



ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF THE MIDDLE EAST

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

BULLETIN N°3

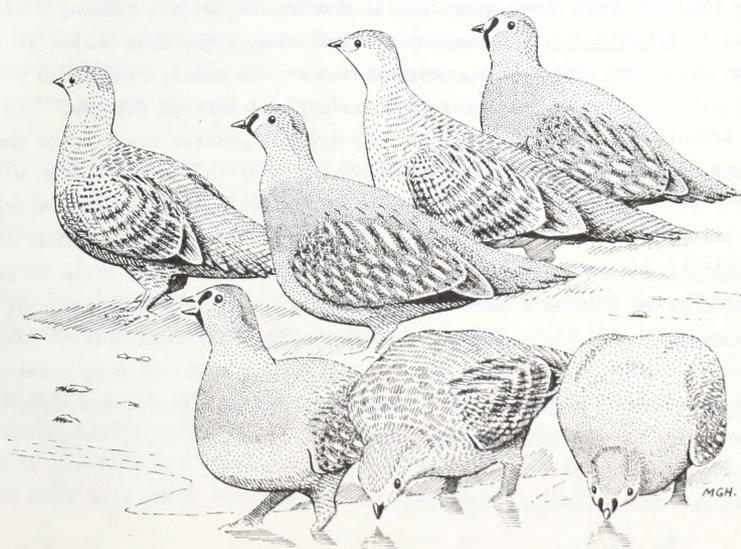
AUTUMN 1979

EDITOR: A VITTERY

PRODUCTION: D J FISHER

OSME moved into its second year with the holding of the Annual General Meeting in London on 6 June 1979. The Society was again indebted to its Chairman, William Wilkinson, without whose generosity and administrative drive it would be so much the poorer. At the conclusion of formal business Richard Porter and David Fisher reviewed recent visits to the Yemen and Israel respectively with the help of excellent colour slides.

Response to the Society has been very good and it is to be hoped that further interest will be aroused when the first edition of "The Sandgrouse" appears later in the year. The timing of this Bulletin has been advanced slightly to give members a regular flow of material. Contributions are welcomed for future editions of either this Bulletin or "The Sandgrouse".



A NOTE ON THE ARABIAN WARBLER

Don Parr

In view of the absence of a reference to the Arabian Warbler Sylvia leucomelaena in the popular field guides to the Middle East it might be helpful to potential visitors to the area to summarise its present known distribution, its recent recording in Israel and dangers of confusion with the Orphean Warbler Sylvia hortensis.

Williamson (1968) describes the distribution of the Arabian Warbler as "Arabia, resident from Midian in the west through the Hejaz to Yemen and Aden: also Somalia in N.E.AFRICA." Hall and Moreau (1970) show the distribution as a fairly narrow fringe on the Arabian and African sides of the Red Sea and place it "provisionally" in a "superspecies" with Sylvia hortensis. Zahavi and Dudai (1974) describe the discovery of the first breeding of this species in the Rift Valley 10 kms south of the southern end of the Dead Sea, Israel in April 1972. It was found to be "a relatively common species in the Arava valley found in stands of large Acacia trees". The song is described as "a melodious short burst of typical sylvian quality". A nest was found in an Acacia tortilis tree about 2.5 m above ground in the lower branches of the canopy. The bird is described as looking like a small S.hortensis and reference is made to its habit of flicking its jet black tail downwards, resembling the colour and movement of the Blackstart Cercomela melanura. Meinertzhagen (1949) claimed that S.leucomelaena could not be separated in the field from S.hortensis.

Williamson (1968) describes the species as having a dark grey-brown mantle, a sooty blackish-brown head merging with the mantle and not forming a clear-cut cap as in S.hortensis. The underparts are creamy, becoming whiter in the middle of the belly and washed with greyish-brown on the sides, flanks and vent. The undertail coverts are dark grey-brown with broad whitish fringes. The wings are dark brown; the tertials, inner secondaries and greater coverts are narrowly fringed greyish-white in fresh plumage. The tail is blackish-brown with the central pair darkest and the outer pair tipped white (unless very worn). The bird has three long rictal bristles and prominent nasal hairs (those of S.hortensis are much finer). The iris is described as dark brown or pale amber (although some observers have recorded a light grey iris as with a typical S.hortensis), and light grey or whitish feathers may form a light orbital ring. The wing is more rounded than that of S.hortensis with the wing point usually falling between the 4th and 5th primaries. The tail is rounded with the outer feathers 7-9 mm shorter than the longest.

