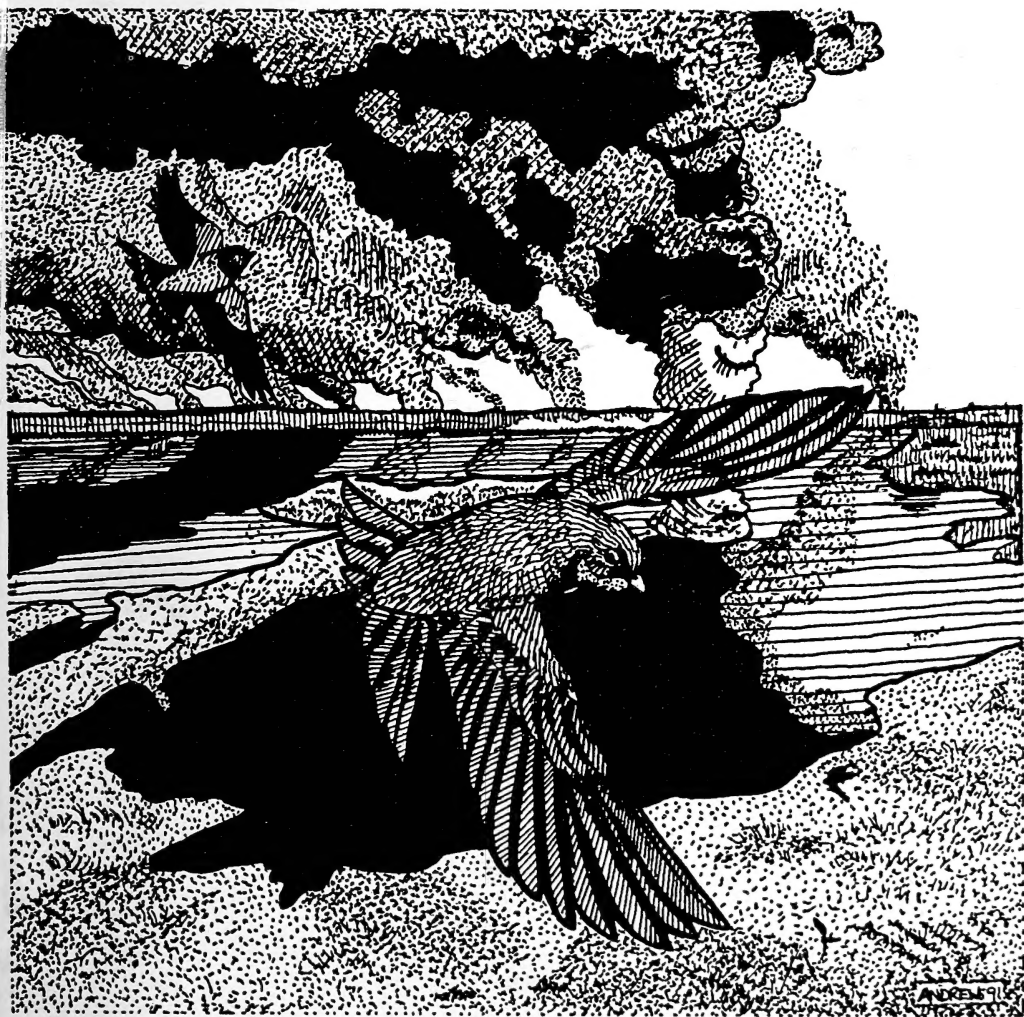


**ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY
OF THE MIDDLE EAST**



**BULLETIN 27
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Editor: Mark Boyd

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

Any articles, announcements or requests to do with birds in the Middle East are welcome, and may be published free of charge, subject to the discretion of the Editor. Accompanying photographs and line-drawings are welcome. Bird names generally follow those of Birds of the Middle East and North Africa.

Contributions to the next Bulletin should be received by 15 February 1992.

They should preferably be double-spaced and typed. Articles on disk (3.5 or 5.25 inch only please) can be accepted, but a paper copy must also be supplied.

Illustrations

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

SM Andrews: Swallow and Sand Martin migrating through Gulf Cover and 37; Kentish, Ringed, Lesser Sand and Crab Plovers 2; Sacred Ibis 8; Collared Pratincole 15; Spur-winged Plovers 18; Citrine Wagtail 30; Senegal Thick-knee and White-eyed Gulls 37; Crab Plover 43; Striated Scops Owl 45; Long-billed Pipit 47.

PJ Powell: Hooded Wheatear 44.

Impact of the Gulf War on birds

MI Evans, CWT Pilcher and P Symens

The war for Kuwait has had a profound and lasting effect on coastal habitats and inland landscapes in the surrounding countries, most especially Kuwait itself and Saudi Arabia. We summarise here the findings of three teams sent to the Gulf by the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP) to assess the impact of the Gulf War on bird populations. They were supported by and worked with the staff of the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development (NCWCD) of Saudi Arabia and the Environment Protection Council (EPC) of Kuwait, with financial assistance generously provided by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB).

Roy Dennis (RSPB) and Burr Heneman (ICBP-USA) arrived in Saudi Arabia on 28 February, the last day of the war, and spent the first half of March carrying out a rapid assessment of oil pollution damage and making recommendations to the NCWCD for immediate action.

One urgent recommendation was that the spring wader migration should be monitored because of the threat posed by the huge amounts of beached oil along the shores of the Gulf. An international team of eight ornithologists, led by MIE, undertook this during 5 April-29 May and also censused the breeding seabirds of the offshore islands in June together with PS (NCWCD). In Kuwait CWTP and Dave Sexton (RSPB) spent 3-28 May surveying the coastal and inland desert habitats for war damage. The results of these surveys are summarised below, together with other information on war damage known to us.

Regional round-up

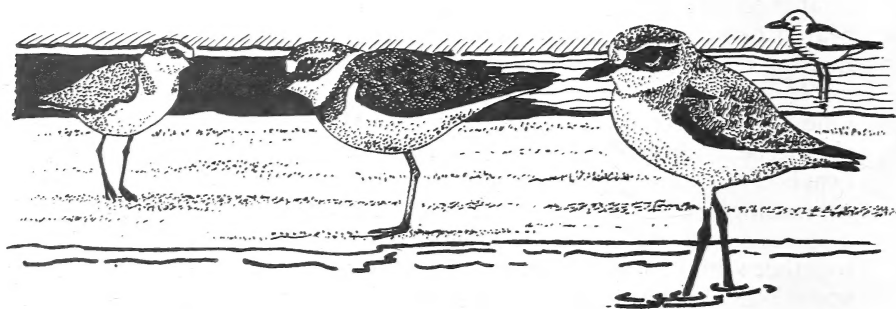
The longer-term damage of the Gulf War to ecosystems in the region cannot be predicted now and will only become clear if there is a concerted effort by Gulf states to monitor the health of these ecosystems over the coming years. This article deals only with the short-term, obvious impact of the Gulf War on birds.

Kuwait

Current estimates are that 7-8 million barrels of oil were spilled into the sea during the war in late January/February, by far the biggest spill in history. Kuwait's mainland coastline and offshore islands were endangered by two of the three major slicks. That from Mina Al-Bakr in Iraq threatened Kuwait Bay and the northern islands, whilst the other,

from Kuwait's Mina Ahmadi terminal, was expected to impact on the southern coast and offshore coral islands. In fact, an estimated 95% of the mainland coastline was clear of recent oil deposits and all the islands, except Bubiyan, which had small deposits on its northeastern coast, had escaped pollution.

The most polluted shoreline was that of the entire Sulaibikhat Bay subsystem, where a 10-metre wide band of fresh oil had been deposited at the highwater line. Fortunately, the extensive intertidal mudflats, critical feeding grounds for waders in winter and on passage had been spared. However the major roost at the Doha Reserve, which is used by hundreds of Crab Plovers *Dromas ardeola* and thousands of Lesser Sand Plovers *Charadrius mongolus*, Kentish Plovers *Calexandrinus*, Grey Plovers *Pluvialis squatarola* and Ringed Plovers *C hiaticula* amongst others, was heavily polluted. Although it was too late in the migration to observe large numbers of waders, it can safely be assumed that most of those using the site would have become oiled.



Four species of terns breed on Kuwait's southern islands (Swift *Sterna bergii*, Lesser Crested *S bengalensis*, Bridled *S anaethetus* and White-cheeked *S repressa*) and a census taken on 19 May, when nesting had just commenced, indicated that numbers were similar to those of the last two censuses, in 1990 and 1987. Less than 1% of all terns (10 species were recorded) showed noticeable oiling, a figure comparable to that obtained in Saudi Arabia.

Inland, pollution from leaking oil wells in all the main fields was extensive and worsening daily, some of the numerous lakes having grown to several square kilometres. Lakes and streams of oil appear to have been mistaken for water by birds and at one small lake over 200 dead or dying individuals were counted, including herons, ducks, hawks, sandpipers, sandgrouse, nightjars, bee-eaters, hirundines, wagtails, shrikes and warblers.

During the project period, more than 500 wells continued to burn, producing vast quantities of soot-laden smoke, and resulting in a heavy soot fall-out over much of the eastern and southern parts of the country. Many birds were begrimed from flying through the smoke or foraging in sooted vegetation; the birds affected included eagles, hirundines, larks, shrikes and warblers.

Desertification has been an accelerating problem in Kuwait: the destruction of vegetation, along with compaction and churning of the desert surface caused by the movements of hundreds of thousands of men and vehicles, has enormously exacerbated this problem.

Saudi Arabia

At least 25-30,000 seabirds were killed by the oil spills, mainly Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*, Great Crested Grebe *P cristatus*, Socotra Cormorant *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis* and Great Cormorant *P carbo*; it is likely that the grebes were particularly badly hit given the high density of beached corpses found. Any oil which did not sink had washed ashore along the northern half of the Saudi Arabian Gulf coastline by early April, carpeting most of the intertidal zone between Khafji and Abu Ali, some 460 km of shoreline (Dennis 1991).

This coast is known to be important for waders on an international scale, holding up to 260,000 waders in winter (Zwarts *et al.* in press: based on a survey in January/February 1986). The ICBP/NCWCD wader survey found that extremely few waders were present on the polluted coast, which from rough calculations using the raw data of Zwarts *et al.* probably normally supported over 100,000 waders in winter (and certainly at least that total on a year-round basis). What happened to the wintering wader population along that coast when the oil impacted remains uncertain, since no ornithologists were able to visit the area until one or two months later. The mass death of invertebrates observed by the team on the oil-smothered tidal flats indicates that food shortage is sure to be a major factor in the continuing absence of waders. On current knowledge of wader behaviour, there would have been a discrete population of waders which would have traditionally wintered in that area, and also one which would have habitually depended on the area for stop-over refuelling on spring and/or autumn migration. Both have now been deprived of their essential feeding grounds.

The Arabian Gulf is the last coastal refuelling site available to migrant waders such as Bar-tailed Godwits *Limosa lapponica* before their final flight across Asia to the polar regions in spring. Such a drastic loss of food is bound to have placed major stress on these waders and will have certainly affected their breeding success this summer, as will any significant degree of oiling. Virtually all 39 wader species recorded were

directly oiled, but some, such as Lesser Sand Plovers, Bar-tailed Godwits and Terek Sandpipers *Xenus cinereus*, appeared to have been particularly badly hit.

The seabird census took place in the first half of June and the second half of July and covered seven of the 11 islands off the Saudi Gulf coast, where the same four tern species breed as in Kuwait. The islands hold the largest concentration of breeding Lesser Crested Terns in the world, already known from the only previous census, in June 1986 (IUCN/MEPA 1987). Compared with that census, Lesser Crested Terns and the endemic White-cheeked Tern have decreased by 22% and 28% respectively to 20,751 and 10,200 pairs, whilst Bridled Terns have increased dramatically to 44,300 pairs (+270%), making the group of islands one of the top five sites in the world for this species. The population changes are thought to be partly due to an increase in vegetation cover on the islands, but are clearly not related to the oil spills since less than 1% of the terns were noticeably oiled. The terns bred well this year: hatching success was in the range 70-95% for all species, and overall chick mortality was less than 10%.

Several hundred million migrants, mostly passerines, are thought to pass through the Gulf in spring (Dolnik 1990; WCMC 1991a); the NCWCD/ICBP ringing activity led by PS indicated that the commonest passerine species in April/May include Whitethroats *Sylvia communis*, Marsh Warblers *Acrocephalus palustris*, Redstarts *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*, Red-backed Shrikes *Lanius collurio* and Willow Warblers *Phylloscopus trochilus*. The smoke from the burning oil wells in Kuwait has the potential to significantly affect this migration, since it lies as a dense, dark pall stretching for hundreds of kilometres down the Gulf. Many bird species, both residents and migrants, were 'sooted', having flown through the cloud or come into contact with sooty vegetation. The decrease in migrants' flight efficiency due to oily soot in their lungs and the begriming of their plumage are probably not immediately lethal, but may reduce the breeding success of large numbers of passerines in Europe and the USSR. Ringing suggests that 10% of migrant passerines were 'sooted' at Ras Tanajib (150 km from the nearest fires), compared with 5% at Jubayl (300 km from the nearest fires). Preliminary analysis of weights and recaptures indicates that 'sooting' slows a bird's migration and severely affects its capacity to refuel.

Iraq

No information has been received on the effect of the war on birds in Iraq. Two species are virtually endemic to the country, Basra Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus griseldis* and Iraq Babbler *Turdoides altirostris*, and a large proportion of the world's Grey Hypocolius *Hypocolius ampelinus* also breeds there.

