, with encouragement from Sir Peter and assistance from the IUCN Species Survival Commission. Conservation projects in Oman have enjoyed outstanding success.

The IUCN Species Survival Commission, which aims to help stem the tide of species extinctions, will use the money for further development of its work.

Colloquy on the Mediterranean coasts

The second colloquy on the Mediterranean coasts and the protection of the environment, organised by the Centre Naturopa of the Council of Europe, was held in Izmir, Turkey, on 19 and 20 October 1989. The colloquy assembled experts

from different disciplines and concentrated its discussions on the opportunities provided by a regional planning policy that is concerned about tourism's impact on the natural environment. The appropriate legislative, administrative and financial instruments with which to modify this growth in tourism were examined. The international conventions on environmental protection also came under scrutiny. The proceedings of the colloquy will be published by the CoE this year.

North Cyprus

New bird society

We are pleased to welcome the formation, during the summer, of the North Cyprus Society for the Protection of Birds. The aims of the society include the protection and preservation of the birds of North Cyprus, together with promotion of study and the publication of data. The Society is particularly concerned with hunting pressure: apparently 20% to 30% of hunters shoot birds of prey; and over a million thrushes were shot in the last year. The hunting laws are inadequate and date from 1934; the liming of birds is not illegal. Membership of the Society is open to all. Further details are available from: The North Cyprus Society for the Protection of Birds, PO Box 634, Girne, North Cyprus.

Conservation awareness campaign

At the time of writing, this campaign is entering its final weeks (see Bull.24:23). The campaign has helped the establishment of the NCSPB (see above). We hope to have a fuller report in the next Bulletin.

Jordan

After a lengthy incubation period, the Royal Society for the Protection of Nature had produced an Arabic version of ICBP's popular bird book, with colour illustrations. It helps in the identification of over 100 local birds and serves as an introduction to birdwatching. The book also has an important role in local conservation education.

Egypt

Conservation Education Centre

Having followed with interest the plans for a conservation education centre at Giza Zoo, we are pleased to report that it opened its doors in June and was formally opened on 3 September 1990, after three years' hard work. Staff have attended courses at the International Centre for Conservation Education in England. A local edition of ICBP's popular bird book and an Arabic version of the Flying Visitors poster have both just been published. It is anticipated that between 20 and 40 thousand people will attend courses at the centre each year. In addition, there will be workshops for teachers and environmental officers from the region, and a portable unit has been launched to take the conservation message to people around the country.

Falcon trapping

An ICBP-sponsored survey is currently underway to establish the extent of falcon trapping in Egypt. We hope to be able to report further on this in the next Bulletin. It has been brought to our attention that the trapping methods mentioned in the last Bulletin may not have originated from Cornell University. We apologise for any embarrassment caused.

Slender-billed Curlew

ICBP's Slender-billed Curlew project has now come to an end, and an ICBP monograph is in preparation. Publication is currently expected early in 1991. Information gathered in the past two years suggests that the species is on the verge of extinction, with only 100 to 400 individuals remaining. The current breeding area remains unknown, and research continues. It seems likely that the prime cause of decline has been hunting pressure. In Italy, for example, 63 of the 76 records this century are of shot birds. Since only a very small proportion of shot birds are reported, it is likely that several thousands of individuals have been shot in Italy alone. Hunting continues - one was shot and wounded in Morocco last December.

The ICBP monograph will contain an action plan for the conservation of the species. What is really needed is a complete ban on the hunting of all curlews and godwits in the countries where the species is known to occur. Hungary, Greece and Tunisia already have such a ban, and Morocco has recently protected all curlews. The status of the Slender-billed Curlew in the Middle East is far from clear, so such a ban throughout the region would be welcome.



Around the Region

This section details recent bird sightings within the OSME region. Whenever possible, the significance of the record (eg unusually late migrant, second spring record, most southerly record) will be included. Records are published for interest only, and their publication here neither implies acceptance nor rejection by the records committee of the relevant country. Any OSME member is welcome to contribute to this feature, and we are particularly keen to hear from anyone resident in the Middle East who could submit regular records. For further details of what is involved in being a regular contributor, or to submit records for the next Bulletin, covering the period September 1990 to February 1991, please write to: Around the Region, OSME, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, UK.

Compiled by Guy Kirwan

Unless otherwise stated all records refer to 1990.