The iris colour and orbital ring is clearly a variable feature. Of three birds trapped in Saudi Arabia by Michael Jennings (pers comm) one had a dark brown iris with a lightish exterior and two were brown without an orbital ring. A photograph taken by Michael Jennings shows a very pronounced black cap sharply demarcated from a grey mantle.

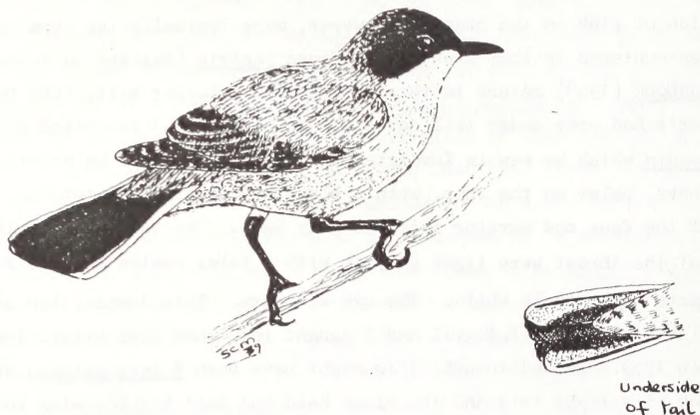
In March and April when many Sylvia warblers are migrating through Israel there is a danger that this present species may be confused with a dark form of S.hortensis which occurs on migration in some numbers. Typical S.h.hortensis specimens are seen in the Eilat area showing only a dark grey (not black) cap merging with the grey of the mantle and with a prominent whitish iris and a suffusion of pink on the breast. However, more typically the form most likely to be encountered in that area is S.h.crassirostris (Balkans to Turkestan). The Handbook (1948) refers to this form having a longer bill, less buff on the underparts and grey under tail coverts. McGeoch (1954) described specimens of S.hortensis which he saw in Kurdistan in June 1954. These he described as dark grey above, paler on the rump, with a black head and nape extending over the side of the face and merging into the grey back. The tail was nearly black, the sides of the throat were light greyish with a paler centre and the rest of the underparts were nearly white. The eye was dark. This description accords very well with a bird that F. Argyll and I caught in a wadi near Eilat, Israel on 26 March 1979. We had thought this might have been S.leucomelaena because of the lack of a light iris and the black head and tail but the wing formula clearly showed it to be S.hortensis. The wing was 82 mm, the tail 66 mm and the bill was noticeably heavy (17 mm to skull, 4.75 mm in depth and 4 mm wide at the nostril). The breast was white fringed buff and the belly white, the under tail coverts were grey/dirty white. The tail was square, the outer feathers were almost wholly white and the penultimate ones were tipped white, all the remainder were black. The iris was dark brown and a few light grey flecks on the feathers around the eye gave an indistinct orbital ring.

In roughly the same area near Eilat in March 1979 several observers reported seeing one or more pairs of Arabian Warblers behaving as if on territory and in habitat similar to that described by Zahavi and Dudai.

The above notes were read by Steve Madge who kindly commented as below and supplied the supporting sketches.

"Firstly may I state that I have seen in the field, and trapped a number of S.hortensis jerdoni and a few of S.h.crassirostris (30, at least in total), chiefly in N.E.Iran and Afghanistan from June to September and not one of them showed a pale iris (even adult males), contra general field guide statements.

They had rather large bills, and the male jerdoni especially had solid black caps and all had obvious white in the outer tail feathers along the entire length. We had seen a few Orpheans in Israel in late March 1979 and were aware of the presence of S.leucomelaena for which we checked every hortensis. Two birds that we located in Acacia scrub in a wadi near Eilat on 3rd April were so obviously not hortensis that we came to the conclusion that they were Arabian Warblers.



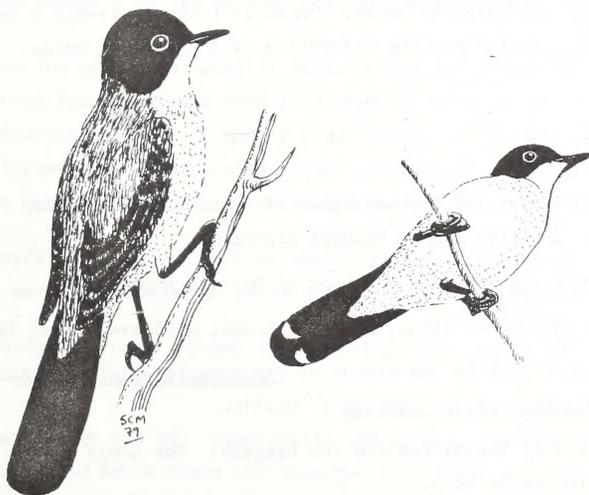
ORPHEAN WARBLER
(*S. h. crassirostris*)