Iran

Iran appears to have escaped serious oil pollution but the burning oil wells in Kuwait may have the potential, through generating acid rain, to affect montane habitats in Iran and further afield (eg Pakistan, Nepal).

Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates

The oil slicks never reached as far south as these countries; only small amounts of tar-balls have been reported from the beaches of Bahrain so far, and little detected in the other states above the high background level of oiling that occurs in the Gulf. The breeding colonies of Socotra Cormorants on the islands of these states, as well as in Saudi Arabia, will have been reduced in size following the large-scale mortality due to the oil. The lack of baseline data will make these decreases difficult to quantify. Severe overhead concentrations of smoke have been reported from Bahrain, on occasions occurring as a ground-level smog.

Jordan

There was concern that the important wetland at Azraq oasis might suffer from the huge numbers of refugees from Kuwait camped nearby. However, they probably made little impact on the water resources over and above the already large-scale extraction of water that is taking place to supply the capital city, Amman (T Jones pers. comm.).

Future action

Further initiatives on bird conservation work in the Gulf are being actively pursued by ICBP, NCWCD and EPC, with the priorities being:

- 1 A census of the breeding population of the Socotra Cormorant in the Gulf, its main breeding area, co-ordinated amongst all the relevant states. No adequate baseline data exist by which to judge the severity of the large-scale mortality in the Gulf; the species is thought to be declining owing to disturbance and development of its breeding islands.
- 2 An assessment this autumn of the scale of bird mortality caused by the oil lakes in Kuwait and of the effects of the smoke from burning oil wells on bird migration in the country.
- 3 A wader survey this winter in Saudi Arabia is necessary in order to monitor the recovery of the oiled intertidal habitats and to gather further baseline information on species, numbers and movements.
- 4 A workshop between ICBP, NCWCD, EPC and other involved bodies is planned this autumn to assess the results and implications of work so far and to co-ordinate further conservation action.

Acknowledgments

In Saudi Arabia, we are very grateful to HRH Prince Saud al Faisal, Prof. Dr Abdulaziz Abuzinada and all other staff of the NCWCD for their support and encouragement. In Kuwait, we greatly appreciate the help given by Mr Ibrahim Hadi of the EPC, who organised the provision of vehicles and documentation. Earthtrust generously provided accommodation and valuable logistical support in Kuwait. Dr Mike Rands and his staff at ICBP are thanked for the effort they put into organising travel, funds and other logistics.

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[Much of the scientific results of the ICBP work on the Gulf will be published in the OSME journal *Sandgrouse*. Ed]

Blue Tits in Jordan

Ian Andrews

An Italian naturalist, Festerboschi, was the first person to report the Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus* in Jordan. This was at Wadi Sir (west of Amman) on

23 April, but no year was given (maybe 1940-45)(in Hardy 1946).

There were no further records until 17 April 1984, when Blue Tits were discovered at Dibbin Forest, southwest of Jerash in northern Jordan (G Bennett, Ornitholidays, in litt). Dibbin is an 8 km² remnant of mature Aleppo Pine *Pinus halepensis* forest with *Arbutus andrachme* undergrowth and evergreen Holly Oak *Quercus calliprinus*, which lies at 550-1,000 m altitude on the slopes of the highest hill range in north Jordan.

Since 1984, Blue Tits have been recorded every April at Dibbin Forest (Ornitholidays and Cygnus Wildlife, in litt). In 1989-91, I recorded Blue Tits in all seasons, establishing their resident status, and the presence of some fledged young in June 1990 confirmed that, as suspected, they breed in Dibbin. The number of Blue Tits at Dibbin is not small, with roaming flocks in winter. I do not know what race is involved, but it appears to be similar to that of European birds. The Blue Tits are found alongside a partly European fauna of Great Tits *Parus major*, Blackbirds *Turdus merula*, Wrens *Troglodytes troglodytes* and Jays *Garrulus glandarius*.

Farther north of this site, two Blue Tits were also seen at Ajlun castle on 8 April 1990 (J Wittenberg, in litt), with one in well-vegetated Wadi el Yabis (northwest of Ajlun) and three in open Holly Oak woods near Ibbin (northeast of Ajlun) on 2 November 1990 (pers obs).

Hollom *et al.* (1988) map the nearest breeding birds in the Taurus mountains, Turkey, at least 500 km from the Dibbin forest. Elsewhere in the Middle East, Hue and Etchécopar (1970) recorded Blue Tits at the end of April in northwest Syria and also in the cedars of Becharre, Lebanon, where they suspected they bred. These are presumably the records quoted by Hollom *et al.* (1988).

Does anyone have other records of Blue Tits in the Middle East outside of Turkey?

I should like to thank J Wittenberg for telling me about the 1940s' sightings.

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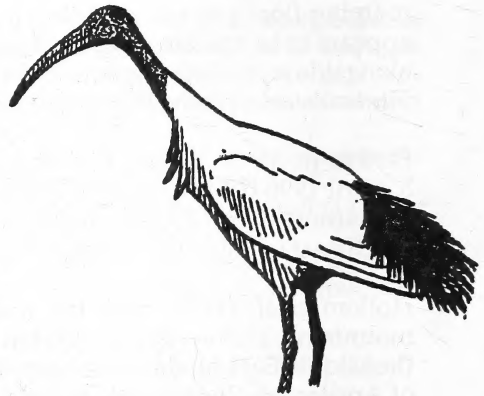
Birds and conservation in Egypt, past, present and future

Mindy Baha El Din

Ancient history

The Ancient Egyptians were among the first natural historians in the world, and until modern times, were the only Egyptians to have any major involvement in ornithology.

The Ancient Egyptians vividly depicted the rich bird life of their country on the walls of tombs and temples, many of which survive today. These people were also the first to enact laws to protect birds; it was illegal to kill sacred species, such as the Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus* and falcons. To do so was punishable by death. However, sacred birds were killed in ritual sacrifices, and tombs containing millions of mummified Sacred Ibises and falcons have been found. The Ancient Egyptians may have been among the first people to breed wild birds, such as Sacred Ibises, in captivity. They also conducted expeditions to other countries to collect species.



From the conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great until the 1950s, Egypt was under foreign domination. Through these centuries, there were periodic ornithological studies. Under Islamic rule, there were several Arab scholars who travelled around the country and wrote about the birds they saw. But it was the French who mounted the first modern scientific expedition. When Napoleon conquered Egypt in 1798, he commissioned a team of scientists to record the flora and fauna. This was published in the monumental work *The Distribution of Egypt*.

Early 20th century ornithology

When Egypt was under British occupation, ornithology started in earnest. Briton Michael Nicoll, director of the Giza Zoological Garden, travelled the country observing birds and collecting specimens. Unfortunately, he died before he could publish a book on his findings. Nicoll's wife then

asked another famous British ornithologist, Richard Meinertzhagen, to complete her husband's work, and in 1930 the book *Nicoll's Birds of Egypt* was published. Even today, this is one of the foremost works on Egyptian birds.

Modern times

Between the 1930s and the 1970s, some Egyptians started to become involved in ornithology. Ahmed Al Hussaini and Abdallah El Negumi were two Egyptian scientists who travelled the country and published books in Arabic about the bird life of Egypt.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s there was a sudden increase in interest in Egyptian ornithology, which resulted in a flurry of research. Much of this came from abroad: the Danes studied waterbird migration along the Mediterranean Coast of northern Sinai; the Holy Land Conservation Fund undertook studies of raptor migration at Suez and surveyed wintering waterbirds; Germany's Max Planck Institute studied bird migration in the western desert; British Petroleum Egypt conducted surveys of seabird colonies breeding in the Red Sea.

Two Dutch birdwatchers, Peter Meininger and Wim Mullie, came to Egypt in the late 1970s and established the Foundation for Ornithological Research in Egypt. For over 10 years, they conducted ornithological surveys. Their research led to their meeting the Americans Steve Goodman and Joseph Hobbs, as well as my husband, Sherif Baha El Din. In 1989, they co-authored the comprehensive book, *The Birds of Egypt*.

Conservation in the 20th century

The first modern conservation laws were passed in the 1920s, probably as a result of pressure from the British authorities.

There had been a noticeable decline in common agricultural species such as the Hoopoe *Upupa epops* and Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*, probably due to hunting pressure. Laws were passed to protect species beneficial to agriculture, and a campaign was launched to develop public awareness. This was very successful, and still can be felt today: every Egyptian child learns in school that the Cattle Egret is a farmer's friend.

In 1979, the US Fish and Wildlife Service helped to establish the Egyptian Wildlife Service at Giza Zoo. Through this body, a number of laws were passed to protect beneficial and endangered species. In 1980, Law 102 was passed, which led to the creation of a system of Protected Areas. In 1983, the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency took over management of the Protected Areas and became responsible for the country's environment. In 1982, the Ornithological Society of Egypt was formed by three Egyptians. It promoted ornithological research and bird and habitat

conservation. It was quiet for some years, until I helped to reactivate it in 1988, along with Dr Mustafa Fouda and Sherif Baha El Din.

Research in the 1970s and 1980s revealed the international importance of Egypt for birds, as well as the increasing level of threats to birds and their habitats. Drainage, landclaim and development, the misuse of pesticides, oil pollution and uncontrolled hunting were all devastating bird populations.

In the past two years, the Ornithological Society of Egypt has launched several successful conservation campaigns: the saving of a Cattle Egret colony at Giza Zoo; a two-year moratorium on foreign bird shooting tours; and the prohibition of bird hunting at the Italian War Memorial at El Alamein. These have been among the first occasions that the Egyptian government has responded to pressure from non-governmental organisations.

In 1987, ICBP hired me to run a conservation education project, based at Giza Zoo. This culminated in the opening of a Conservation Education Centre in September 1990. This comprises an auditorium, classroom, library and office space, and is the first facility of its kind in the country. The centre has produced bird books and wallcharts in Arabic, and the education programme is running well.

ICBP has also helped the formation of the Egyptian Wildlife Society, which now has 100 members.

Present concerns

These are two-fold. Firstly, pollution of Egypt's northern delta lakes has led to a decrease in wintering waterfowl, including an 80% fall in coot *Fulica atra* numbers. The lakes hold around 40,000 Little Gulls *Larus minutus* in winter.

The other main concern is the dramatic increase in falcon trapping. Falcons, especially the larger species, are trapped for export to the Gulf states, where they fetch an extremely high price. The smaller falcons are sold on markets either as pets or as bait for the trapping of larger species.

Conservation in Egypt has to be shown to have tangible human benefits: the delta lakes are important fisheries; and birds of prey are good for wildlife tourism.

Future opportunities

Birdwatching tourism brings in income to Egypt, but can also still make real contributions to Egyptian ornithology. There is still much to discover about bird distributions, migrations and numbers, even in well-known sites.

For example, little is known about bird of prey migration along the Red Sea coast, or stork passage through northern Egypt. There is more to learn about migration along the Western Desert Mediterranean coast, as well as the hunting that takes place in the area.

The Zaranik Protected Area in north Sinai has recently opened, and its migrant birds should be counted every autumn. There is a need for a thorough survey of Lake Nasser.

If you are interested in Egyptian ornithology, please join the Ornithological Society of Egypt. I should be delighted to help visiting birdwatchers or researchers to enjoy this wonderful country and to contribute to the conservation of its wildlife.

Mindy Baha El Din, c/o Executive Business Services, Cairo Marriott Hotel, PO Box 33, Zamalek, Cairo, Egypt

Important Bird Areas in the Middle East: the new OSME/ICBP project

MRW Rands and MI Evans

OSME members will know that the Middle East is ornithologically rich, with a diversity of extreme environments - deserts, wetlands and mountains in particular - as well as regional specialities including 20 endemic and 23 globally threatened bird species. Some of the largest and most diverse wetlands and steppes are to be found in the Middle East, upon which millions of waterfowl, waders and grassland birds depend as breeding, stopover or wintering areas. Their value to birds is but a reflection of their overall ecological importance.

Initiatives to conserve birds and wildlife habitats at either a national or a regional level in the Middle East are, however, far from advanced. Given the rapid increase in the region over the last 20 years of human population, agricultural intensification and industrialization, heralding increased rates of over-grazing, wetland drainage, woodland clearance, coastal landfill and over-hunting, the need for a directory of the most critical areas for conserving birds and habitats is now urgent. Such a volume, if effectively used, could save many of the region's valuable ecosystems and so help to maintain global biological diversity.

For these reasons OSME, jointly with the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP), is initiating the Important Bird Areas in the Middle East project, starting in September this year.

The project will last for two years and aims to produce an inventory of internationally important areas for conserving birds in the Middle East, by drawing together published and unpublished information, including the OSME Sites Register, as well as the expertise of Middle Eastern conservation organisations and individuals so as to compile details of such sites in one volume. Although knowledge of the avifauna and wildlife habitats of the region is quite comprehensive, no previous attempt has been made to draw this information together, critically assess the value and status of sites, and then publish it.

In recent years, similar inventories and directories of key wildlife sites have been published for other areas of the world and have proved to be successful tools for implementing conservation action (eg Grimmett and Jones (1989) *Important Bird Areas in Europe*; Scott (1989) *A directory of Asian wetlands*).

