



# ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

## Egypt & Petra

Birds and Antiquities

*3<sup>rd</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> April 2010 (19 days)*



### Top 10 Birds (as voted by participants)

- 1) Nile Valley Sunbird
- 2) White Stork
- 3) Greater Painted Snipe
- 4) Sooty Gull
- 5) Eurasian Hoopoe
- 6) Hooded Wheatear
- 7) White-eyed Gull
- 8) White-throated Kingfisher
- 9) Common Quail
- 10) Blue-cheeked Bee-eater

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**Trip Report compiled by:** Mark Beevers

## Tour Summary

Our first taste of North African birding was quite productive and a wander through our hotel grounds in Cairo yielded Eurasian Wryneck, Semi-collared Flycatcher, noisy White-throated Kingfisher, Masked Shrike, Common Nightingale and several Eurasian Hoopoes. Added to this we found one of only two Common Whitethroats to be seen on the tour.

Leaving the sprawling metropolis of Cairo, we headed south to Abu Simbel, near the Sudanese border. Beginning our exploration at the Airport Bay area of Lake Nasser, one of the largest man-made waterbodies on Earth, we came across was a pair of stunning Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters, which afforded super views. Graceful Prinias and Crested Larks were very obvious, unlike two distant Egyptian Vultures that could barely be made out through the shimmering heat haze on the far shore of the bay! Other species observed during the brief visit included the only Long-legged Buzzard of the trip and a beautiful male



Black-eared Wheatear. Later we encountered our first Yellow-billed Stork, here at the very northern edge of its range. The rest of the afternoon was set aside for our first excursion to one of the many antiquities that we were to see over the next three weeks, the impressive Abu Simbel Temples. This site has two massive temples, both of which were moved to higher ground in the 1960's when the Aswan High Dam was built. The first temple is dedicated to the sun god Ra, although it was actually built to proclaim the greatness of Rameses II. The second temple is unusual in that it was dedicated to Rameses' favourite wife, Nefertari (he had over 34 wives!). We stayed on after dark to watch the spectacular Sound and Light show at the site. Birding, however, wasn't completely neglected, as the local guides explanation of the site was interrupted by a pair of smart looking African Pied Wagtails, another species at the northern edge of its range.



Next day we made an early pre-breakfast visit to Airport Bay, where seven Yellow-billed Storks and a Black Stork were scoped on the far bank. The shoreline was alive with small birds, including Greater Short-toed Lark, Tawny and Red-throated Pipits, and both Northern and Black-eared Wheatears. After a good breakfast we boarded a boat and set off for a cruise on the massive body of water. More Yellow-billed Storks, our first White Stork, a large flock of Eurasian Spoonbills, the only Greater Flamingo of the trip, and several shorebirds including Senegal Thick-knee, Spotted Redshank and Wood Sandpiper were all discovered. However, one of the birds of the day was without doubt a pair of Lesser Kestrel, the first to be recorded on a RBT tour to Egypt! Late in the afternoon we returned to Airport Bay and unexpectedly flushed, from a Tamarisk bush, probably the most unexpected bird of the trip, a Great Bittern! Another new bird for RBT in Egypt! We finished off a great day with excellent views of an Egyptian Nightjar.

As we were thwarted in our attempt to search for Sandgrouse at the old camel feeding station, we elected to return to the Airport Bay where the highlight was a Rufous-tailed Scrub-Robin. Later, an Eastern Bonelli's Warbler was discovered in the hotel grounds. It was then time to join the convoy from Abu Simbel to Aswan, during which we were not allowed to stop for security reasons. This was a great pity, as we drove past two unidentified Sandgrouse, the only ones we were to see.

Aswan was the starting point for our Nile adventure, and after lunch we boarded a motorised Felucca to explore the river upstream towards the Cataracts. A variety of herons, including Purple and Striated were quickly noted, as were three species of tern: Gull-billed, Whiskered and White-winged. A party of Ferruginous Ducks allowed good views, as did some African Swamphen, while a flock of European Bee-eaters flew overhead. Entering the islands we found more Senegal Thick-knee and our first Green Bee-eaters along with a beautiful male Nile Valley Sunbird, while Clamorous Reed Warblers created a din from the dense reedbeds. Other highlights included good views of the Old Cataract hotel where Agatha Christie wrote *Death on the Nile*, Elephantine Island and the Mausoleum of Aga Khan, high on the hill overlooking the river. After the river tour we visited the Nubian Museum for an informative tour with a local guide.