The first glimpse that I had of one was of its head amongst branches of the Acacia - this was black with a contrasting white throat and obvious whitish spectacle (as obvious as the white eye ring of a Yellow-vented Bulbul Pycnonotus xanthopygos). It flitted out and into an adjoining Acacia and I noted a black tail which was as black as that of a Blackstart C. melanura. I knew that leucomelaena should have some white in the outer tail and the apparent lack of this puzzled me until we obtained better views. Then we found that it differed from hortensis as follows:

- a. Tail: Continually cocked, rather slowly wagged, during entire period of observation as they crept about the lower part of an Acacia, sometimes descending onto the ground. The tail looked completely black, both in flight and when perched but close observation showed that there were white tips to the outermost tail feathers - however, the outer tail feathers were markedly shorter than the others and were not visible from above when in

flight. In the bushes the white tips were clearly visible from below as a couple of white spots on an otherwise black tail some $\frac{2}{3}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ along its length.

- b. Head: Black cap, clearly defined from both grey upperparts and white throat. A narrow, but very obvious white eye ring. Forehead rather more rounded and bill sligher than hortensis. Iris dark.



One of the pair, presumed to be the female had a duller black head than the other and had a brownish cast to the upperparts. She still had the eye ring however and tail pattern, and cocked her tail too.

From the clear grey of the upperparts and the neatness of the cap it seems that these birds resembled the race blanfordi rather than the nominate form, but this of course is impossible to sort out from a few field observations.

The continual tail wagging gave the birds a very distinctive appearance and we all remarked as to how un-Sylvia like they were as they crept about in the Acacia scrub. The two birds were together constantly and were almost certainly on territory although no song or calls were heard.

In short, an Orphean-type warbler with a Blackstart tail and a Bulbul head must be an Arabian and the two birds that we saw were so distinctive that in no way could they have been mistaken for hortensis."

Steve's notes above clearly indicate that observers should have little difficulty in separating S.leucomelaena and S.hortensis in the field provided the danger of confusion is known. There is however clearly a need for more study on this species and the collection of a series of skins.

References

Hall P B and Moreau R E 1970 An Atlas of Speciation in African Passerine Birds : 159. British Museum Natural History.

Witherby H G et al 1948 The Handbook of British Birds.

McGeoch J A 1963 Observations from Ser Amada, Kurdistan, Iraq 1954. Ardea 51:248.

Meinertzhagen R 1949 On the status of Parisoma leucomelaena (Hemp and Ehr) Bull. Br. Ornithologists' Club 69 : 109-110.

Williamson K 1968 Identification for Ringers: The Genus Sylvia. BTO Identification Guide No 3.

Zahavi A and Dudai R 1974 First breeding Record of Blandford's Warbler Sylvia leucomelaena. Israel Journal of Zoology 23 : 55-56.

HOLY LAND CONSERVATION FUND MISSION TO THE MIDDLE EAST

Dr Bertel Bruun and the bird artist Arthur Singer visited the Middle East in October/November 1978. The following are extracts from Dr Bruun's report.

Reliefs and frescoes dating back more than 3,500 years depict the rich and varied birdlife in the Middle East from the Persian empire in the North to the realm of the Pharoos in the South. Herodotus of Halicarnassus in 450 BC described the richness of the animal life in Egypt, and in the Bible we find the first description of the masses of migrating birds which passed through the

Middle East from their Palearctic breeding grounds to their African winter homes. Jeremiah exclaims:

"Yea, the stork in the heaven
knoweth her appointed times;
and the Turtle Dove and the crane and the swallow
observe the time of their coming."

Jeremiah 8:7

Since that time many of the wetlands as well as other natural areas have been converted into fields, fishponds, salt flats and even desert. This process continues at an alarming rate, often without appropriate measures being taken to safeguard even remnants of the natural habitats and the animals inhabiting them.

Being aware of the rising interest in wildlife and conservation in the area as well as the need for assistance both in regard to finances and expertise, the Holy Land Conservation Fund's Board of Directors in early 1978 decided to explore the possibilities for a co-ordinated effort in preserving the wetlands of the Middle East. The following goals for such an effort were decided upon:

- A. To establish a list, with as complete description as possible, of the marshes, swamps and other wetlands in the Middle East.
- B. To establish what current developmental plans exist today which may threaten these wetlands.
- C. To encourage and aid, financially and with professional personnel, research in areas where the importance of these wetlands is unknown and/or where they are seriously threatened by development and drainage.
- D. To encourage and aid, financially and possibly with expertise, the preservation and improvement of threatened wetlands.
- E. To raise funds through grants from foundations, corporations and agencies, as well as directly through our own Fund, to support the previously established goals (A to D).