The following countries are included in the Middle Eastern inventory:

Afghanistan	Israel	Qatar
Bahrain	Jordan	Saudi Arabia
Egypt	Kuwait	Syria
Iran	Lebanon	United Arab Emirates
Iraq	Oman	Yemen (including Socotra)

Site identification and book compilation are being carried out by MIE, based at ICBP's office in Cambridge, and the project is supervised by a steering committee chaired by MRWR (Chairman of OSME and Programme Director of ICBP). For certain countries, national co-ordinators will be appointed to gather information.

Sites will be included only if they meet certain criteria; details of these are being drawn up now at the start of the project, but sites important for four groups of birds will certainly be included:

- species at risk of total extinction (globally threatened species);
- species or subspecies threatened throughout all or large parts of their range in the Middle East but not globally;
- species that have relatively small total world ranges with important populations in the Middle East;
- regularly occurring migratory species which concentrate at and are dependent on particular sites either when breeding, on migration, or during the winter.

Once completed the directory will have a number of important functions, including:

- to guide the implementation of national conservation strategies and in particular to promote the development of national protected-area programmes;
- to inform decision makers at all levels of the existence of these vital habitats and thereby to enable them to oppose land-use proposals which would be incompatible with habitat conservation;
- to provide an indication of the sites which are currently threatened and/or inadequately protected so as to assist the lobbying activities of national and international conservation bodies;
- to serve the conservation activities of international governmental organisations;
- to promote the implementation of global agreements such as the Ramsar Convention (on wetlands), Bonn Convention (on migratory species) and 'World Heritage' Convention.

OSME is contributing £3,000 to the project, a very substantial sum for an organisation such as ours. The project's major sponsor is The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (UK), and the project will also receive data and technical support from the International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau.

For further information, please contact: Mike Evans, 'IBAs in the Middle East' Compiler, ICBP, 32 Cambridge Road, Girton, Cambridge CB30PJ, UK. Tel: (0223) 277318. Telex: 818794 ICBP G. FAX: (0223) 277200.

Is Azraq still an oasis?

Ian Andrews

It is now 10 years since anything up to date has appeared in OSME publications about the famous Azraq oasis in eastern Jordan. In what state would members of the 1963 Jordan Expedition (Mountford 1965) find the Azraq oasis if they returned today? Change has certainly been widespread and far-reaching in the last 28 years, in a country that has severe water problems and a rapidly growing human population.

Improvements in access are the first obvious change, with the long desert treks replaced by a choice of two well-used tarmac roads. However, with trade routes from Amman and Syria to Iraq, Saudi and the Gulf states

passing through Azraq, one's initial impression is of a dusty truck stop rather than a lush oasis. The two villages, dating back 80 years, have also grown, but at least there is now a choice of hotels and a modern government rest house. However, amongst other things, a military airfield has now been built, agriculture has become established and there is now little hope that the planned desert reserve will be designated.

Azraq oasis essentially comprises a (formerly) permanent, spring-fed wetland; and a large, seasonally flooded mudflat ('qa' in Arabic).

The marsh (Azraq Wetland Reserve)

In the 1960s, the two major springs flowed into the marshes at an impressive rate of 7.5 million gallons/day, as they must have done when Colonel Meinertzhagen visited Azraq in 1922 and first described this 'perfect paradise for birds with green meadows, pools and bushes.' It was not long, however, before the potential of this valuable underground water resource was recognised, and as far back as 1963 water was being pumped to the city of Irbid. Various consultants, visiting naturalists and indeed the Jordanian Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature pointed to the problems in maintaining a wetland area whilst exploiting the water resource. However, demand soon overtook conservation warnings for restraint, and from 1979 water was being pumped to Amman and Irbid at ever-increasing rates, which soon exceeded safe extraction rates. Flow into the marshes of the newly established Wetland Reserve soon reduced to virtually nil, as Peter Conder discovered when he visited Azraq in April 1981. Measured flow rates in 1986 had fallen to a quarter of their former figure and are now even less. Over-exploitation has already led to a reduction in water quality, but at least this may result in a reduction in pumping rates.

The net result is that the pools and marshes of Azraq oasis have become a poor remnant of their former glory, and water rarely flows beyond the immediate vicinity of the village pools. The oasis was formerly the breeding site of many wetland birds and some 347,000 ducks wintered in the marshes. The number of wintering ducks was down to 2,500 in early 1979 (Conder 1982) and now the winter population probably never exceeds 100-200, mainly Teal *Anas crecca*. Losses to the breeding birds are also great, especially amongst those dependent on marsh vegetation and water. In the 1960s, a community of 28 aquatic species was recorded breeding (or possibly breeding) at Azraq (Wallace 1983). I have no suspicion of any herons nesting now. Water Rails *Rallus aquaticus* and Moorhens *Gallinula chloropus* may still breed - but in considerably lower numbers - but Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* and Garganey *A. querquedula* now only visit on passage. More than 200 pairs of Collared Pratincoles *Glareola pratincola* nested along the edge of the marsh in 1969 (Nelson 1973) and it was good to see 10 successful pairs in the same area in 1991.



Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters *Merops superciliosus* do not nest now, as their preferred island sites no longer exist, and numbers of reedbed warblers are well down, with no singing Savi's *Locustella luscinioides*, Clamorous Reed *Acrocephalus stentoreus* or Great Reed Warblers *A. arundinaceus* recorded. A healthy population of 30-60 pairs of Fan-tailed Warblers *Cisticola juncidis* in marsh vegetation at the outfalls has totally disappeared. On the positive side, a few Laughing Doves *Streptopelia senegalensis* are now found at Azraq.

The mudflat (Qa al Azraq)

The qa is a flat, crescent-shaped basin surrounding the wetland. It is several metres lower than the marsh and forms the lowest part of a large rainwater catchment. In wet winters, the qa fills with flood water to a maximum depth of 1.25 m and is 35 km around. The water does not seep into the underlying aquifers, rather it evaporates over a period of three months or so. Needless to say, the qa does not flood every year: the British expeditions in the 1960s found 1965/66 and 1966/67 to be wet years (but not the subsequent two winters), and Conder reported that 1981 was the first wet year since 1976. It also flooded in 1982. It was thought that a dam in Syria may be affecting the flow into the qa, but during my stay the springs of both 1990 and 1991 have fortunately seen the qa filled to capacity. The water never, however, rises high enough to flood into the marshes themselves and, as Conder (1982) pointed out, this leads to the extraordinary juxtaposition of dry marsh and a vast shallow lake teeming with birds along its edges. Birds soon make use of this lake, especially as its formation usually coincides with the migration season of March to May. Its margins are less barren than some other nearby qas and it contains many invertebrates. It is not surprising, therefore, that it attracts large numbers of waders and terns, some ducks and gulls and also some passerines. In 1990 and 1991, I recorded a peak of 3,625 birds using the accessible margins of the qa, and the total was probably well over 5,000. The majority of these were Ruffs *Philomachus pugnax*, Little Stints *Calidris minuta* and White-winged Black Terns *Chlidonias leucopterus*, but in total I have recorded 27 species of waders, nine of gulls and terns and seven of ducks, plus Black-necked Grebes *Podiceps nigricollis* and Coots *Fulica atra* on the flooded qa.

Scattered islands, formed by mounds of the local salt workings in the dry season, form important refuges for breeding birds, but as a whole we

have not found disturbance too excessive, until the drying of the glutinous mud allows the salt working to restart. Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus*, Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta*, and Kentish Plovers *Charadrius alexandrinus* nest in wet years as they did in the 1960s, but the timing of the drying up must be crucial to breeding birds and the unfledged young could find themselves left on a barren dry mudflat by mid-May, especially now they cannot retreat into the marsh. The question of breeding success has previously remained unanswered as no stilts or Avocets nested when Bryan Nelson made observations there in the summers of 1968 and 1969.

In 1990, the qa filled in early March and there were some wader broods in late May along the edge (table 1), but I did not return until mid-June and the qa had long since evaporated. The year 1991 had a wet and cool late spring, with the water staying far longer than normal - there was still shallow water and extensive mud at the end of June. Waders took full advantage of this rare combination of favourable conditions and breeding success was exceptional (table 1). On 19 June, I estimated 500 young stilts of various sizes, many fledged or almost so, many young chicks and there were even some adults still sitting on nests. On 28 June, the total number of stilts exceeded 1,200, but it was unlikely that the mud would last long enough for some of the smallest chicks and sitting adults. The young Avocets were already well grown on 8 June, with approximately 80 fledged young on 19 June. The Avocets settled earlier in the season, which may explain why they did better than the stilts in 1990 (table 1). Kentish Plovers did very well in both years and several hundred young were reared.

	24 May 1990			19 June 1991		
	Total pairs	No of broods	No of young	Total pairs	No of broods	No of young
Black-winged Stilt	c.50	2	3	c.300	?	500+
Avocet	50?	?	25	c.20	c.15	80

Table 1. Numbers of breeding Black-winged Stilts and Avocets at Azraq qa, 1990-91. Counts were made along approximately 40-50% of the qa edge, although these were probably the most productive parts.

These two wet years also allowed five species to nest at Azraq that had not been recorded previously (Wallace 1983). In 1990, I saw a brood of small Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* chicks, and later a brood of Marbled Ducks *Marmaronetta angustirostris* also appeared. In the following year, up to 60 Little Terns *Sterna albifrons* summered, a few were seen courtship feeding and visiting islands, and one juvenile was seen on 20 July. Gull-billed Terns *Gelochelidon nilotica*, also present throughout the 1991 breeding

season, produced two flying young. Two pairs of Little Ringed Plovers *Charadrius dubius* also bred successfully.

Perhaps the most interesting species at Azraq is the White-tailed Plover *Chettusia leucura*. The nearest regular breeding area is 600 km east in the marshes of the Euphrates, but in successive summers I have seen family groups at Azraq - two families on 3 August 1989 and one on 23 July 1990. White-tailed Plovers are regularly seen in April, and there were one or two territorial pairs in April 1963. On 25 May 1991, an adult flew over with alarm-calling pratincoles, but could not be relocated. No-one has yet found a White-tailed Plover's nest at Azraq.

At least 10 successful pairs of Yellow Wagtails *Motacilla flava* were seen in June 1991. The race involved has not previously been determined. Wallace (1983) saw males resembling *M f flava* with puzzling females with uniform dark heads, and was unsure of the race involved. Nelson (1973) thought his breeding record referred to *M f feldegg*. My observations of Yellow Wagtails in the breeding season virtually all refer to *feldegg*, but one pair feeding young on 28 June involved a *feldegg* male and a female with a clear supercilium resembling *M f flava*.

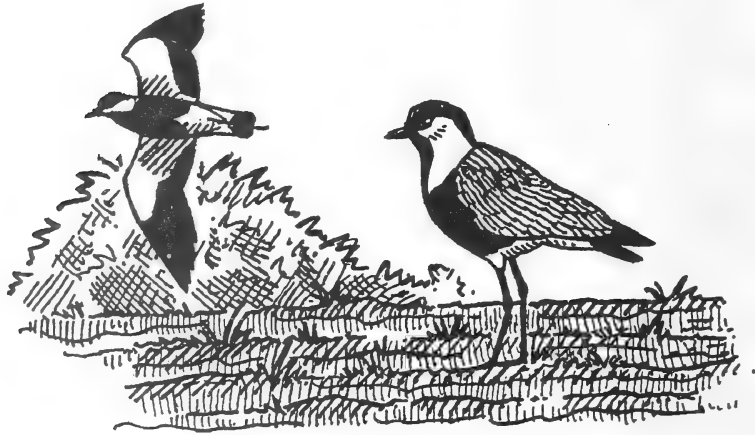
Autumn and winter

For much of the year, including the winter, even in wet years, the Azraq wetland now contains a very small amount of surface water - a far cry from the permanent lushness of the past. Apart from the pools in the villages themselves, the birds have to seek refuge on a small marsh formed by an artesian borehole and a small, recently dug area of fish pools. Both are near the town and since they are outside the Wetland Reserve, are often disturbed by frequent shooting or even the erection of a bedu tent nearby! Bird watchers may be the only ones to benefit, as this paucity of water concentrates the birds, but it also means that birds have so few alternatives when disturbed.

In autumn, these sites are magnets for birds as they are the only wetlands in the entire Jordanian desert. Birds of prey come in to drink, and waders and terns make use of the only pools for hundreds of kilometres. During two autumns, I have seen 15 species of raptor at the pools. Most notable were 66 drinking Montagu's Harriers *Circus pygargus* (8 September 1990) and 14 Honey Buzzards *Pernis apivoris* (15 September 1990). Total numbers of birds rarely exceed 200, but the lack of large numbers is made up for by variety, with Baillon's *Porzana pusilla*, Little *P parva* and Spotted Crakes *P porzana*, Broad-billed Sandpipers *Limicola falcinellus*, Terek Sandpipers *Xenus cinereus*, Black-winged Pratincoles *Pratincola nordmanni*, Little Gulls *Larus minutus*, Citrine Wagtails *Motacilla citreola* all seen in autumn. It shows how important such a small area of water is and how many birds are migrating across the desert. In winter, shooting leaves

just a few flighty birds, but Black-necked Grebes and Common Gulls *Larus canus* have been added to the Azraq list and a few Kingfishers *Alcedo atthis* and Pied Kingfishers *Ceryle rudis* make it across 200 km of desert to winter here.