Bahrain

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus* Ten recorded between November 1989 and April 1990 (including four in March and one in April); previously very few records, but no doubt overlooked. *E Hirschfeld*

Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* One, Portuguese Fort 23 February, two Adhari-Ras Tubli 21-27 April, third to fourth records. *D Davies, E Hirschfeld, J Kuypers*

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* Small breeding colonies

established at two sites with sub-adults summering at a third; the first breeding records. *E Hirschfeld, J Kuypers, T Nightingale*

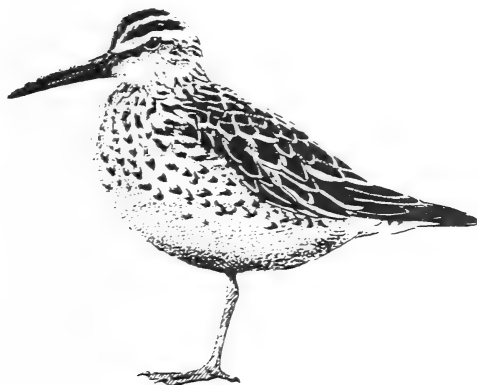
Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola* One, Malharraq 24 May; less than annual in Bahrain. *E Hirschfeld*

Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* Correction. Record previously mentioned (Bull.24:37) was not the first. *E Hirschfeld*

Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* One, ASRY 5 January; first record. *Dr M Hill, E Hirschfeld, J Kuypers*



Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* Recent counts indicate a wintering population of 1500-2000 individuals (cf. counts in UAE, *Sandgrouse* 10:58-70). E Hirschfeld.



Common Gull *Larus canus* Adult, Ras Tubli 4 November 1989; first record. E Hirschfeld

Armenian Gull *Larus (argentatus) armenicus* Adult, Ras Tubli 27 March; first inshore record. E Hirschfeld

Swift Tern *Sterna bergii* One, ASRY 5 January; rare inshore. Dr M Hill, E Hirschfeld, J Kuypers

Striated Scops Owl *Otus brucei* One, Awali 27 October 1989; only the second verified occurrence. Dr M Hill

Palm Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis* One, Manam 20 May; sixth record, first was as recently as 1987. E Hirschfeld

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis* One, Qurrayah 12 April; also found to be breeding around Hamalah, where four different males, two females and a juvenile were seen in June; eighth and ninth records, first in 1983 so obviously increasing. M Braynes, Dr M Hill, E Hirschfeld, Sheikh Al Khalifa

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* Two different individuals showing characters of *M. a. personata* at Ras Tubli, 2 January and 17 February; the first records of this subspecies. E Hirschfeld

Grey Hypocolius *Hypocolius ampelinus* Two of the large roosts previously reported (Bull.24:37) had been completely vacated by the end of 1989. The third held a record 488 in mid-December 1989 although this subsequently declined dramatically, with only a few birds remaining until mid-February 1990. E Hirschfeld

Red-Breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva* One, UBF stream 7-8 February; fifth record. J Kuypers

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* Male at Janabiyah reedbed 8 April; two previous winter records both concerned small flocks in 1970-71. E Hirschfeld

Cinereous Bunting *Emberiza cineracea* One, Jasra 19 April and two there 27 April (all *E. c. semenowi*); consorting with large flocks of Ortolans. An annual but scarce spring migrant. E Hirschfeld, J Kuypers

Egypt

Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus* Adult, Agilkia Island, Aswan 3 May; no records since the end of the nineteenth century, although Goodman and Meininger (1989) speculate that the species may be an occasional visitor to the south of the country from the Sudanese breeding grounds. C Walters

Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus* Six, Hurghada 15 April; rare passage migrant. J Foster, R Morris

Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* First year, Ain Sukhna 5 May; unusually late, and the southernmost record ever. P J Evans

African Skimmer *Rynchops flavirostris* Five, Kom Ombo 25 April; the species has become increasingly regular since 1979, culminating in the discovery of a breeding colony near Abu Simbel in July 1989. C Walters

Cyprus Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe*

cypriaca One, Hurghada 5 April; uncommon passage migrant. G Kirwan
Siskin *Carduelis spinus* One, Santa Katharina 26 March; a scarce winter visitor most often recorded in Sinai. G Kirwan

Israel

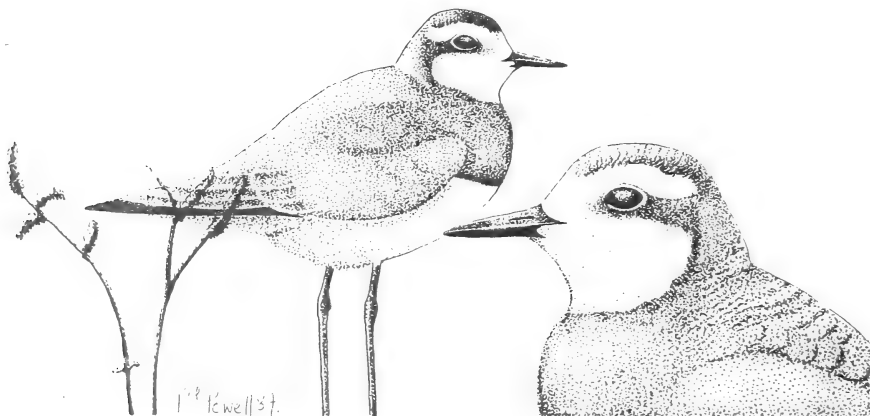
Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* One, Eilat 7 April; rare passage migrant in the Gulf of Aqaba. G Kirwan, R Lucking, R Morris
Black Bush Robin *Cercotrichas podobe* One, Yotvata 2 April-30 June at least; the twelfth record, first was as recent as 1981. per M Whittingham
Cyprus Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe cypriaca* One, Eilat 30-31 March; uncommon passage migrant most often seen in this area. M Warden, M Whittingham
Clamorous Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus* One, Eilat April; very rare at Eilat in recent years. M Warden, M