A pre-breakfast river watch produced Western Marsh Harrier, Ferruginous Duck and hundreds of migrating White-winged and Whiskered Terns. Next on the schedule was a visit to the Temple of Philae. The gardens of this stately temple held a few beautiful Nile Valley Sunbirds. We also took time to marvel at the Aswan High Dam. This remarkable structure, 3.6km wide and 111m high, was completed in 1971 after 11 years of work and is a truly impressive creation. Thereafter we returned to the boat to commence the next stage of our tour, the Nile cruise on board the Nile Admiral. Birding from the sun-deck produced hundreds of herons, egrets and terns, as well as Glossy Ibis, Black-winged Kite, a female Western Marsh Harrier and a few more African Swamphen. Sites visited on the cruise included the temple at Kom Ombo; the main temple building consisted of two equal halves; one side was dedicated to the crocodile god Sobek and the other to Horus. This temple was

very impressive, and for one couple so were the brief glimpses of a Pharaoh Eagle-Owl. We also stopped in at the Temple of Horus, Edfu, which is an exceptionally well preserved temple considering it was hidden under the desert sands for hundreds of years. Long after the original users had left this temple, it was re-used by Coptic Christians who defaced many of the Egyptian gods and engraved their own signs on the temple walls.

Continuing northwards towards the Esna lock, we added a few good birds that included Little Bittern, Eurasian Wigeon, Garganey, Tufted Duck and Common Pochard. We eventually reached Luxor after a relaxing afternoon of watching life along this great river. The final excursion from the boat was a morning around Luxor, visiting the Valley of the Kings, Queen Hatshepsut's Temple and the Colossi of Memnon. Beginning in the Valley of the Kings, a desolate area that was used to hide the mummies and treasures of buried pharaohs, we explored deep shafts that lead to highly decorated burial chambers, most of which still failed to evade the robbers. One of the highlights was the tomb of King Tutankhamun, famous for the incredible treasures that were found within it; the only pharaoh's tomb that had evaded the



ancient robbers. The area also harboured one of our target birds, and a small flock of Trumpeter Finch were duly added to our trip list. Thereafter we proceeded to the Temple of Queen Hatshepsut, a magnificent sight indeed! Although it has been damaged, the greater part of it still does justice to its former beauty. Here we observed beautiful hieroglyphs, large areas of which still had remnants of brilliant colour. Our last excursion was to the Colossi of Memnon before enjoying a scrumptious lunch.

Our hotel on Crocodile Island is surrounded by a bird-rich area due to the well-watered lawns and abundance of plants, although this is now threatened by a considerable amount of development taking place. Nevertheless, the stunning Nile Valley Sunbird was common, and on our first walk around the island we had superb views of a male Little Bittern, Senegal Thick-knee, Blue-cheeked and Green Bee-eaters, Pied Kingfisher and noisy Clamorous Reed Warbler. Next day we visited the last two ancient Egyptian temples of the tour: Karnak and Luxor. Few sights in Egypt are as impressive as the colossal temple complex of Karnak; constructed in the time of Rameses III, it is the largest temple complex ever built in antiquity. Luxor temple is also very impressive and has produced numerous archaeological finds in the last few years. Interestingly, today one can see a mosque, still in use, perched on top of part of the original temple! Leaving Luxor, we set off on the long drive across the desert to the Red Sea coast just north of Hurghada, for a two nights stay.



The coastal area is very productive, with a well watered golf course and farm acting as magnets to migrating birds. A visit to the farm rewarded us with a pair of Lanner Falcon which showed-off a great aerial display. This area is close to a mountain ridge, and as the day warmed up, migrating raptors started to appear. Dashing Eurasian Sparrowhawks with piercing yellow eyes showed regularly, and other birds of prey included an Osprey, our first Booted Eagle of the trip and the expected Steppe Buzzards and Black Kites. A couple of Common Nightingales were also found, however, the highlight of

this particular excursion was a delicate Namaqua Dove spotted drinking by a small pool. It was then off for a snorkelling trip to Gifton Island. Before we arrived at our snorkelling site, we stopped to admire stunning White-eyed and Sooty Gulls and scoped a distant Armenian Gull and Great Crested Tern. Eurasian Spoonbill, Western Reef Heron, Osprey and numerous Common and Little Terns were present on the sandbars. Upon reaching the islands most participants wasted no time getting into the sea to observe the kaleidoscope of colourful fish massing just below the surface; truly a sight to behold!