When there is no water in the desert, the Samra sewage lagoons, on the desert fringe, 35 km northeast of Amman, provide a valuable alternative to birds that may have used the Azraq staging post in the past. These extensive lagoons were completed in 1985 and provide a habitat for passage storks, herons, ducks, waders, gulls and terns as well as a few passerines. Rarities for Jordan seen at Samra include White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*, Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*, Grey Plover *Psquatarola*, Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* and Curlew *Numenius arquata*. Breeding birds are few, but include Spurred Plover *Hoplopterus spinosus* and possibly Citrine Wagtail.



Although the facts about Azraq's water pumping and desiccation make depressing reading, it is clear that something of the oasis's former glory hangs on. Spring flood water has now become of overwhelming importance, but resourceful migrants still make use of a shrinking number of pools in autumn and winter. Unfortunately, the Wetland Reserve is hardly worth a visit, providing ample evidence of what could so easily happen to, for example, the Coto Doñana in Spain. However, unless a large new water resource is discovered soon, there is no way Jordan itself can survive without Azraq's water and perhaps conservation efforts should concentrate on protecting and enlarging the few remaining permanent wetland sites.

Finally, Azraq and its surrounding desert is surprisingly not on the regular birding trail through the Middle East. Suffice it to say that I thoroughly recommend it!

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Ian J Andrews, c/o British Embassy, PO Box 87, Amman, Jordan

Postscript

On 27 July 1991, the Jordanian Government announced its plan to dam Wadi Rajil, 45 km north of Azraq, to provide water for the bedu through the summer. Wadi Rajil is the single most important wadi feeding flood water into Azraq qa, having its source in Syrian Jebel Druz. Will this now see the end of the flooded qa? This autumn has also seen an increase in shooting at Azraq and the virtual drying up of the artesian marsh. IJA

Turkey Bird Report: a request for records and notes for contributors

Rod Martins and Richard Webb

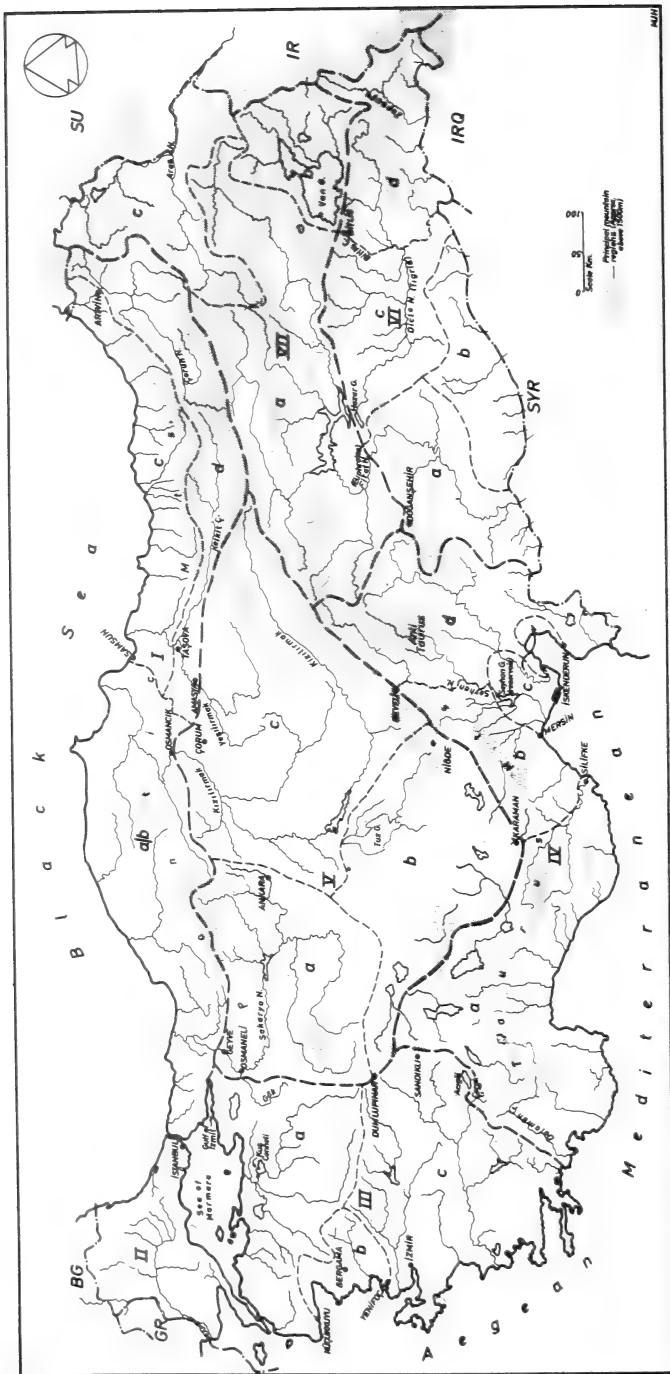
We are now seeking records for the Turkey Bird Report, covering the years 1987-1991. Some material has already been received.

Observers are requested to submit records in systematic order, on one side of each sheet of paper only. 'Unusual' records and records of rarities should be accompanied by further details, including a description where appropriate.

Please avoid submitting records in an unsystematic, semi-anecdotal form, such as photocopies of pages from notebooks.

All records should include the names of the observers and highlight the address of one observer to whom any queries can be referred.

The compilation of previous Turkey Bird Reports has been hindered by confusion over place names. This is because a) two or more widely



- I Black Sea Coastlands**
 - (a) Western Coastal
 - (b) Western Inland
 - (c) Eastern Coastal
 - (d) Eastern Inland
- II Thrace**
- III Western Anatolia**
 - (a) Marmara
 - (b) Bergama
 - (c) Izmir
- IV Southern Coastlands**
 - (a) Western Taurus
 - (b) Main Taurus
 - (c) Seyhan Lowland
 - (d) Anti-Taurus
- V Central Plateau**
 - (a) Sakarya
 - (b) Enclosed Basins
 - (c) Kizilirmak
- VI South-East**
 - (a) Middle Euphrates
 - (b) Mesopotamian Rise
 - (c) Upper Tigris
 - (d) Kurdish Alps
- VII East**
 - (a) Upper Euphrates
 - (b) Van
 - (c) Upper Aras

Figure 1. Turkey, showing regions and sub-regions

separated locations may have the same name; b) a single locality may have different names on different maps; and c) place names on road signs may differ from those shown on maps. Therefore, please include details of the itinerary and a note of which map(s) were used for place names. Also, please try to assign records to the biogeographical region of Turkey shown on the map.

We require records from the period to be covered by the next report (1987-1991) and also unsubmitted records for earlier years. Please send all records to the Turkey Bird Report Editorial Committee, OSME, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, UK.

The publication of five Turkey Bird Reports, covering the period 1966-1986, has greatly increased our knowledge of Turkish birds, but has also highlighted the gaps that remain. Understanding of the status and distribution (particularly breeding distribution) of many species remains incomplete. The following list therefore details those species for which records are particularly sought. Note that the list includes some species for which records are notoriously difficult to assess.

RD Red Data Book species. These are considered to be threatened globally and were included in *Birds to Watch: the ICBP World Checklist of Threatened Birds* (Collar and Andrew 1988).

V Vulnerable species in Europe. These are some of the 111 species classed by ICBP as vulnerable in Europe. They include some listed as 'near threatened' in *Birds to Watch*. Several birds of prey, and many species associated with wetlands, come in this category, but are not listed. Please submit all information on these threatened groups. Any observer visiting a wetland site is encouraged to submit an OSME Site Register form (available from the Secretary).

U Status uncertain. This includes those species for which the status in at least one biogeographical region is uncertain, including those species which have been only recently discovered in Turkey.

I Identification problematical. This category covers known pitfall species. Observers are asked to take particular care, both in the field and with the presentation of their observations. Written evidence may be essential for record assessment. This may be a full description, but in some cases may simply be confirmation that the observer is aware of the particular pitfalls and that enough was seen or heard to avoid them.

Some species will fall into more than one category. For them, the codes are listed in order of importance. Records of rarities should always be submitted with full details (such species are not included in this list).

Black-throated Diver <i>Gavia arctica</i>	V
Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	U, V
Pygmy Cormorant <i>P. pygmeus</i>	RD

White Pelican <i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>	V
Dalmatian Pelican <i>P. crispus</i>	RD
Bittern <i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	V
Cattle Egret <i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	U
White Stork <i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	RD
Bald Ibis <i>Geronticus eremita</i>	RD
Red-breasted Goose <i>Branta ruficollis</i>	RD
Marbled Duck <i>Marmaronetta angustirostris</i>	RD
White-headed Duck <i>Oxyura leucocephala</i>	RD
Black Kite <i>Milvus migrans</i>	U
Red Kite <i>Milvus milvus</i>	RD, I
White-tailed Eagle <i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	RD
Lammergeier <i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>	V
Black Vulture <i>Aegyptius monachus</i>	RD
Goshawk <i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	U, I
Sparrowhawk <i>A. nisus</i>	U, I
Levant Sparrowhawk <i>A. brevipes</i>	U, I, V
Long-legged Buzzard <i>Buteo rufinus</i>	I, V
Spotted Eagle <i>Aquila clanga</i>	V, I
Imperial Eagle <i>A. heliaca</i>	V
Bonelli's Eagle <i>Hieraetus fasciatus</i>	U, I, V
Osprey <i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	V
Lesser Kestrel <i>Falco naumanni</i>	RD
Eleonora's Falcon <i>Falco eleonorae</i>	U, I, V
Lanner <i>F. biarmicus</i>	U, I, V
Saker <i>F. cherrug</i>	I, V
Peregrine <i>F. peregrinus</i>	U
Caucasian Black Grouse <i>Tetrao mlokosiewiczii</i>	V
Caspian Snowcock <i>Tetraogallus caspius</i>	U
Black Francolin <i>Francolinus francolinus</i>	V
Pheasant <i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	U
Spotted Crake <i>Porzana porzana</i>	U, V
Little Crake <i>P. parva</i>	U, I, V
Baillon's Crake <i>P. pusilla</i>	U, I, V
Corncrake <i>Crex crex</i>	RD, U
Purple Gallinule <i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>	V
Demoiselle Crane <i>Anthropoides virgo</i>	V
Little Bustard <i>Tetrax tetrax</i>	RD, U
Great Bustard <i>Otis tarda</i>	RD
Cream-coloured Courser <i>Cursorius cursor</i>	U
Black-winged Pratincole <i>Glareola nordmanni</i>	I, V
Red-wattled Plover <i>Hoplopterus indicus</i>	U
Sociable Plover <i>Chettusia gregaria</i>	RD
White-tailed Plover <i>C. leucura</i>	U
Jack Snipe <i>Lymnocyptes minimus</i>	U
Great Snipe <i>Gallinago media</i>	I, U, V
Slender-billed Curlew <i>Numenius tenuirostris</i>	RD
Audouin's Gull <i>Larus audouinii</i>	RD
Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>L. fuscus</i>	I
Herring Gull <i>L. argentatus/cachinnans</i>	I
Armenian Gull <i>L. armenicus</i>	I

Great Black-backed Gull <i>L marinus</i>	U
White-winged Black Tern <i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>	U, V
Pin-tailed Sandgrouse <i>Pterocles alchata</i>	U, V
Striated Scops Owl <i>Otus brucei</i>	U
Eagle Owl <i>Bubo bubo</i>	U, V
Brown Fish Owl <i>Ketupa zeylonensis</i>	U
Tawny Owl <i>Strix aluco</i>	U
Long-eared Owl <i>Asio otus</i>	U
Tengmalm's Owl <i>Aegolius funereus</i>	U
Pallid Swift <i>Apus pallidus</i>	U, I
Kingfisher <i>Alcedo atthis</i>	U, V
Blue-cheeked Bee-eater <i>Merops superciliosus</i>	I, V
Wryneck <i>Jynx torquilla</i>	U
Great Spotted Woodpecker <i>Dendrocopos major</i>	U
White-backed Woodpecker <i>D leucotos</i>	U, V
Lesser Spotted Woodpecker <i>D minor</i>	U
Desert Lark <i>Ammomanes deserti</i>	U
Rock Pipit <i>Anthus petrosus</i>	U
Citrine Wagtail <i>Motacilla citreola</i>	U
Radde's Accentor <i>Prunella ocularis</i>	U
Thrush Nightingale <i>Luscinia luscinia</i>	I
Pied Wheatear <i>Oenanthe pleschanka</i>	I
Cyprus Pied Wheatear <i>O cypriaca</i>	U, I
Red-tailed Wheatear <i>O xanthopyrmyna</i>	U
River Warbler <i>Locustella fluviatilis</i>	U
Savi's Warbler <i>L luscinioides</i>	U
Moustached Warbler <i>Acrocephalus melanopogon</i>	U, I, V
Sedge Warbler <i>A schoenobaenus</i>	U, I
Paddyfield Warbler <i>A agricola</i>	U, I
Marsh Warbler <i>A palustris</i>	U, I
Upcher's Warbler <i>Hippolais languida</i>	I
Garden Warbler <i>Sylvia borin</i>	U
Green Warbler <i>Phylloscopus nitidus</i>	U, I
Mountain Chiffchaff <i>P sindianus</i>	U, I
Chiffchaff <i>P collybita</i>	U, I
Spotted Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa striata</i>	U
Red-breasted Flycatcher <i>Ficedula parva</i>	U, V
Semi-collared Flycatcher <i>F semitorquata</i>	U, I, V
Collared Flycatcher <i>F albicollis</i>	U, I, V
Pied Flycatcher <i>F hypoleuca</i>	U, I
Great Rock Nuthatch <i>Sitta tephronota</i>	I, U
Rock Nuthatch <i>S neumayer</i>	I, U
Treecreeper <i>Certhia familiaris</i>	I
Short-toed Treecreeper <i>C brachydactyla</i>	U, I
Great Grey Shrike <i>Lanius excubitor</i>	I
Rose-coloured Starling <i>Sturnus roseus</i>	U
Tree Sparrow <i>Passer montanus</i>	U
Yellow-throated Sparrow <i>Petronia xanthocollis</i>	U
Yellowhammer <i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	U
Cirl Bunting <i>E cirrus</i>	U
Cinereous Bunting <i>E cineracea</i>	U

The length of this list indicates the amount of work that still needs to be done, even in such a comparatively well-known country. It must be stressed, however, that records, especially breeding records, are required for all species, not just those listed above.