The Physical Environment

The Middle East, the lands from Anatolia and Iran south to Sudan and west to Libya, comprises about 2.6 million square miles. By far the largest part of

this area is occupied by enormous and forbidding deserts. Indeed, only the coastal strip from Egypt to Syria, the Euphrates and Tigris valleys together with the Nile valley and parts of the northern coast of the Persian Gulf, have much to offer waterfowl, breeders as well as migrants. The few oases such as Azraq in Jordan are, because of their relatively small sizes, rather insignificant.

The large river valleys as well as the coastal strip from Alexandria to Syria have all been heavily inhabited by man since antiquity. Modern technology paired with the growing population pressure is turning more and more marginal land into fields and drainage of natural wetlands are among priorities in most of the countries concerned. Furthermore, modern piping of scant water resources rather than the time-honoured canal systems further reduces available open or semi-open water. Lagoons and ponds are utilised heavily for aquaculture and artificial fishponds are common along the Mediterranean coast.

With the damming of the Nile at Aswan, the annual flooding of fields in the Nile valley has ceased. The added potential wetlands created in the form of Lake Nasser in Upper Egypt is still an ecologically unknown entity.

The sparse wetlands can best be divided into five categories:

1. Open rivers - Euphrates, Tigris and the Nile, as well as smaller rivers such as the Jordan.
2. Natural lakes and ponds which are few and far between. Many of these are saline due to the rapid evaporation of water.
3. Coastal lagoons, especially along the southern Mediterranean and northern Persian Gulf. These are heavily fished.
4. Fishponds, potentially very important substitutes for destroyed natural habitats, but requiring special efforts and understanding in realising the potential.
5. Artificial canals and flooded fields.

During our trip we visited examples of all five categories and got a first hand impression of the problems and potentials of each.

Status of Wetland and Waterfowl Protection and Management in the Area

A. Conservation Laws

All countries have laws for protection of wildlife and regulation of hunting. Effective enforcement of these laws is a major problem although efforts of improving enforcement is being made. The most efficient systems are found in Iran and Israel.

B. Protected Wetlands

In Iran and Israel several important wetlands are protected. This protection is efficient in Israel. Unfortunately, we were not able to judge the status in Iran as our trip to the Jarrahi delta (Shadegan preserve) had to be cancelled. In Jordan, Azraq is under development as a national park. No protected wildlife areas exist in Egypt at the present time. Saudi Arabia and Bahrain are involved in establishing wildlife preserves, but none of importance to waterfowl. It is our impression that considerable attention is beginning to be paid to this aspect of conservation by local authorities.

C. Agencies Concerned with Protection of Wetlands and Waterfowl

In Egypt, the Ministry of Agriculture has the governmental responsibility for nature protection. No special agency for management of wildlife exists.

The Egyptian Association for the Conservation of Natural Resources is a private conservation group recently established. It is affiliated with the IUCN.

In Iran, the Department of the Environment manages the relatively numerous parks and preserves in Iran.

The Nature Reserves Authority in Israel manages the parks and reserves in Israel and the occupied territories.

The Society for the Protection of Nature is a private organisation operating several field stations and primarily involved in educating the public in ecology and natural history.

In Jordan, the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature, a privately constituted body, has been delegated most responsibility for wildlife preservation by the Ministry of Agriculture.

In Turkey, the protected wetlands are managed by the General Directorate of National Parks and Wildlife.

D. Endangered Species

At the present time, only the Bald Ibis Geronticus eremita nesting in Turkey and wintering in Ethiopia, and the Siberian Crane Grus leucogeranus nesting in Siberia and wintering in Iran, are placed on the endangered species list of the IUCN.

Impressions

It was clear to us there is an increasing interest in conservation among small but growing groups in all three countries visited (Egypt, Iran and Israel). These groups are very eager to co-operate and receive assistance.

In Israel, the work performed by the Nature Reserves Authority is very impressive. The staff consists of very dedicated and competent men and women, and the leadership dynamic and imaginative. The educational work by the Society for the Protection of Nature is slowly raising the public's awareness of the importance of conservation. The Hai Bar Society is well established and plays an important role in breeding of endangered desert mammals. The breeding programme of the Ornithology Department of Tel Aviv University is pioneering the same efforts among desert birds and reptiles.