The following morning, some early risers were out on the golf course at dawn for some productive pre-breakfast birding, and even before we had left the hotel grounds we were encountered Common Quail, a species more commonly heard than seen. Birds of prey were also moving north, with several Marsh Harriers, two female Montagu's Harriers, an Osprey and several Eurasian Sparrowhawks seen. Other birds observed included numerous Red-throated Pipits and Yellow Wagtail, Northern Wheatear and a stunning male Black-eared Wheatear. Overhead Collared Pratincole and a party of Whiskered Tern winged their way north.



From Hurghada we jetted off to the vibrant town of Sharm El Sheikh on the Sinai Peninsula. No birding trip would be complete without a trip to a sewage works, and that afternoon found us at the Sharm sewage treatment plant. Here, a tiny patch of reeds offered Baillon's Crake and rather more fleeting glimpses of a Savi's Warbler, two very good birds for the Egypt tour. Other species seen



were Mallard, Peregrine Falcon, Collared Pratincole, and a selection of common waders and migrants namely Red-throated Pipit, Whinchat and Northern Wheatear. The other reason for staying in Sharm el Sheikh is its close proximity to the world renowned marine reserve, Ras Mohammed National Park, excellent for both snorkelling and birding. Our visit produced the likes of Eurasian Curlew, Whimbrel, Dunlin, Osprey and Steppe Buzzard pouring off the sea and our first Slender-billed Gull, before some of the snorkelers had views of a large Turtle just off the reef. The snorkelling was brilliant with up-close and personal looks

at many different species of fabulous fish and some beautiful corals!

Heading north, a short drive through the Sinai Desert took us to St. Katherine's. Birding the garden of our hotel here yielded great looks at a male Collared Flycatcher. An excursion down the valley to Wadi Feiran was fruitful, and en route we added Desert Lark to our ever-growing list. Wadi Feiran is a haven for migrants, and in the orchards we were soon finding species like Namaqua Dove, Thrush and Common Nightingales, Wood Warbler, more Collared Flycatchers, White-spectacled Bulbul and Blackstart. The following morning we were up at dawn and at the entrance to St Katherine's Monastery before the crowds arrived. The monastery is considered a very holy place to

some Coptic Christians who perform an annual pilgrimage here. Among other things, it's believed to contain a descendant of the original Burning Bush, and is built at the foot of Mt Sinai where Moses received the Ten Commandments. Our early start enabled us to see our targets of Pale Rosefinch and Tristram's Starling with ease, and then whilst watching a pair of Desert Lark, a Striolated Bunting appeared, a new species for this tour! After a tour of the monastery, we spotted another Eastern Bonelli's Warbler and were able to compare Pied and Collared Flycatchers in the monastery garden. We then set off on the



long drive through the Sinai Desert to Ain Sukhna, travelling under the Suez Canal *en route* back to Africa. Our lunch stop was enlivened by a flyover male Golden Oriole and a male Rüppell's Warbler, whilst a short stop at a small wetland produced awesome views of a Water Rail.

The Ain Sukhna area is a well-known raptor migration point. Thousands of birds can be observed here using the thermals off the nearby Bir Abu Darag Mountain range to migrate across the desert into Israel. A great point to observe this spectacle is St. Paul's Monastery. En route to the monastery we encountered the highly sought-after Greater Hoopoe Lark. Upon arrival at the monastery some folks took an in-depth tour of the monastery, while others kept their eyes skyward and this proved fruitful. The highlights included Egyptian Vulture, European Honey Buzzard, Short-toed Snake, Booted, Bonelli's, Steppe and Lesser Spotted Eagles, and many Steppe Buzzards. A handful of Black Storks were also counted, but without doubt the most enduring memory was a flock of approximately 1500 White Storks, which gained altitude and then set off on their migration north. Later we ventured north to Suez in search of waterbirds and were well rewarded with a tight flock of 80 Garganey offshore, accompanied by a few Northern Shovelers. Scoping the mudflats produced Western Reef Heron, Grey, Ringed and Kentish Plovers, Ruddy Turnstone, Dunlin, Bar-