Our knowledge of the breeding distribution of many Turkish birds is at best incomplete, and is absent for many regions. Even the simplest notes distinguishing breeding birds from conspecific migrants would be helpful.

Rod Martins and Richard Webb, for the Turkish Bird Report Editorial Committee, OSME, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, UK

Karapinar Ovası, a little-known Turkish IBA

Guy Kirwan

The Karapinar Ovası, north-west of the town of Karapinar, Konya Province, is included in the recent list of Turkish Important Bird Areas (Ertan *et al* 1989; Grimmett and Jones 1989), although comparatively few data are available except during mid-winter. Van den Berk *et al* (1983) and Dijkzen and Koning (1986) mention the apparently recent origin of this wetland, but this is far from true. Dijkzen and Koning do suggest that the water table in this plain is highly variable; they state that it was consistently higher in the 1980s than in the 1970s. The area, then rather confusingly labelled Tuzlu Göl, is included in a map prepared by Kiepert in 1911-12, which was itself based on information collected in the nineteenth century (Kilic and Kasperek 1990).

The huge salt-pan at the centre of this virtually bare plain varies greatly in area and, to a lesser extent, depth. The lake regularly dries up completely or nearly so during the summer (Grimmett and Jones 1989). In winter, the normal water depth is half a metre or less, and it frequently freezes over completely. A visit in 1989 showed that the lake can, possibly through lack of rain, split into two or more main sections (G Magnin pers comm).

Most ornithological data for the area are for the winter only, when the site is important for White-fronted Geese *Anser albifrons* and Ruddy Shelducks *Tadorna ferruginea*, which both feed and roost there (Grimmett and Jones 1989; G Magnin pers comm).

Few visits had been made in summer, until Warncke discovered a breeding colony of Greater Flamingos *Phoenicopterus ruber* in 1977 (Kilic 1988). Although this species has been recorded in the summer since then, breeding has not been recorded. Nevertheless, the huge size of the plain (19,000 hectares) and the problems of access caused by the soft mud surrounds of the lake may have prevented records. Also, Greater Flamingos are known to have a cycle of breeding sites, not necessarily using the same ones each year.

Other breeding species include Ruddy Shelduck, Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* and, perhaps, Marbled Duck *Marmaronetta angustirostris* (Grimmett and Jones 1989).

Together with Uygur Ozesmi, I visited this area, having been informed by locals around Hotamis that the Karapinar wetland was now perhaps a more important site. Certainly, the large number of hunters who travel from as far as Istanbul and Syria, have, over the past two years, abandoned Hotamis Sazligi in favour of the bird-rich Karapinar Ovasi.

We spent two days here in April 1991, but the sticky mud prevented a full circuit of the lake or even making accurate counts from the southern side. We estimated the size of the lake at 6x7 km.

We approached the area from the southwest, via Karapinar itself, rather than from the road to Gotoren which is east of the plain and which runs along the Karadja hills. This approach has, however, been used by most visiting birdwatchers as it allows a more complete view of the whole area.

Following a small, reed-choked drainage canal (good for migrant passerines) about 5 km from Karapinar, we eventually reached an excellent reedbed *Phragmites*, intersected by small, apparently freshwater but possibly brackish lagoons. This area was surrounded by wet grassland and sedge *Scirpus* beds and was approximately 1x2 km in area. This surprised us, given the comments of Grimmett and Jones (1989). This marsh may be new, as it was not noticed in a visit in 1989 (G Magnin pers comm). The reeds may be harvested in the summer, making the marsh less noticeable in winter.

During the two days we spent at Karapinar Ovasi, we recorded the following species.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* 1
Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus* 8
White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* 8
Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* 2 Possibly a pair seen, but no booming heard
Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* 3

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* 9
 Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* 23
 Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* 5
 Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* 21
 White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* 148
 Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* 55
 Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus ruber* 159 No signs of breeding
 Greylag Goose *Anser anser* 6
 Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* 25 Principally in pairs
 Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* 4
 Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* 16
 Garganey *Anas querquedula* 15
 Red-crested pochard *Netta rufina* 1
 Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* 10
 Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus* 4
 Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* 6
 Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* 8
 Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* 2
 Kentish Plover *Charadrius alaexandrinus* 10
 Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* 2
 Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* 4
 Little Stint *Calidris minuta* c. 150
 Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* c. 700
 Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* 4
 Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* 8
 Redshank *Tringa totanus* 1
 Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* 5
 Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* 50
 Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei* 50 No signs of breeding
 Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* 1
 White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* 30
 Black-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles orientalis* 15
 Little Owl *Athene noctua* 1
 Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* 3
 Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* 21
 Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* 1 Migrant
 Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* 1
 Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* 4
 Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon* 10
 Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* Common
 Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* Common
 Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* 1
 Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* c. 200
 Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus* 3
 Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* 5
 Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* c. 4,000 Roosting flock in canal reedbed
 Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* 10

More extensive surveys are required to clarify the ornithological importance of Karapınar Ovası and the threats to it. Winter hunting is possibly intensive, but there appears to have been little agricultural development as yet.

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Acknowledgments

I should like to thank OSME for its financial support which enabled this project to run and to Uygur Ozesmi for his company in the field. Gernant Magnin (DHKD) supplied much useful discussion, as well as access to his unpublished fieldnotes on Karapinar.

Guy Kirwan, 12 Carlton Avenue, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria LA13 9AU, UK

Turkish IBAs: an appeal for information

A list of possible additions to the Important Turkish Bird Areas has been prepared in collaboration with DHKD. Members wishing to visit these areas should contact Richard Webb or Guy Kirwan, c/o OSME, for further information. Any survey work undertaken will be used in the preparation of a new list of Turkish IBAs, which is to be compiled over the next two years. All contributions will be fully acknowledged.

List of Important Turkish Bird Areas for which more information is required, and potential additions to the IBA list.

IBA number

- Abant Golu (40.370N, 31,15°E) and Yedigoller Lilli Parki (41.20°N, 31.500E)(Bolu)(Black Sea Coastlands). Forest areas.
- 12 Ilgaz Daglari (40.00°N, 33.40°E)(Kastamonou) (Black Sea Coastlands). Montane forest area.

- 15 Kizilirmak Deltasi (40,35°N, 36.00°E)(Samsun)(Black Sea Coastlands). Coverage of western half especially.
- 13 Kackar Daglari (40.35-41.10°N, 40.42-41.35°E)(Artvin)(Black Sea Coastlands). Montane forest area.
- 16 Northeast Turkey (41.20°N, 41,30°E)(Artvin and Rize)(Black Sea Coastlands). Special attention to alpine habitat and remaining forest areas.
- Longoz Ormani (41.49°N, 27.59°E) (Kirkaleri)(Thrace). Pristine wetland and forest area with threat of tourist development.
- Taurus Mountains. Central part: forest areas on road Mut-Ermenek; western part: Koprulu Canyon (Antalya)(Southern Coastlands). Potentially important for vultures and forest species. Tourism may be damaging some areas.
- 50 Akyatan Golu (36.39°N, 37.17°E)(Adana)(Southern Coastlands). Notes on water levels, the dune system and wader counts required.
- Topprakale (37.10°N, 36.10°E)(Adana)(Southern Coastlands). Potentially important raptor watchpoint.
- Amik Golu (36.23°N, 36.18°E)(Hatay)(Southern Coastlands). Drained during the 1960, but recent data lacking.
- 19 Aksehir Golu (38.10°N, 31.28°E)(Konya, Ayfon)(Central Plateau). Boat required for survey.
- Golbek Golu (39.23°N, 32.55°E)(Ankara)(Central Plateau). Inland saline lake which initial observations suggest may be important.
- 32 Tersakan Golu (38.37°N, 33.08°E)(Konya)(Central Plateau). Part of Tuz Golu complex which may be an IBA in its own right.
- 23 Eregli Sazligi (37.30°N, 33.44°E)(Konya)(Central Plateau). Imminent plans for drainage.
- 30 Sultansazligi (38.20°N, 35.15°E)(Kayseri)(Central Plateau). Dried up to large extent in past two years. Current extent of wetland habitat and it importance unknown.
- 31 Demiryurt Golu (39.53°N, 37.36°E)(Sivas)(Central Plateau). Little studied wetland.
- 60 Ceylanpinar (36.51°N, 40.03°E)(Urfa, Mardin)(Southeast). No recent data, but very important for bustards, including perhaps Little Bustard *Tetrax tetrax*.
- Nazik Golu (38.05°N, 42.20°E)(Bitlis)(East). Poorly known lake at western end of Van Golu.

- 76 Arin Golu (38.49°N, 42.59°E)(Bitlis)(East). Potentially important for White-headed Ducks *Oxyura leucocephala*.
- Hazapin Golu (41.11°N, 43.16°E)(Kars)(East). Potentially interesting wetland, no recent data.
- Cildir Golu (41.02°N, 43.16°E)(Kars)(East). Interesting but underwatched wetland near Soviet border.

More selected bird observations from Turkey, spring and summer 1990

Jonathan Eames

From 29 June to 15 July 1990, I led a party of Naturetrek birdwatchers to the East and along the Black Sea Coastlands of Turkey. This note documents 23 species recorded during this period. Data are presented for all species listed by Harrap and Martins (1986), except Steppe Buzzard *Buteo buteo vulpinus* and the Lesser Black-backed/Herring Gull superspecies *Larus fuscus/argentatus*. All records are included for the 15 species included in Collar and Andrew (1988). In addition, records are included for selected species mentioned in Beaman (1986) and Martins (1989), where few documented records exist and the pattern of occurrence is unclear. Several breeding records are also included.

Place-names and locations

The spelling of place-names follows the 1:800,000 map of Turkey produced by Media Print, Basim Ticaret AS, Harita ve Turistik Yayınlar, Istanbul (ISBN 975 7702 01 3), but the accents are omitted. The regional divisions used follow those of the Turkish Bird Report:

Black Sea Coastlands: Dilberduzu, Kackar Dagı, Sumelas Manastiri, Yaylalar.

East: Akdamar Adası, Aygır Golu, Ahlat, Bendimaha, Caldıran, Cecirme, Dogubayazit, Ercek Golu, Golduzu Golu (Arın Golu), Gole, Golyuzu, Iğdir, İshak Paşa Sarayı, Küçük Ağrı Dagı, Nemrut Dagı, Nemrut Golu, Van Golu.

Pygmy Cormorant *Phalacrocorax pygmeus* Up to 15, Bendimaha Marsh, 5 July.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* Flock of seven, near Iğdir, 7 July.

Velvet Scoter *Melanitta nigra* Six, Nemrut Golu in Nemrut Dagı, 3-4 July. One

pair fired on unsuccessfully by hunter, 3 July.

White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* Three females or immatures, Golduzu Golu (Arin Golu), 4 July. One female or immature, Bendimaha Marsh, 5 July.

Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus* One, Yaylalar, 10 July. Two or three, Dilberduzu, 11 July. One, near Dilberduzu, 12 July. All localities lie in the Kackar Dagı.

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* Up to 10 pairs nesting on Akdamar Adası, Van Golu, 1 July.

Lanner *Falco biarmicus* One, Aygir Golu, near Ahlat, 5 July.

Saker *Falco cherrug* One Ercek Golu, 2 July. One, near Aygir Golu, 4 July. One, near Golduzu Golu (Arin Golu), 5 July.

Caspian Snowcock *Tetraogallus caspius* One seen and up to four heard, near Dilberduzu, Kackar Dagı, 11 July.

Great Bustard *Otis tarda* 23, near Golduzu Golu (Arin Golu), 4 July and 32 there on 5 July. Both sightings of single flocks on ploughed land at edge of cereal field.

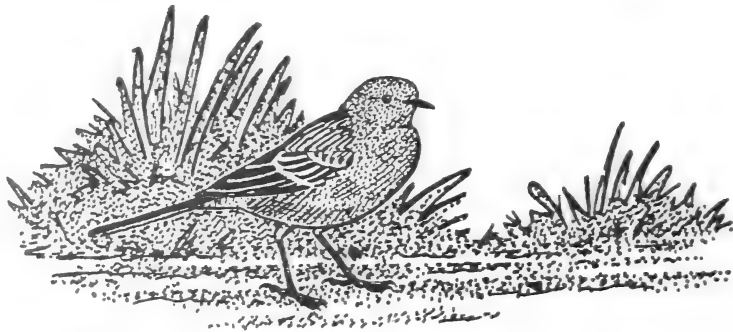
Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* One, Aygir Golu, 5 July.

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* 30, including several first-summer individuals, Ercek Golu, 2 July.

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus* Seven, 17 km east of Iğdir, 7 July. Breeding suspected.

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* One female, near Gole, 8 July.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia* 150, drinking at small pool near Golduzu Golu (Arin Golu), 4 July.



Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* One male, Ercek Golu, 2 July.

Alpine Accentor *Prunella ocularis* Common around Dilberduzu, Kackar Dagı, 10-12 July.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica* One, north of Cladiran, 5 July. One, Ishak Pasa Sarayı, 6 July.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* One male, near Golyuzu, Kucuk Agri Dagı, 6 July.

Green Warbler *Phylloscopus nitidus* Adult feeding young, Sumelas Manastiri, 13 July.

Rock Nuthatch *Sitta neumayer* At least two pairs, near Cevirme, Kucuk Agri Dagı, 6 July.

Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria* Pair feeding young, near Yaylalar, 9 and 12 July. Two, Dilberduzu, 11 July. One, near Dilberduzu, 12 July. All localities lie within the Kackar Dagı.

Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus* Many flocks of five to 50 individuals along roadside between Dogubayazit and Iğdir, 7 July.

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Jonathan Eames, 17 Brookside Drive, Oadby, Leicester LE2 4PB, UK

News and Information

Compiled by Simon Albrecht

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

The Gulf

Fires out

Many of the oil wells set on fire during the Gulf war have already been extinguished, and a British team, the last to join the international effort, will fly out on 15 October to help. Suleiman Muttawa, the Emir of Kuwait's special envoy, said on BBC Radio's *Today* programme on 2 October 1991 that all the oil well fires would be out by January 1992. We can only hope that work on the other environmental problems starts soon.

Atmospheric pollution

The *Guardian* newspaper on 2 August reported the extent of atmospheric pollution resulting from the oil well fires in the Gulf. Smoke was reported 2,400 km from burning wells, with temperature distortions noted up to 1,000 km away. It was covering an area of 15,000 km², and rising to 5,000 m. We can only guess at the effects on wildlife. The breakdown by country was as follows:

Kuwait Smoke cloud at desert; animals reported dying in desert; inhabitants reporting asthma attacks, increased

lung disease and skin complaints; regional temperatures reported to be 10-15°C below normal.

Iraq Black rain; fear of reduced growing season; particle fall-out and rise in water acidity affecting crops and forests expected.

Saudi Arabia Reports of smoke and black rain; changes in regional temperatures south to Riyadh.

Gulf states Reports of smoke and increased air pollution.

Iran Black rain reported from early March in Dexful in north and Kernan, Shiraz, Genavah and Bushehr in south; smoke in Lut desert; fears for growing season; soot dumped in mountains and washed into water supplies; threat to 2.5 million hectares of semi-arid forest along Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman.

Afghanistan Black rain and smoke reported.

Pakistan Black rain in Balochistan in April.

India Late March, skiers in Himalayas, 3,000 km from Kuwait, reported black snow 5 cm thick in Kashmir, giving rise to fear of floods due to premature melting.

Turkey Black rain and smoke reported. Early March, Governor of Adana state orders residents not to use rain water or let animals drink it; soot dumped in mountains and washed into water supplies.

Bulgaria Black rain and smoke reported. **USSR** Black rain and smoke reported in south.

Great Knot in the Gulf

Following the report of a Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* in Bahrain (*Bull* 26: 21), we now have a report of 107 at Tarut Bay, Saudi Arabia, on 9 April 1991. A single individual was also seen there in the second week of May. These observations were made during the ICBP/RSPB/OSME assessment of damage caused by the war for Kuwait.

A paper is planned on the status of Great Knot in the Middle East (east to Pakistan). If you have any records or other information that could be included, please send them to Mike Carr, c/o OSME.

Turkey

The Pontic Mountain forests

The lack of knowledge about the status of forests in Turkey has been a cause for concern for many years (eg *Bull.* 18:29). We now have some preliminary observations from Guy Kirwan on forests in the Pontic Mountains, in the Black Sea Coastlands. West of Unye (on the coast between Samsun and Ordu), most of the accessible forest appears to have been felled, except in the national parks, such as Abant. Some of this area has been replanted with deciduous trees, such as oaks, which appear to be cropped on a 15-year rotation. East of Unye, large areas of forest remain.

Enquiries are continuing both in Turkey and elsewhere with a view to providing a fuller account. If you can help, please contact OSME's Turkey Officer.

Dalmatian Pelicans and Greater Flamingos
Dalmatian Pelicans *Pelecanus crispus* bred at four Turkish locations in 1991, with a total of 152 adults and 100 juveniles. They did not, apparently, breed in the Kizilirmak Delta, where a maximum of four adults were seen.

Greater Flamingos bred at Tuz Golu, where 3,500 juveniles were seen. Breeding was also confirmed at the freshwater marsh of Eregli Sazligi.

Hotamis Golu

Guy Kirwan visited Hotamis Golu in the spring. In 1985, the Turkish Water Authority built an irrigation canal from the lake towards the Tuz Golu basin. This has resulted in over half the lake being drained. Some 7-8,000 hectares remain. This area holds small number of Pygmy Cormorants *Phalacrocorax pygmeus* and is important for White-headed Ducks *Oxyura leucocephala* and Marbled Ducks *Marmaronetta angustirostris*. Although some villagers continue the traditional reed harvest outside the breeding season, others burn reeds in an uncontrolled way, to provide grazing. This is a threat to nesting herons and to the traditional reed harvest.

The wetland is probably safe for the next 10 years, as it is used to store excess rainwater. After this, its use will be reviewed.

Burdur Golu

Burdur Golu was declared a Special Protection Area by the Turkish Government at the beginning of 1991. Among other species, the lake is important for its wintering White-headed Ducks. Some 10,927 were counted there in February 1991.

Egypt

Bird catching in North Sinai

Sherif Baha El Din and Waheed Salama, from ICBP, investigated bird catching activities along the north Sinai coast in

autumn 1990. Probably over 200,000 Quails *Coturnix coturnix* were caught along 170 kilometres of shoreline during the 1990 season. In addition, over 1,000 birds of prey of 12 species were caught by a variety of sophisticated methods, plus about 30,000 passerines; so-called non-target species.

The ICBP team recommended recommend a law banning trade in birds of prey in Egypt: capture and killing birds of prey is already illegal. At present, it is impossible to take action against anyone selling wild-caught birds of prey in the markets.

The team also proposed that the ban on Quail hunting in the Zaranik nature reserve area (about 17 kilometres of shoreline) be continued, and that it be coupled to ornithological and ecological research in the area. This proposal is both realistic and practicable, and would provide a cornerstone for future action in north Sinai.

The results of the study have been published as ICBP Study Report 45. It includes maps, diagrams and photographs, and is available (price £5 including surface mail postage) from ICBP, 32 Cambridge Road, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0PJ, UK.

Maltese hunting tours

Following the banning of package holiday hunting tours to Egypt from

Malta (Bull. 24: 20), one of the Maltese companies involved, *Spinx Tours*, has now sued the Malta Ornithological Society for £52,000 loss of income. The court froze the society's assets, and it was unable to pay its bills until it was lent £20,000 by the RSPB, following appeals from ICBP. We hear that *Spinx Tours* failed to show up at a recent court hearing, which may be a sign that they are going to relent. Meanwhile the Malta Ornithological Society desperately needs more funds. If you can help or want further information, please contact Georgina Green, ICBP, 32 Cambridge Road, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0PJ, UK.

Ramsar monitoring mission to visit Egyptian Wetland of international importance

In October 1991, Cairo will host a meeting of the countries that have signed the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea Against Pollution. This includes a protocol on Mediterranean Specially Protected Areas. This has prompted the Deputy Secretary-General of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, together with ICBP and WWF representatives, to visit both Egyptian Ramsar sites: Lake Burullus in the Nile Delta and Lake Bardawil in north Sinai. They will investigate the ecological state of the sites which continue to be threatened by increasing pollution, drainage, land fill and fish farms.

OSME News

Thirteenth Annual General Meeting

The thirteenth AGM was held on 20 July 1991, at the Natural History Museum, London. Over 80 people attended the meeting and were treated to an enjoyable programme of talks; enhanced by having speakers

from the Middle East. Mindy Baha El Din gave a full account of the problems and efforts towards conservation in Egypt. Charles Pilcher described a depressing picture of the state of oil pollution occurring as a result of the Gulf War. Nigel Cleere used slides and audio tapes in a comprehensive review of Middle Eastern nightjars. Finally, Nergis Yazgan presented a dynamic talk on conservation in Turkey, and showed how DHKD are putting forward reasoned arguments for the protection of wildlife-rich sites, especially in tourist development areas.

In the AGM, the Chairman explained that because of the Gulf War, the OSME expedition to southern Yemen had been delayed to 1993. However, OSME was planning a major initiative to Turkey in 1992 (details to be announced). Hilary and Geoff Welch were to represent OSME at a meeting with DHKD and WIWO in Turkey in 1991, when various conservation topics would be debated. The task of gathering data for the Important Bird Areas in the Middle East, announced at the twelfth AGM, was to start in September 1991.

Various changes in Council membership had taken place during the year, and the Chairman was pleased to welcome Richard Grimmett, Guy Kirwan and Stan Howe as new Council members. The nominations of Professor Abdulaziz H Abuzinada, Secretary General of the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Shaika Noora Bint Isa Bin Sulman Al Khalifa, President of the Bahrain Natural History Society, as Vice Presidents were warmly welcomed. The full list of OSME Officers is given below.

Vice-presidents

Prof Dr Abdulaziz H Abuzinada
Sir Derek Barber
Prof Dr W Buttiker
Major MD Gallagher
Shaika Noora Bint Isa Bin Sulman Al Khalifa
Prof H Mendelssohn
Dr G Tohme
Sir William Wilkinson
Mrs N Yazgan

Council Members

S Mark Andrews *Publicity Officer*
Dr Mark Boyd *Bulletin Editor*
Duncan J Brooks *Sandgrouse Editor*
Major David JR Counsell *Treasurer*
Richard FA Grimmett
Peter C Heathcote *Secretary*
Phil AD Hollom
Stan Howe
Mike C Jennings
Guy Kirwan

Tom Nightingale
Richard Porter *Chairman, Conservation Research Committee*
Dr Michael RW Rands *Chairman*
Richard Webb *Turkey Officer*
Mrs Hilary Welch

Co-opted Members

Mrs Irene Hutson *Postal Clerk*
Ms Chris Tucker *Membership Secretary*
Mrs FE Warr *Sales Officer*
Geoff R Welch *Librarian*

Others

Mike I Evans *Middle East IBA Co-ordinator*
Rod P Martins *Turkish Bird Report Co-ordinator*

Retiring Council members

This year's AGM saw the retirement by rotation of two long-standing and outstanding members of OSME Council.

Simon Albrecht has served the Society faithfully since its inception. For a number of years, he painstakingly and thoroughly dealt with and developed OSME's sales and throughout his time as a Council member he has always brought a great deal of original thought and perceptiveness to meetings, from which the Society has benefited. We shall miss his contributions in no small measure, but have no doubt he will remain a committed member of the Society.

Geoff Welch has also made a quite outstanding contribution to OSME. His thoughtful and considered remarks are always sharp and to the point and in his own quiet way he has contributed a great deal to the Society over the last few years. Together with his wife, Hilary, Geoff has worked wonders as joint Honorary Secretary and as Librarian, where his meticulousness and hard work have served the Society far beyond the call of duty. Council has agreed to co-opt Geoff for a further year, and he is happy to continue to look after the library for this time.

Sadly, we also lost one Council member and one co-opted member this year. **Chris Bowden**, who was Chairman of the Conservation Research Committee, and **Elizabeth Smith**, who was co-opted as Membership Secretary for a while, left the UK to work on the ICBP Kupe Mountain Forest conservation programme in Cameroon. They both made lively and productive contributions to OSME, and we wish them well with their efforts in Cameroon.

We are very grateful to all these individuals for helping to shape OSME's growth and development.

Mike Rands

Fourteenth Annual General Meeting

The fourteenth OSME AGM will be held on the afternoon of Saturday 11 July 1992, in the Lecture Theatre, Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, South Kensington, London, UK. Further details will be published in Bulletin 28.

Subscription renewals

Many members find it more convenient to pay their annual subscription by Bankers Order, and it certainly helps us. All UK members will have received a Bankers Order and Covenant form with their subscription reminder. If you can, please change to this method of payment. If you can fill in the covenant section (UK tax-payers only), OSME will benefit even more, as we can claim back the income tax you paid on your £7.

If any overseas members have a bank account in the UK and would like to pay their subscription by Bankers Order, please write to the Membership Secretary for a form.

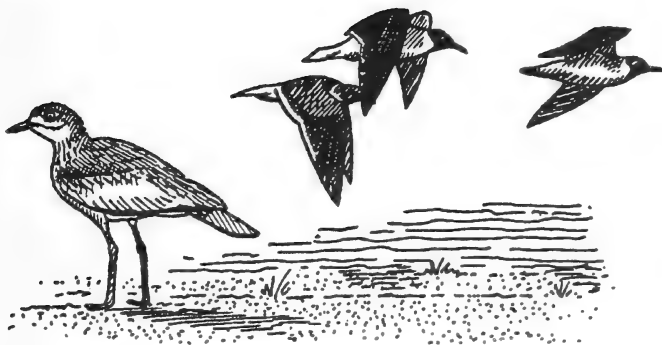
Special Gulf meeting, 14 November 1991

The Flora and Fauna Preservation Society and the British Ornithologists' Union have joined OSME for an evening meeting considering the environmental aftermath of the war in the Gulf. The two speakers are Andrew Price, the Special Advisor to the Marine Programme of IUCN, and OSME's Chairman and ICBP Programme Director, Dr Michael Rands.