Whittingham

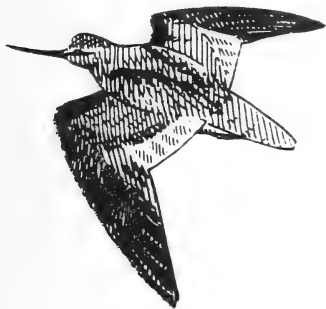
Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* One, (humei race, now treated as a full species, Oriental Warbler *P.humei*, by the Israel records committee) at Eilat from mid-December 1989 to at least 5 April 1990; the third record of this form. per R Morris, M Whittingham

Jordan

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* Three, Shuna Dam 19 and 26 January; third record. I Andrews
Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila verreauxi* A pair bred successfully in the southern desert, producing one young; the first proven breeding record. I Andrews, Prof K Kermac
Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus* Two, Azraq 20 April, 12 there 26 April; third and fourth records, previous were in 1969 and 1987. I Andrews



Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* One, Azraq 23 July; second record, first was in 1965. *I Andrews*
Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* One, Azraq 22 June; first record. *I Andrews*



Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus* One, Dibbin Forest 12 January; only the second published record for Jordan. *I Andrews*

Dunn's Lark *Eremalauda dunni* Ten, Wadi Fidan 10 April, and four there 2 June; only previous records were from Azraq in 1963-65 (cf. recent influx and breeding record in Israel, *Brit. Birds* 82:328; and breeding record in Sinai May 1990, *Birding World* 3:185). *I Andrews*

Thick-billed Lark *Rhamphocorys clotbey* Four, Qasr Harana 24 April; adult with juvenile there 22 June; first breeding record. *I Andrews*

White-cheeked Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucogenys* One, Aqaba 9 April; potentially the first record but origin remains unproven, although the record does recall the recent first records for Israel in April 1988 at Eilat (*Brit. Birds* 82:21). *I Andrews*

Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus* One, Amman 22 January-14 March, and 15 Dibbin Forest 16 February; probably only two previous records. *I Andrews*

Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana* Two, Wadi Batn al Guhl, near Mudawwara 7 February; fourth record. *I Andrews*

Goldcrest *Regulus regulus* One, Dibbin Forest 16 February; second record. The first was at the same site in

December 1989. *I Andrews*
Indian Silverbill *Euodice malabarica* Pair nest building Kafrein, 1 May; second record (cf. breeding records in Israel, *Brit. Birds* 82:354). *I Andrews*

Saudi Arabia

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* One, Yanbu, on an artificial pond 1-10 January; first record for Yanbu since recording began in 1979. *B S Meadows*

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* 1-2 May, 31 May-1 June, Rabigh; possible new breeding locality. *B S Meadows*

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* Up to eight, Yanbu al-Sinaiyah, overwintered for the first time; party of 47 flying north on 13 April is the largest flock seen to date. *B S Meadows*

Shoveler *Anas clypeata* Pair at Yanbu al-Bahr salt pans, 22-28 June. *B S Meadows*

Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor* Yanbu, One, 1 July; second record. *B S Meadows*

Quail *Coturnix coturnix* One, Yanbu al-Nahl, 7 February; one, Yanbu al-Sinaiyah, 21 January; first winter records. *B S Meadows*

Pratincole *Glareola* sp. Pair, Wadi Rabigh, 31 May-1 June; possible new breeding locality. *B S Meadows*

Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* Yanbu al-Sinaiyah, winter maximum of 1050 on 13 February. *B S Meadows*

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* Rabigh, pair feeding single young bird on 31 May and 1 June; young seen previously in winter. *B S Meadows*

Pin-tailed Sandgrouse *Pterocles alchata* Hadirah (140 km north of Medinah), 93 counted in several parties on 17 May; new locality. *B S Meadows*

Nubian Nightjar *Caprimulgus nubicus* One, Hadirah, 16 May; new locality. *B S Meadows*

Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta* One, Rabigh, 9 March; scarce along Red Sea coast, one at Mecca is the only previous record south of Yanbu. *B S*

Meadows

Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis* One, Rabigh, 9 March; scarce along Red Sea coast. *B S Meadows*