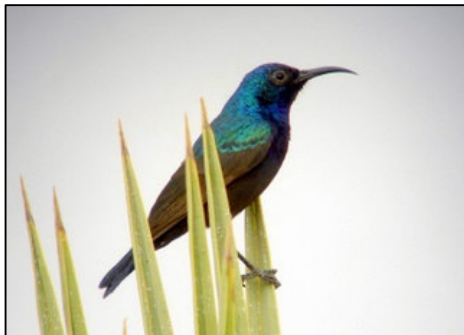
tailed Godwit, Ruff and Slender-billed Gulls, as well as Lesser Crested, Sandwich, Common and Little Terns.

All too soon it was time to leave the coast and head inland back to Cairo. Our route took us through the Eastern Desert via the cement factory road and Wadi Hagul. Here we found Mourning and Hooded Wheatears as well as a male Common Redstart. Heading to Abassa, east of Cairo, we enjoyed a few hours birding around the irrigated fields. This site yielded excellent looks at a pair of Greater Painted Snipe, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, White-throated Kingfisher, Little Bittern, Spotted Redshank and Ruff. Our other targets here were Senegal Coucal and Streaked Weaver, and we also had the added bonus of a Black-winged Pratincole. This spot is also excellent for dragonflies and at least seven species were identified, including Broad Scarlet, Banded Groundling, Long Skimmer and the beautiful Violet Dropwing.



Back in Cairo we then turned our focus back to antiquities and our first port of call was the Citadel, where we visited the Mohammed Ali Mosque, an imposing structure overlooking the huge metropolis. After a while at the Bazaar and lunch on a moored boat on the Nile, we headed to the Cairo Museum. The collection of ancient artifacts, consisting of over 120 000 exhibits, is both fantastic and fascinating. The room containing the fabulous death mask and jewellery of Tutankhamun was of course a favourite. The Egyptian part of the tour was then concluded on the final day by visits to the pyramids and the Sphinx. First it was off to Giza, where the three most famous pyramids are the burial place of three pharaohs, father (Cheops), son (Khafre), and grandson (Menkaure). We next visited another celebrated structure: the Sphinx, where one enters the area through the temple that is dedicated to it. Thereafter it was onward to Zoser's Step Pyramid, supposedly the first pyramid to be built. This king wanted a more elaborate tomb than his predecessors and enlisted the best architect of the time, Imhotep, to design it to this end. The final product was this fabulous step pyramid, the first of over 100 pyramids built in ancient Egypt! Although the birding in Cairo was limited, we still added several species to the list, including Ring-necked Parakeet, Eurasian Blackbird and Goldfinch. Bidding farewell to Egypt, it was on to Jordan and its capital Amman, for an overnight stay.

Wadi As Sir was where we headed on the first morning in Jordan. The green hills made a refreshing



change after weeks of mainly dry and dusty surroundings in Egypt. The area produced some wonderful sightings that included Syrian Woodpecker, Common Linnet, Eurasian Jay and both Cretzschmar's and Ortolan Buntings. A pair of Levant Sparrowhawks was also a welcome find, as was a singing Cetti's Warbler, and we finally caught up with Palestine Sunbird. Just before leaving the area, we were treated to fantastic views of three Little Owls. At the Dana Reserve we recorded Alpine Swift, numerous Tristram's Starlings and a magnificent pair of Bonelli's Eagles. Later

we headed south across the desert to the modern town of Petra. The area adjacent to our hotel was a small vegetated wadi that held Sardinian Warbler, Spotted Flycatcher and more Palestine Sunbirds.