The wetlands in Israel are relatively small but very rich in birdlife. The Lake Huleh Reserve serves as a way station for probably the entire Palearctic population of White Pelicans Pelecanus onocrotalus as well as many other species. It is also the major breeding ground for several species of herons. The opening of this reserve to the public will further increase the interest in birds.

Ma'agen Michael, a Kibbutz-owned complex of artificial fishponds, is a major stop over for waterfowl and shorebirds migrating along the Mediterranean coast. It is the major wintering area for White Storks Ciconia ciconia in Israel. It is an example of the coexistence of birds and industrial agriculture. It has

been calculated that losses due to birds amount to less than five percent, and may be beneficial by the removal of unwanted fish and amphibians.

Other wetlands visited in Israel were smaller but not insignificant. This is especially true of the sewage plant south of Tel Aviv.

The Bardawil Lagoon in northern Sinai is of the greatest importance for migrating shorebirds and waterfowl. The tens of thousands of Garganeys Anas querquedula passing through re-fuel here for instance. It harbours one of the world's greatest breeding populations of Kentish Plovers Charadrius alexandrinus and is a potential breeding ground for Greater Flamingos Phoenicopterus ruber. By cautious management and co-operation with local fishermen, the area can be preserved without significant economic loss to the local population. Control of boat traffic and boating are the most important measures taken. Salt ponds in northern Sinai are of less importance.

The Isle of Tiran (which we did not visit) is a major breeding ground for Osprey Pandion haliaetus, White-eyed Gull Larus leucophthalmus, Caspian Tern Sterna caspia, Lesser Crested Tern Sterna bengalensis and White-cheeked Tern Sterna repressa. The colonies need continuous protection from disturbances especially from local fishermen as do the surrounding coral reefs.

In Iran, the Department of the Environment administrates many reserves recently established in the country. The staff is very dedicated and eager for help from outside experts especially regarding wetlands. Immediate areas of concern are projected drainage in the Pahlavi area on the south-western Caspian coast. The wetlands are relatively poorly known. The Department conducts annual waterfowl counts, the results of which it is very willing to share with other interested parties.

In Egypt, the International Workshop offered the opportunity to meet with officials interested in conservation. This is managed by the Ministry of Agriculture. Although the greatest interest is in plant preservation there is a growing concern for conservation of birds as well. Attempts are being made to raise the public awareness through youth programmes and through special programmes at the universities. There is great dedication to conservation among the Egyptians we met and great eagerness for collaboration with specialists from abroad especially in regard to the establishment of parks and refuges of which Egypt at the present has none. Areas of special interest are the northern delta region, the Ismaelia region and Lake Nasser where ornithological research is

needed. At the present time, there is only limited access to several areas for non-military personnel, but for instance Greater Flamingos are known to breed in the saltmarshes immediately east of Port Said. Efforts are being made to consolidate the knowledge of birdlife and wetlands. These efforts are centred at the Giza Zoo and the Giza University.

Bertel Bruun MD
52 East 73rd Street
New York, 10021
USA

SOME RESULTS OF THE DUTCH ORNITHOLOGICAL EXPEDITION TO EGYPT IN JANUARY AND
FEBRUARY 1979

Along the Mediterranean coast of the Nile-delta four large coastal lakes are situated. For some of these lakes, plans for (partial) reclamation are being prepared or are already in execution. In view of the geographical position of the Nile-delta and the types of habitat within the area, it seemed likely to be of great importance as a wintering ground for migratory birds. The few available (historical) data confirmed this presumption, but recent information about numbers was completely lacking.

From 2 January to 12 February 1979 Jan van der Kamp, Peter Meininger, Wim Mullié and Bernard Spaans visited Egypt with the objective of collecting data about the importance of the coastal lakes and other Egyptian wetlands for wintering waterfowl. Ben Dielissen made some additional observations along the Red Sea coast of the Sinai-peninsula.

The expedition was sponsored by the International Waterfowl Research Bureau (IWRB), the Netherlands Foundation for International Bird Preservation and the Prince Bernhard Fund.

This paper is only a short summary of the most interesting ornithological results. A comprehensive report and some papers for ornithological journals are in preparation.