The meeting will be held at the Meeting Rooms, Zoological Society of London, at 6 pm on Thursday 14 November 1991. Tickets are available at £6 each (cheques payable to FFPS) from FFPS, 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR. The ticket price includes a wine and cheese buffet. Please enclose a stamped addressed envelope, and note that tickets are not available from the OSME address.

OSME tour to Egypt

Due to the war in the Gulf, the OSME/*Sunbird* tour to Egypt planned for last April had to be cancelled. We are pleased to announce that the tour will be offered again in April 1992, following the same itinerary, but on slightly later dates. The tour will run from 2-12 April and will be led by Mike Everett and 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 coast. 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. Egyptian specialities should include Black-winged Kite



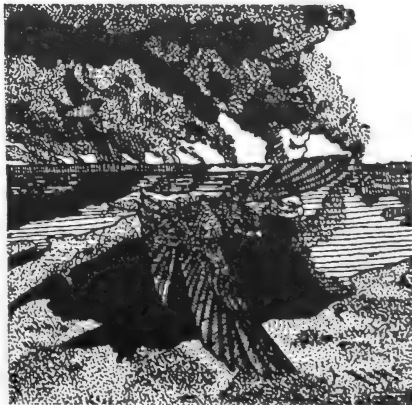
Elanus caeruleus Painted Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*, Senegal Thick-knee *Burhinus senegalensis*, Kittlitz's Plover *Charadrius pecuarius*, Sooty *Larus hemprichii* and White-eyed Gulls *L leucoptalmus*, Swift *Sterna bergii* and Lesser Crested Terns *S bengalensis*, Senegal Coucal *Centropus senegalensis* and Nile Valley Sunbird *Anthreptes metallicus*.

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 £1,520. In addition, OSME members receive priority booking and until 1 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. For full details of the tour, please write to Sunbird, PO Box 76, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DF, UK. Telephone (0767) 682969. Please make sure that you mention your OSME membership when making your booking or enquiry.

Cover auction

The original pen-and-ink drawing for the front cover of this *Bulletin*, passerines flying through the Gulf war zone, by Mark Andrews, measuring 13x13 cm, is for sale in a postal auction. The proceeds will go to the Conservation Research Fund. Please send your bid (no money at this stage) to Cover Auction, OSME, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, UK; to arrive by 31 December 1991. If your bid is successful, we will inform you immediately, and send the drawing on receipt of a cheque.



Requests

Oiled birds

The massive oil slicks released in the Gulf in January and February caused large-scale mortality of wintering seabirds, waders and other waterfowl. The oil lakes and rivers in Kuwait are also taking a considerable toll. Considerable numbers of conspicuously oiled birds did not, however, die immediately and will have dispersed and migrated away from the war zone this spring. Huge numbers of spring migrants have also been covered in oily soot while flying through the immense smoke clouds in the northern Gulf. The same is now happening this autumn.

The International Council for Bird Preservation is urgently seeking information on the impact of the Gulf War on bird populations in the region, and should like to hear of any observations of oiled or 'sooted' birds away from the immediate impact zone of Kuwait and the Saudi Arabian Gulf coast: ie central Europe, the eastern Mediterranean, the USSR, eastern Africa and other parts of the Middle East. Such information will be immensely valuable in assessing the true effects of this war on bird populations. Please send information to: Mike Evans, ICBP, 32 Cambridge Road, Girton, Cambridge CB3 0PJ, UK. Telephone 0223 277318. Fax 0223 277200.

Photographs for Sandgrouse

If you can lend good photographs of any of the following for possible publication in forthcoming *Sandgrouse* papers, please send details, or the pictures themselves, as soon as possible, to the *Sandgrouse* Editor, Duncan J Brooks, c/o British Museum (Natural History), Akeman Street, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 6AP, UK. (Telephone 081 5203943 home; 0442 890125 office) Photographs will be welcomed in any form, though good quality black-and-white prints or colour slides are best; all will be returned. Unfortunately, responsibility for loss or damage cannot be accepted, though all material will be carefully looked after.

Crane *Grus grus* showing birds and wintering habitats in Israel

Radde's Dunnock *Prunella ocularis*

Yemen Dunnock *P fagani*

Black-throated Dunnock *P atrogularis*

Mourning Wheatear *Oenanthe lugens*

dark morph from basalt of Jordan/Syria

Krüper's Nuthatch *Sitta krueperi*

House Crow *Corvus splendens*

Rüppell's Weaver *Ploceus galbula*

Desert Finch *Rhodospiza obsoleta*

Volunteers wanted in Turkey

Volunteers are wanted for two surveys of birds in Turkey. The first, the WIWO survey of breeding birds and migration at the Kizilirmak Delta,

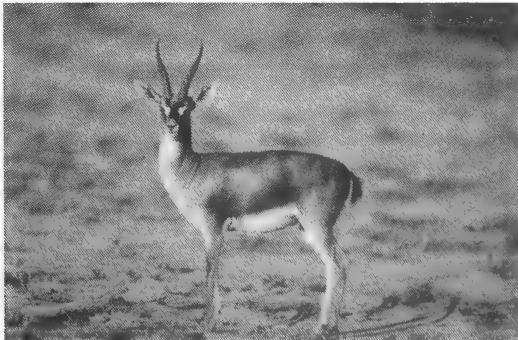
runs between mid-March and mid-June 1992. This survey is organised by WIWO, but OSME volunteers who can spend at least two weeks in the field would be most welcome.

The second survey is planned for spring 1993. It will cover Great Bustards *Otis tarda* breeding throughout Turkey. DHKD will have close involvement with the planning and fieldwork of this project. The status of Great Bustards in Turkey in recent years is uncertain. The effects of increased hunting and agricultural change give particular cause for concern, and this survey should clarify the species' status.

If you are interested in taking part in either or both of these surveys, please write to Guy Kirwan, c/o OSME. Please include a CV stating relevant experience and skills (eg mechanic, ringer), and availability.

Gazelles in Yemen and southern Saudi Arabia

To clarify the taxonomy of gazelles in the Arabian Peninsula, we should like to collect information about the dark forms occurring in Yemen and the south of Saudi Arabia. Gazelles like that in the photograph are breeding at the National Wildlife Research Centre in Taif, Saudi Arabia. This taxon could be *Gazella bilkis*, described as a new species by Groves and Lay (1985, *Mammalia* 49: 27-36) on the basis of specimens from Yemen, or more probably a dark subspecies of *Gazella gazella*. The status of *Gazella bilkis* and of this uncertain subspecies is unclear, but, in view of the paucity of information, they could be endangered.



G bilis or *G gazella*, Taif, Saudi Arabia, May 1991 (Photograph NWRC)

The main sightings of *Gazella bilkis* were in the area of Ta'izz, North Yemen. If this is a dark subspecies of *Gazella gazella*, its origin is unknown. Any information about these taxa - taxonomy, distribution, sightings, photographs, contacts of people concerned - will be useful for co-ordinating international conservation measures. If you can help, please write to Arnaud Greth, National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development, PO Box 1086, Taif, Saudi Arabia.



Announcements

MEDMARAVIS Conference 1992

Next year's conference theme is Management of Island and Coastal Ecosystems in the Mediterranean. It will take place on the island of Chios, Greece, from 15-20 September 1992. There are eight conference sessions: importance of existing coastal parks and reserves; known populations of infralittoral ecosystems; management of beach and dune ecosystems; managements of coastal wetlands; ecological monitoring of small islands; plans and policies for major Mediterranean ecosystems; and projects for sustainable development. There will be specialised workshops and poster sessions which will deal with ecological research on the Mediterranean fauna, especially seabird. For conference registration and further details, please contact: Xaver Monbailliu, MEDMARAVIS, BP 2, 83470 Saint Maximin, France.

Wetland and waterfowl conservation in south and west Asia, Karachi, Pakistan, 14-20 December 1991

The above conference and symposium, organised by the International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau, the National Council for the Conservation of Wildlife (Pakistan) and the Asian Wetland Bureau, will have sessions on the following topics: status of Asian wetlands and waterfowl; wetlands and waterfowl conservation and management; wetland and waterfowl management and research needs; and international cooperation and action. If you are interested in attending, please write immediately to IWRB, Slimbridge, Gloucester GL2 7BX, UK.



Reviews

The conservation of western Lesser Kestrel populations By Jean-Pierre Biber. International Council for Bird Preservation Study Report No 41: Spiral bound 46pp.

The Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* is a small, gregarious falcon which was once common in many towns and villages in the Mediterranean Basin. During the last 30 years, its population has crashed in large parts of its Western Palearctic breeding range. It has apparently disappeared as a breeding species from six countries. This concise report provides an overview of the current status of the western Lesser Kestrel populations.

The author examines the reasons for the decline: thought to be loss of hunting habitat and nesting sites. Open grassland and shrub areas are increasingly converted to intensive agriculture or built development. Older buildings are being demolished or renovated to modern designs that no longer provide nesting niches. Furthermore, the large-scale application of pesticides in modern agriculture

dramatically reduces prey availability. Spain is believed still to hold the major breeding population within the region.

This important report summarises the biology, habitat and nesting requirements of the species, and highlights large gaps in our knowledge of its ecology. Little is known about the migration routes of the different Lesser Kestrel populations or of their ecology in their African winter quarters.

The author lists a number of conservation recommendations and suggests areas requiring further research. Although the general situation revealed in this review is depressing, it is hoped that the habitat conservation measures outlined will benefit a number of other species such as White Storks *Ciconia ciconia*, Great Bustards *Otis tarda*, Little Bustards *Tetrax tetrax*, Pin-tailed Sandgrouse *Pterocles alchata* and Gull-billed Terns *Gelochelidon nilotica*.

Nick P Williams

Birds of Israel. Computerized Bird Identification System and Ornithological Data Base/ Encyclopedia. Eds Ron Frumkin, Noah Rotary and Tzila Ahariv. Published by A Sapir, 19 Dov Hoz Street, 44356 Kfar Saba, Israel.

This computer database contains basic information about 464 Israeli birds: size, sexual dimorphism, distribution, nesting habits, scientific names etc. In fact, it contains as much accurate information as many bird books, but in a far less usable form. Computer software has a long way to go before it can really help bird identification.

The identification and encyclopediac functions of the software are accessed in different ways: looking up the characteristics of unknown birds can lead to their identification; or it can be used almost as a book by using the index screens to find details of a particular species.

Unfortunately, the identification route is clumsy and has many pitfalls. I found that even if I knew the species, the software would often lead me in completely the wrong direction. The idea is that when you see a bird, you can narrow its identification down by entering the data of your observation. For example, a bird nestbuilding in July will not be solely a winter visitor to Israel, so the programme then excludes winter visitors from your consideration. The identification can be narrowed further by a series of similar choices, with the hope that eventually you have entered enough information to lead to one species. It is, however, very easy to make the 'wrong' choice just because of the particular circumstances of an observation.

Identification through keys can be successful for many groups, particularly plants and invertebrates, but has never proved satisfactory for birds. Books have tried the approach and at least have the advantage of being able to include pictures to confirm the identification.

Even if the limitations of a keyed approach to bird identification are ignored, this software is poor. The encyclopediac side of the programme has about 70 data entries for each bird, but many of these are abbreviated and poorly laid out.

Despite its being designed to run on all computers with DOS 2.0 or higher, I found that the programme would not operate on three out of four supposedly suitable systems, and would often 'hang.' The help screens are often inadequate and the documentation is poorly produced. Despite the claims in the manual, this software is neither revolutionary nor remarkably user-friendly. It is, however, supplied in a durable rigid case.

Mark Boyd

Zoology in the Middle East, Volume 4. 1990. Edited by Ragnar Kinzelbach and Max Kasperek. Heidelberg. DM 25.

This is the fourth issue of this increasingly regular journal, it now being the stated aim of the editors to make a virtually annual publication. Previous reviews (*Bull.* 19:40-41; 25:36-37) have outlined the scope of the journal.

Fourteen papers are presented in the 120 pages of the present volume, the contents being divided as follows: mammals (two papers), birds (four), insects (three), crustacea (one), arachnids (one), leeches (one), molluscs (one), parasites (one) and scyphozoa (one). A welcome development is the increasing number of papers submitted by Middle East nationals and residents.

The subjects of the four bird papers are as follows: On the distribution and status of the Black Francolin *Francoelinus francoelinus* in Cyprus; First record of the Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* in Turkey; On the migration of the Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* in Turkey; and On the migration of the Whimbrel in Bulgaria.

The paper on Black Francolins is a useful contribution to knowledge of the species' status in the eastern Mediterranean. The Storm Petrel paper is only a short communication, and, unfortunately, only brief identification characters are presented for this important but not unexpected record.

The two papers dealing with Whimbrel migration comprise the main body of bird-related material. Both are interesting and informative, although one may say with the benefit of recent hindsight that the species is distinctly more common in Turkey than Kasperek suggests. Nonetheless, the main points, including the timing and concentration of migration are correct.

Two other papers will be of interest to birders: Notes on mammals (Insectivora, Rodentia) taken by the Tawny Owl *Strix aluco* in N.W. Turkey; and Flat-worms of two species of gull (*Larus ichthyaetus* and *L. Canus*) [Great Black-headed and Common Gulls] from Basrah, Iraq.