The "Rose City" of Petra was the main reason for our visit here, and it is regarded as the most astounding ancient city left in the modern world. Petra flourished as a vast trading centre and controlled a large part of the "Incense Route", thus profiting from the trade between the Greeks,

Persians, Medes and Egyptians. The Nabataean's were at their peak from the 3rd century B.C. until the 1st century A.D. when Petra was annexed by the Romans. The journey to the ancient city starts off with a kilometre walk to the Siq entrance. After walking through a two-kilometre long narrow crevasse through tall canyon walls, we found ourselves standing before the famous Treasury, hewn from the sandstone cliffs. This stone-carved facade is approximately 88 feet tall and is extremely well preserved considering the soft sandstone from which it was hewn. All the tombs and other structures in the valley were cut from the rock from the top down. Our local guide then took us further into the old city and it was amazing to see how many rock-cut tombs and other structures there were. While walking in Petra, birds seen included Fan-tailed Raven, Blue Rock Thrush and Mourning Wheatear. After our fascinating visit we returned to Amman in time to catch our international flights home, and so ended our fabulous and very rewarding tour to a part of the world where tourism began!



## Annotated List of Birds recorded

Nomenclature and taxonomy follows the IOC 2.3 list of: Gill, F. and Wright, M. Birds of the World: Recommended English Names. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.

**Total species recorded: 185 species seen**

### Pheasants, Fowl and allies Phasianidae

**Common Quail** *Coturnix coturnix*  
Some of us had exceptionally good, if brief views of one at El Gouna.

### Swans, Geese & Ducks Anatidae

**Egyptian Goose** *Alopochen aegyptiacus*  
Seen on four dates around Lake Nasser with a peak count of 300. In Egypt this species is only found in the south of the country around Abu Simbel.

**Eurasian Wigeon** *Anas penelope*  
Two were seen on the River Nile between Edfu and Luxor.

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*  
A male was a nice surprise at Sharm el Sheikh sewage ponds.

**Northern Shoveler** *Anas clypeata*  
40 were seen on the River Nile between Edfu and Luxor and several were amongst a flock of Garganey at Suez.

**Garganey** *Anas querquedula*  
A pair was amongst a flock of Northern Shoveler on the River Nile between Edfu and Luxor and a tight flock of 80 was offshore at Suez.

**Common Pochard** *Aythya ferina*  
Five birds were seen from the boat whilst waiting to go through the lock at Esna.

**Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula*  
A female was seen from the boat whilst waiting to go through the Esna lock.

**Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca*  
17 counted from the boat at Aswan had increased to 29 the following day.

### Grebes Podicipedidae

**Little Grebe***Tachybaptus ruficollis*

One was seen at Moses Spring south of Suez and another was seen on our visit to Abassa fish ponds.

**Flamingos Phoenicopteridae****Greater Flamingo***Phoenicopterus roseus*

One was seen in flight over Lake Nasser.

**Storks Ciconidae****Yellow-billed Stork***Mycteria ibis*

Up to 12 birds were found on three dates whilst we were at Lake Nasser. This is the only site in Egypt where they are regularly recorded.

**Black Stork***Ciconia nigra*

One was found on the shore of Lake Nasser and a total of 29 flew north over St Paul's Monastery.

**White Stork***Ciconia ciconia*

This species was recorded on ten days during the tour, with a good flock of 600 seen as we travelled along the cement factory road. However were treated to a most impressive sight at St Paul's Monastery where a flock of c1500 was observed gaining height and then migrating north with a further 1000 recorded during the day. The group was so impressed by this spectacle that they voted this species number two bird of the trip!

**Ibises & Spoonbills Threskiornithidae****Glossy Ibis***Plegadis falcinellus*

16 were counted between Aswan and Kom Ombo, c60 were seen the following day between Kom Ombo and Edfu and 46 flew over the fish ponds at Abassa. Additionally single birds were recorded on two other dates.

**Eurasian Spoonbill***Platalea leucorodia*

One flock of 30 were seen at Lake Nasser on the first visit, with nine there the following day. Four flew over the hotel at Abu Simbel and another was seen on the boat trip out to the Gifton Islands.

**Hérons & Bitterns Ardeidae****Eurasian Bittern***Botaurus stellaris*

One of the great finds of the trip. A bird was flushed from a parched area of Lake Nasser and flew off strongly northwards. A difficult species to see in Africa and an even more amazing record given the habitat it was discovered in. This is needless to say the first time that this species has been recorded on this tour.

**Little Bittern***Ixobrychus minutus*

This skulking species was seen well during our tour. A female was seen between Edfu and Luxor, two males were seen on Crocodile Island and three were found whilst birding at Abassa fish ponds.

**Black-crowned Night Heron***Nycticorax nycticorax*

This worldwide species was recorded on 12 dates with 20 at Aswan and 15 at Crocodile Island being the largest numbers recorded.