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* One, Yanbu al-Bahr, 2 March; once previously at Yanbu in March. *B S Meadows*

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* One, Yanbu al-Nakhl, 7 February; first winter record from this area. *B S Meadows*

Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* One, Yanbu al-Sinaiyah, 29 March, two overwintered last year at the same locality; first records so far south in Western Arabia. *B S Meadows*

Olive-tree Warbler *Hippolais olivetorum* One, Yanbu al-Bahr, 10 August; one previous autumn record in September. *B S Meadows*

Pygmy Sunbird *Anthreptes platurus* Influx in Yanbu al-Sinaiyah and hinterland December 1989 to 25 January 1990, seven sightings (up to four together); significant northerly range extension. *B S Meadows*

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* Yanbu al-Sinaiyah, pair overwintered. *B S Meadows*

Pale Rock Sparrow *Petronia brachydactyla* Nine, Al-Wedj, 11 May; second record in over six years residence in the northern Hejaz. *B S Meadows*

African Silverbill *Euodice cantans* Five, Medinah, 5 April, Yanbu al-Nakhl, party of 23 on 2 February and seven on 6 July; previously not recorded north of Tropic of Cancer. *B S Meadows*

Turkey

Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus* 1500+ Eregli Golu 15 June; a very large count of this localised species. *B Jarvis*

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* 11, Goksu Delta 12 January, 29 Burdur Golu 16 January; significant flocks of a rare winter visitor. *L Dijkzen, A Blomert*

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator* 62, Camalti Tuzlasi 24 January; rare winter visitor, usually in smaller numbers. *L Dijkzen, A Blomert*

White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* 6483, Burdur Golu 16 January; the highest count in recent years. *L Dijkzen, A Blomert*

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* One, Paradeniz, Goksu Delta 12 January; very unusual record, previously only known as a rare summer visitor to the Black Sea coastlands and as an uncommon, but widespread passage migrant. *L Dijkzen, A Blomert*

See-see Partridge *Ammoperdix griseogularis* Male at Yesilce 21 May; rarely recorded away from the Birecik region. *P Benstead, C Jeffs*

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus* One at the mouth of the Sakarya River, Black Sea 4 January; unusually far north in winter, normally only an uncommon passage migrant through the Bosphorus and Mediterranean Turkey. *L Dijkzen, A Blomert*

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus* One, Goksu Delta 25 May; very rare, only the third record since 1976. *P Hill, J Mottishaw*

Tengmalm's Owl *Aegolius funereus* One, near Sumela Monastery 21 June; the fourth published record, all previous records have also come from the predominantly coniferous, northern, montane forests. *G Kirwan, D Ross, M Roxby*

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* Pair at Maden Koprasi 23 June, *G Kirwan, D Ross, M Roxby*. Male near Golyuzu, Kucuk Agri Dagi 6 June, *J Eames*; significant records from potential breeding areas. Most previous records are either of migrants or are attributed to Cyprus Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe cypriaca*.

Grey-necked Bunting *Emberiza buchanani* One, south of Bulduruc, near Demirkazik 18 May; unusually far west, most records come from the extreme east and southeast. *P Benstead, C Jeffs*



Announcements

Spring Migration Birdwatcher's Festival 1991

The International Birdwatching Centre Eilat is holding a 10-day programme of birdwatching activities and events, at the height of the spring migration. The festival includes birdwatching excursions, lectures, films and glider flights with the migrating raptors. For details of the festival, which takes place during 20-30 March 1991, please write to: IBCE, PO Box 774, 88106 Eilat, Israel.

IWRB Symposium

The International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau is convening a symposium entitled 'Managing Mediterranean Wetlands and their Birds for the Year 2000 and Beyond' at Grado, Italy, during 3-10 February 1991. It is concerned particularly with the effects of wetland loss and degradation on waterbirds. For further details, please write as soon as possible to: IWRB Grado Conference, Slimbridge, Gloucester GL2 7BX, UK.

Stop Press

During the OSME Dutch weekend on 15/16 September 1990, a meeting was held between representatives of OSME, WIWO (Foundation Working Group for International Wader and Waterfowl Research) and DHKD (Society for the Protection of Nature in Turkey) to discuss future conservation research projects in Turkey. Several ideas were put forward, and it was unanimously agreed that a major study of the Kizilirmak Delta be carried out, starting with a breeding bird survey in spring 1991, co-ordinated by WIWO. The opportunity may arise for OSME members to participate. Further details will appear in the spring Bulletin, but in the meantime if you would like to be kept informed about the project's progress please write to Richard Webb, Turkey Information Officer, OSME, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, UK.

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Ornithological Society of the Middle East

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

The Ornithological Society of the Middle East was formed in April 1978 and is a successor to the Ornithological Society of Turkey. Its aims are as follows:

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

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

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