Another paper, Historical record of a Tiger *Panthera tigris* (Linnaeus 1758), in Iraq, also interested me.

The journal continues to act as a useful vehicle for shorter papers on a range of topics that may otherwise not be published. It is typically well produced, and the material well presented, justifying its cost of just under £10. The continued preponderance of bird papers dealing with Turkish ornithology, in part no doubt resulting from the interests in one half of the editorial team, will satisfy (but never

satiate) the avid Turcophile. The journal will, however, be unlikely to gain the readership of OSME members with a more general interest in the region.

Guy Kirwan



Around the Region

This section details recent bird sightings within the OSME region. Whenever possible, the significance of the 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 records. To submit records for Bulletin 28, covering the period September 1991 to February 1992, please write to: Around the Region, OSME, c/o The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, UK. Closing date for records is 15 February 1992.

Compiled by Guy Kirwan

All dates refer to 1991, unless otherwise stated; and all records refer to single individuals unless numbers are given.

Bahrain

Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus* Bahrain Fort, 30 January. First winter record (see Bull 26:59). *E Hirschfeld*

Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla* Janabiyah reeds, 12 April. Rare migrant. *E Hirschfeld*

Corncrake *Crex crex* Janabiyah reeds, 5 May. Rare migrant, not annual. *E Hirschfeld*

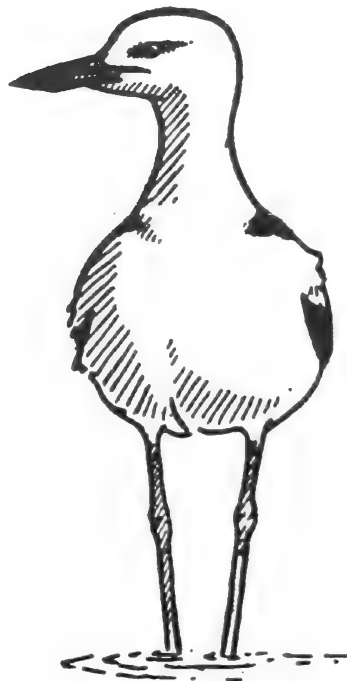
Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola* ASRY, 10-12 June, and four adults, ASRY, 4 August. Annual May to September, but uncommon. *E Hirschfeld*

Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus* Flock of 45, Muharraq, 5 March. Largest flock. *E Hirschfeld*

Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta* Flock of seven, Dumistan, 16 May First record for Bahrain. *E Hirschfeld*

Palm Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis* Three to four individuals, displaying and holding territory, Riffa, from April. *E Hirschfeld*

Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis* Male, Sakhir, 23 March, Male, Dadan Farm, 9



May, male Muharraq, 12 March. *E Hirschfeld, N Chapman*

Small Skylark *Alauda gulgula*
Wintering flocks, Badan Farm and Muharraq (Bull 26: 23), last seen 1 April and 15 March respectively. *E Hirschfeld*

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*
Wintering flock, Muharraq (Bull 26: 23), last seen 14 April. *E Hirschfeld*

Eversmann's Redstart *Phoenicurus erythronotus* Male, Arad, 15 February, possible same as January individual.

This makes possibly five during winter 1990/91 (see Bull 26: 24). *E Hirschfeld*

Hooded Wheatear *Oenanthe monacha*
Female, Gebel Dukhan, 10 March Rare winter visitor. *M Adlam, N Chapman, E Hirschfeld*

Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon* Janabiyah reeds, 9 March. Third record, previous ones, September 1969 and December 1974. *E Hirschfeld*

Grey Hypocolius *Hypocolius ampelinus*
Male Hamed town, 24 March. First spring record of this locally common autumn migrant. *E Hirschfeld, N Chapman*

Pale Rock Sparrow *Petronia brachydactyla* At least five, Jasra Farm, 13 March, two Refinery wadi, 8 April; and three, Hamad town, 28 April. Scarce, not annual spring migrant. *Dr WRP Bourne, E Hirschfeld*

Cinereous Bunting *Emberiza cineracea*
Seven recorded between 10 and 23 April with flocks of Ortolan Buntings *E hortulanus*. Probably overlooked spring migrant. *E Hirschfeld*

Israel

Ethiopian Swallow *Hirundo aethiopica*
Beit-Shean, March, trapped and ringed with Swallow *H rustica* roost. First Israeli and West Palearctic record



(details will be published in *Sandgrouse* in due course). per Ron Frumkin

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* Metsuba, northern Israel, 21 April, trapped and ringed. Third record, others were in April 1982 and April 1983. per Yakov Langer

Qatar

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* Seen with young, Slawa Pools, 12-14 May. Casual breeder. RJ Shepherd

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* Umm Said, March. Uncommon winter visitor. RJ Shepherd

Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* Doha, April 12. Uncommon passage migrant, early in comparison with UAE. RJ Shepherd

Saudi Arabia

Arabian Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris melanocephala* Pair, Jebel Figrah (Between Yanbu and Medina), 4-5 April. Reconfirmation of northerly range extension, prior to 1989 known only south of Taif. BS Meadows

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* Four, Wadi Rabigh, 31 May. Status uncertain in western Arabia; All breeding little terns appear to be Saunders' Little Tern *S saundersii*. BS Meadows

Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse *Pterocles lichtensteinii* Three Hadirah (140 km north of Medina, 23 May. First record from this locality. BS Meadows

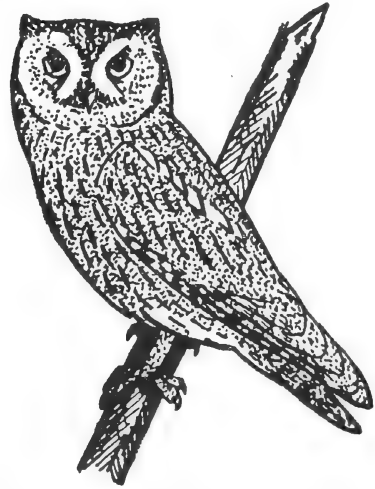
Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles exustus* Rabigh, 31 May. First record here since Bates (1936). BS Meadows

Pin-tailed Sandgrouse *Pterocles alchata* Four, Hadirah, 24 May. First located here in 1990 (*Bull* 25: 45). BS Meadows

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* Breeding 'colony' of 20 pairs, Hadiah, 23-24 May. Hitherto unrecorded from this locality. Species has been noted breeding at several isolated localities in north-west Arabia over the past three years, the sub-species is *St arenicola*. BS Meadows

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* Yanbu al Sinaiyah, 24 February. First spring record; Two previous autumn records from the Western Province. per L Vickers

Striated Scops Owl *Otus brucei* Four showing characters of this species, Yanbu al Sinaiyah, 2 January-11 February. Note that Scops Owls *Otus scops* resembling Striated Scops have wintered here in recent years. BS Meadows



Hume's Tawny Owl *Strix butleri* Yanbu al Sinaiyah, 25-26 January. New locality. BS Meadows

Nubian Nightjar *Caprimulgus nubicus* Wadi Rabigh, 25 July. New locality. BS Meadows

Arabian Woodpecker *Dendrocopos dorae* Jebel Fignah, 5 April. New locality, one two other sites known north of Taif. BS Meadows

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis* Up to four, Yanbu al Sinaiyah, 24-31 January. First winter records from this locality. BS Meadows

Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* Yanbu al Sinaiyah, 13 January. First winter record at Yanbu of regular passage migrant. BS Meadows

Mourning Wheatear *Oenanthe lugens*

Two pairs (*O. lugens?*), between Doha and Tabuk in sandstone outcrops (Hisma formation), 1-2 May. New breeding locality, only found in this biotope in 1986 (*Bull* 26:63). *BS Meadows*

African Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus baeticatus* Up to 30 pairs in mangroves, Yanbu al Sinaiyah, March to April. This species was discovered here in 1984, with specimens obtained in 1986 (see *Bull BOC* 109: 36-43). *BS Meadows*

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* Eighteen, Fort Farrah, 15 February; up to 150 Yanbu al Bahr, 21 February to 3 March. Only second winter influx in 11 years recording around Yanbu. *BS Meadows*

Pale Rock Sparrow *Petronia brachydactyla* Four hundred, Wadi Rabigh, 1 March. Only two previous records by this observer in the Hejaz since 1984, and the largest flock to date. *BS Meadows*

Rüppell's Weaver *Ploceus galbula* Two colonies nest-building, Wadi Qudah (near Masturah), 22 March; nine nests, Rabigh, 35 July Previously unrecorded north of latitude 22°N. *BS Meadows*

United Arab Emirates

Greylag Goose *Anser anser* Two, Zabeel eater treatment plant, Dubai, 22 March to 9 April. Larger wild flock reported in palace grounds near Dubai during same period. *C Richardson, K Hyland*

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* Two, Ramtha tip, Sharjah, 10 May. Seventh UAE record. *S Turner, C Richardson, J Bannon*

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus* Three young (second year) males, summering in fodder fields, All Habab, 19 July to 9 August. Only fifth positive record of males in UAE. *C Richardson, E Hirschfeld et al*

Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor* Flying over alfalfa field, Digdaga, 21 March. First mainland record for seven years. *C Richardson*

Quail *Coturnix coturnix* Up to six,

calling in field at Digdaga, 22 March to 5 April, but not after harvest in mid-April. First breeding evidence. *C Richardson, J Bannon*

Corncrake *Crex crex* Saffa park, 23-27 March; another there, 13 May; Sir Bani Yas Island, 2-3 May; and one with injured leg, Emirates golf course, 7 May. Less than 10 previous records. *J Bannon, C Richardson*

Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus* New Dubai creek golf course, 20 August, and two there, 27 August. Rare, seldom lingering on passage in UAE. *C Richardson*

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus* Emirates golf course, 18 July. Thirteenth UAE record. *C Richardson*

Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini* Summer plumaged individual, Ramtha tip, 24 June to 26 July. First record for UAE and probably Arabia. *C Richardson*

Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* 240 feeding on alfalfa stubble (with c. 7,000 Collared Doves *S. decaocto*), Hamraniyah, 16 May. Noteworthy numbers. *C Richardson*

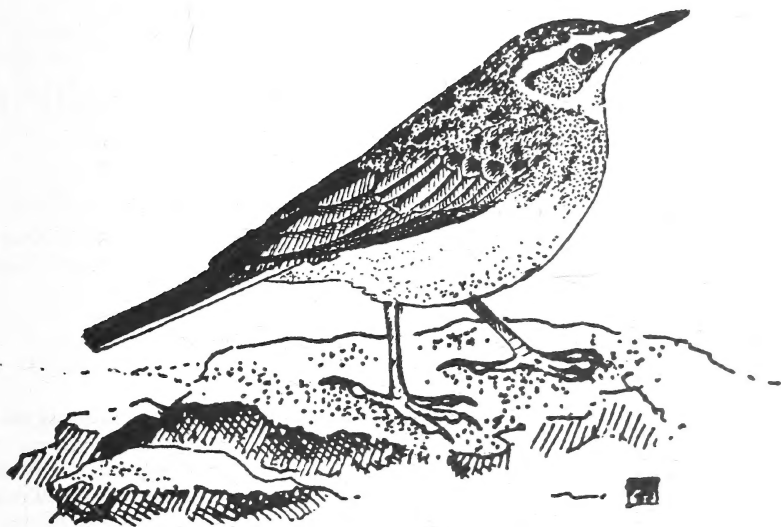
Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis* Asab, 3-29 April; Digdaga, 19 April; and Bu Hasa, 6 May. Only five previous records, but apparently becoming more common. *L Reaney, J Bannon, C Richardson*

Long-billed Pipit *Anthea similis* Up to three, Masafi, 15-22 February; one in song there, 4-16 April. First breeding record since 1972. *C Richardson, J Bannon*

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* Bu Hasa, 14 April. Fifth UAE record. *D Robinson*

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* Bu Hasa, 3 April; Saffa park, 23 April and 10-11 May; Emirates golf course, 25 April. Less than 10 previous confirmed records. *D Robinson, J Bannon, C Richardson*

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* Sixty, Abu al Abyadh, and 13, Emirates golf course, 17 May (sites 170 km apart).



Exceptionally heavy passage. *R Morris, C Richardson*

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* Bu Hasa, 23 April. Scarce and probably overlooked. *D Robinson*

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* Two adults with three juveniles, in field at Hamraniyah, Ras al Khaimah, 28 June. First evidence of breeding in Arabia. *C Richardson*

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* Flocks of up to 10 at Hamraniyah fields, 5 April and 28 June; two juveniles there with House Sparrow *P domesticus* flocks, 16 August. First breeding evidence for UAE. *C Richardson, J Bannon*

Pale Rock Sparrow *Petronia brachydactyla* Healthy passage, 10 March to mid-April; 60 in one flock in foothills near Ras al Khaimah, 5 April. *C Richardson, J Bannon, L Reaney*

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus* Asab, in Western desert, 8 April. Only spring record. *L Reaney*

Correction

Bull 26: 50 para 3: for 'taxidermists' read 'taxonomists.'

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To be published end of 1991

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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 as 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.

Membership is open to all and spans over 40 countries. Current membership subscription is £7 individual, £10 family; airmail £10 individual, £13 family. Life membership £150.

Publications *Sandgrouse* is the Society's journal and contains scientific papers on all aspects of the ornithology of the Middle East. The *OSME Bulletin*, issued twice yearly to all members, covers all aspects of birdwatching and conservation within the Middle East.

For further details, please write to:

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

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