We made counts on Lake Qarun, a large salt lake near the Faiyum oasis, from 10 to 12 January. Here we found 2,800 Great Crested Grebes Podiceps cristatus, 10,760 Black-necked Grebes P. nigricollis, several thousand ducks, 9,000 Coots Fulica atra, 1,570 Little Stints Calidris minuta and 1,240 Slender-billed Gulls Larus genei. Many of the 6,000 unidentified gulls might well also have been Slender-billed. In the Nile valley between Cairo and Aswan, we made counts from

the train and were able to get a good impression of the characteristic birds in this area: Cattle Egret Bubulcus ibis (13,000), Black-shouldered Kite Elanus caeruleus (60) and Laughing Dove Streptopelia senegalensis (5,000). Between Aswan and Luxor we saw 659 Egyptian Geese Alopochen aegyptiacus and on 18 January an Alpine Swift Apus melba between Beni Suef and El Minya.

Observations of birds out of their known distribution range were a male Black Wheatear Oenanthe leucura near Na'ama (Sinai) on 2 January and a male Red-rumped Wheatear Oenanthe moesta on the Cheops pyramid near Giza on 9 January. The first bird was filmed and the second one photographed.

The coverage of the lakes Maryut and Idku was poor and no large numbers of waterfowl were seen in these areas.

Areas of major importance for wintering waterfowl are the lakes Burullus and Manzala. A two day count from a boat on the first lake on 31 January and 2 February, which covered nearly half of the area, produced a remarkable number of Coots (153,000), Shovelers Anas clypeata (63,000), Wigeons A.penelope (23,000), Pochards Aythya ferina (8,300), Ferruginous Ducks A.nyroca (6,800) and Black-headed Gulls Larus ridibundus (36,000).

One of the most important (and unexpected!) discoveries was the enormous number of Whiskered Terns Chlidonias hybridus: 17,400 on Lake Burullus and 7,000 on Lake Manzala. This must be a high proportion of the breeding population of eastern Europe and western Asia. Among the Whiskered Terns on Lake Burullus we identified at least four Black Terns C.niger.

The numbers of waterfowl observed on Lake Manzala were not so high, but a large part was not visited. Interesting observations in this area include Great White Egret Egretta alba (87), Shelduck Tadorna tadorna (1,000), Coot (22,000), Redshank Tringa totanus (1,150), Black-headed Gull (17,000) and Slender-billed Gull (236).

Among the many waders present in a small intertidal area in the Bay of Suez we found Grey Plover Pluvialis squatarola (90), Little Stint (5,000) and Redshank (400).

To summarise the results of the expedition the following totals can be given: grebes 13,700, herons 16,600, ducks 118,000, Coots 184,800, waders 20,700, gulls 84,000 and terns 24,500.

Although we visited only a part of the area, these results clearly show the importance of Egypt for wintering waterfowl. To obtain a more complete insight into the function of Egyptian wetlands for migratory birds, more research will have to be done in future.

Peter L Meininger
Wim C Mullié

c/o Grevelingenstraat 127
G335 XE Middelburg
The Netherlands

A RECORD OF SOLITARY SNIPE, *Gallinago solitaria*, FROM ARABIA

M C Jennings

On 28 October 1975 at Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (24° 40'N, 46° 40'E) I flushed from low rushes beside a lagoon of treated effluent a large, darkish snipe. It flew off slowly and rather heavily uttering a single grunting snipe-like call. It was obviously not a Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* and was too small for a Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*. I concluded at the time it could only be a Great Snipe *G. media*, a species that I had had a little experience of a few years earlier in Bahrain.

Two days later, whilst mist-netting birds for ringing, I caught what I took to be the same bird. In the hand, it was much larger and heavier than the Common Snipe that I had been catching. After taking several measurements and details of plumage, I ringed it as a Great Snipe (see Jennings 1976). At the time of ringing the possibility of it being another species seemed remote. It lacked an extensive area of white in the outer tail feathers (a feature of Great Snipe) but I assumed that the bird was a first year specimen that had not yet developed this feature. (NB: There were no wader guides for ringers available at the time.)

That evening I referred to Meinertzhagen (1954), which, confusingly for me, gave wing and bill measurements for Great Snipe that did not fit the bird I had ringed. Hue and Etchécopar (1970) and Vaurie (1965) gave information on additional large Asian snipes but known ranges of all seemed to preclude an occurrence in central Arabia.

The bird I caught weighed 133 grammes, its critical measurements were:-

| | |
|--------|-----------------------|
| Wing | 167 mm (Max cord) |
| Tarsus | 36 mm |
| Tail | 71 mm |
| Bill | 74 mm (to feathering) |

After consulting descriptions and measurements of Asian snipes in King et al (1975) and Prater et al (1977), (which I did not obtain until 1978), I felt sure the bird was not after all a Great Snipe but a Solitary Snipe G.solitaria. The most obvious feature was the very long wing. There are only two Asian snipes with a wing length of 167 mm, the Solitary Snipe and the Latham's (or Japanese) Snipe G.hardwickii. If accepted, this would be the first record for Arabia of a species that has not, as far as I know, occurred west of the eastern border of Iran.

The tail is perhaps the most important identification feature of the various snipes that occur in Asia. The bird I caught had all tail feathers tipped white. The outer four pairs were barred black and white, lacking the rufous of the other retrices. The outer two pairs were very narrow but not pinlike. Unfortunately, tail lengths are not given in Prater (1977) but in April 1979 I was able to examine some snipe skins at the British Museum (Natural History), Tring, England. A sample of Solitary Snipe skins (which had the longest tails of all snipes examined) had tail length between 65.5 mm and 70.5 mm, which compared with 51.5-58 mm for Great Snipe and 62.5-66.5 for Latham's Snipe. (I also took the opportunity to examine specimens of Swinhoe's Snipe G.megala and Wood Snipe G.nemoricola but these two species, although larger than the Common Snipe, could easily be eliminated on other counts.)

I did not get good views of the bird in the field but Ben King (pers comm) has informed me that in flight the tail of the Solitary Snipe appears heavy in comparison with other Asian snipes. In addition, I think that its rather uniform brown breast with some diffuse mottling, compared to the streaks and spots of other snipes, would permit recognition on the ground if seen well.

Great Snipe has occurred rarely in all parts of Arabia; in winter and on migration. Meinertzhagen (1954) mentions a specimen from Yemen, I caught another at Riyadh in autumn 1976 (which was positively identified) and had other sight records there before I left in May 1977. Mrs F.E.Warr informs me that there have been about a dozen sight records in the Arabian Gulf States in the last two decades.

Snipes are probably one of the trickiest families to identify in the field because of their habitat and the poor views one gets of them as they fly away. On the strength of my limited experience in Bahrain, I had thought that a large, rather cumbersome snipe, flying straight when flushed and which sounded different to Common Snipe, should be Great Snipe. The above noted occurrence

illustrates that this assumption cannot now be made for Arabia. Certainly, some doubt now exists for my own Bahrain sight records and perhaps other sight records of Great Snipe in Arabia will need to be re-assessed.

References

Hüe F and R D Etchécopar 1970 Les Oiseaux du Proche et du Moyen Orient. Paris, Boubée.

Jennings M 1976 Riyadh Bird Ringing Report - 1975 Journal Saudi Arabian Nat Hist Soc No 18.

King B, M Woodcock and E C Dickinson 1975. A field Guide to the birds of South East Asia. London, Collins.

Meinertzhagen R 1954 Birds of Arabia. Edinburgh and London, Oliver and Boyd.

Prater A J, J H Marchant and J Vuorinen 1977 Guide to the Identification and Ageing of Holarctic Waders. Tring, BTO.

Vaurie C 1965 The Birds of the Palearctic Fauna-Non Passeriformes. London, Witherby.

LIST OF OSME COUNCIL MEMBERS 1979/80

Vice-Presidents

S Cramp
Sir Hugh Elliott
R D Etchécopar
Dr L Hoffmann
P A D Hollom
Dr H Kumerlove

Other Members

M A S Beaman (Editor of Sandgrouse)
D J Fisher (Publicity Officer)
M C Harrison (Sales Officer)
T P Inskipp
M C Jennings (Treasurer and Membership Secretary)
F J Köning
S C Madge
D Parr (Secretary)
R F Porter
C D W Savage
A Vittery (Bulletin Editor)
W H W Wilkinson (Chairman)

All correspondence to the above members in connection with OSME should be sent to:

OSME
c/o The Lodge
Sandy
Bedfordshire
SG19 2DL
Great Britain

LIST OF MEMBERS

Enclosed with this Bulletin you will find a list of the members of OSME and their addresses. We hope that this proves useful to members, particularly those living in more remote regions who may not know of the other members living in their vicinity.

Will all members please check that their address is correct and inform the Membership Secretary of any errors.

REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

Revised Cyprus Check List

Peter Flint and Peter Stewart are compiling a revised check list of the Birds of Cyprus and would welcome any unpublished data. Please send this to the former at 29 Tilney Close, Alton, Hants.

Peter Flint has a limited number of copies of a 1972 Cyprus Check List which he is willing to supply free of charge. Please send SAE (minimum size $4\frac{3}{4}$ " x 7").

Seabirds of Oman

As an extension of the studies of the birds of the Sultanate of Oman, Eastern Arabia, being undertaken by the Office of the Government Adviser for the Conservation of the Environment, seabirds (mainly gulls and terns) and Crab Plovers Dromas ardeola will be ringed, colour-ringed and colour-marked on Masirah Island, Oman, in July and August 1979. The aim of this is to attempt to trace the post-breeding dispersal of these birds and to relate this to the geographical distribution of the ticks that parasitise them. Studies will also be made for avian influenza, and for arboviruses in the ticks.

Reports of sightings of colour-ringed and colour-marked seabirds in the Indian Ocean region will be gratefully received and acknowledged by:-
M D Gallagher, PO Box 246, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman and Dr C J Feare, Greenfields, The Street, Ewhurst, Surrey, England.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bahrain Report

The Bahrain Natural History Society has just published its Annual Report for 1977 entitled "Wildlife in Bahrain". This is a well-produced booklet which includes a review of the weather in 1977 and its effect on birdlife in Bahrain, a classified bird list covering the period NOV 1976 to DEC 1977, an Introduction to the Shore Life of Bahrain, some notes on the Al-Areen Wildlife Sanctuary recently established on the island and a detailed report on the wildlife (including birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians) of the Hawan Islands. Altogether an excellent production which we trust will be the first of a long series.

A small number of the Reports are available to non-members at \$ 3.00 (post free) from the Bahrain Natural History Society, PO BOX 20336, Manama, Bahrain.

A Bibliography of the Avifauna of the Arabian Peninsula, the Levant and Mesopotamia - by W A C Griffiths

Members who ordered this booklet following the review that appeared in Bulletin No 1 should by now have also received the correct map for the inside back cover and Addendum No 1, which contained additional references. Those who did not receive these items should contact the Sales Officer.

OSME Greetings Cards

This year we have produced two OSME greetings cards for use by our members. The two illustrations are Crowned Sandgrouse Pterocles coronatus by Michael Hodgson (reproduced on page 1 of this Bulletin) and a Black-eared Wheatear Oenanthe hispanica by R A Hume (reproduced on page 20 of this Bulletin). The message inside the card reads "Season's Greetings" and details of the Society are given on the back. We hope that a large number of our members will purchase and send these cards to non-member friends and that this will help to publicise the Society to interested people who may, as yet, be unaware of its existence.

The greetings cards are available in packs of ten (five of each design) for 60p a pack (including postage) from the Sales Officer. (Orders from Europe (including Turkey) at £1.00 and outside Europe at £1.50 a pack to cover the cost of airmail.)

The following items are also available from the Sales Officer.

- Turkish Bird Report 74/75 £4.00
- Ornithological Society of Turkey Bulletins No 1 - 15 (complete set) £4.00
- Army Birdwatching Society Publication No 1 "A note on the birds of Oman
and the Trucial States 1954 - 1968" by W. Stanford £1.20
- Army Birdwatching Society Publication No 2 "A Bibliography of the Avifauna
of the Arabian Peninsula, the Levant and Mesopotamia" by W.A.C. Griffiths
(photocopy) £1.50
- Army Birdwatching Society Publication No 3 "Field notes on the birds of
Lebanon and Syria 74 - 77" by A.M. Macfarlane £2.50

The above prices include postage and packing for orders from within Europe.
Please add 50p if ordering from other areas.

Some Notes from the Treasurer/Membership Secretary

1. Would all members please remember to tell me (or any other Council member) when they change their permanent address.
2. The Society conducts its financial affairs in £ Sterling. Members are requested to make all payments in £ Sterling if at all possible, but if payment in another currency is unavoidable, please remember to add 15% to cover bank charges.
3. Those members with a UK bank account are urged to make out a Banker's Order Form to pay their annual subscriptions. (UK members not already paying by Banker's Order will find a form enclosed with this Bulletin. The form should be completed and returned to me as soon as possible to take effect from 1 January 1980.)
4. Subscriptions are due on 1 January each year. Would those few members who have not yet paid for 1979 please now forward £3.50.

M C Jennings
Treasurer/Membership Secretary

CORRECTION

On page seven of Bulletin No 2 the symbols for the key to the map were unfortunately inverted. The key should have been laid out as follows:-

- KEY:
- ▽ Possible breeding
 - Probable breeding
 - Definite breeding

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our thanks go to Michael Hodgson for the vignette of Crowned Sandgrouse and to Rob Hume for that of the Black-eared Wheatear.