**Striated Heron***Butorides striata*

Three were seen on the felucca boat trip at Aswan with single birds daily over the next three days either along the Nile or at Crocodile Island. Two were also seen in the El Gouna area.

**Squacco Heron***Ardeola ralloides*

This species was recorded on 14 dates during the tour with good numbers along the River Nile where 150 were counted between Aswan and Kom Ombo and 100 were counted between Kom Ombo and Edfu.

**Western Cattle Egret***Bubulcus ibis*



Another very common species with records for 15 dates with again the highest counts coming from along the River Nile where 300 counted between Aswan and Kom Ombo and 500 counted between Kom Ombo and Edfu. Additionally 300 counted in the Abassa area.

*NOTE: Clements lumps this species with Eastern Cattle Egret B. coromandus of south and East Asia and Australasia as Cattle Egret Bubulcus ibis.*

**Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea*

Recorded on 11 dates at most wetland sites and along the River Nile. The highest single site count was 30 at Lake Nasser and at Aswan.

**Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea*

Double-figure counts on three dates during the first week the highest being 25 along the River Nile between Edfu and Luxor. One or two on four other dates during the last two weeks of the tour.

**Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta*

Another very common heron with records on 14 dates including 300 between Aswan and Kom Ombo and 100 between Edfu and Luxor.

**Western Reef Egret (-Heron)** *Egretta gularis*

Single birds were seen on the Gifton Islands, at Ras Mohammed National Park and at Suez.

*NOTE: Clements lumps this species with Dimorphic Egret E. dimorpha as Western Reef-Heron E. gularis.*

### Cormorants Phalacrocoracidae

**Great Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax carbo*

One at Lake Nasser, nine at Esna Lock and one near Hurghada were the only ones recorded.

### Ospreys Pandionidae

**Western Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*

At least four birds were seen at Lake Nasser whilst another one flew north over El Gouna Farm. Five were around the Gifton Islands, one flew north over El Gouna golf course and five were around Ras Mohammed NP, including a nest with two chicks.

*NOTE: Clements lumps this species with Eastern Osprey P. cristatus of Australasia as Osprey P. haliaetus.*

### Kites Hawks & Eagles Accipitridae

**European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus*

One bird was picked out of migrating raptors at St. Paul's Monastery but was seen by a leader only as they were trying to get the group onto a migrating Bonelli's Eagle.

**Black-winged (shouldered) Kite** *Elanus caeruleus*

Up to four birds were seen on four consecutive dates as we travelled down the River Nile and at Crocodile Island.

**Black Kite** *Milvus migrans*

This raptor was recorded on 12 days during the trip but numbers were quite low with highs of 40 at Lake Nasser and 50 north over St Paul's Monastery.

**Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus*

Two extremely distant (untickable views!) birds were scoped through heat haze at Lake Nasser. Thankfully eight more gave good views during the migration watch at St Paul's Monastery.

**Short-toed Snake Eagle** *Circaetus gallicus*

A total of 24 were recorded as birds migrated north over St. Paul's Monastery, some of which gave excellent views.

*NOTE: Clements calls this Short-toed Eagle.*

**Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus*

One to three birds were recorded on eight dates but the best count was four females migrating north over El Gouna golf course.

**Montagu's Harrier** *Circus pygargus*

Two females flew north over El Gouna golf course and single unidentified ring-tail harriers either this species or Pallid Harrier were recorded high over Cairo, over El Gouna golf course and south of Ain Sukhna.

**Levant Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter brevipes*

This was one of the trip's big targets but we failed to see one in Egypt. Fortunately a pair performed admirably in Wadi As Sir in Jordan.

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter nisus*

Up to eight were recorded on eight dates during the latter half of the trip from various locations but the largest number was c20 that flew north over El Gouna Farm.

**Common (Eurasian) Buzzard** *Buteo buteo*

The first large group was c60 over Safaga on the way to El Gouna and 110 were counted flying in off the sea at Ras Mohammed NP. By far the largest numbers were at St Paul's Monastery where an estimated 1500 flew north along the ridge there. Up to 75 were recorded on a further eight dates elsewhere in Egypt and Jordan.

**Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus*

Just a single bird was seen at Lake Nasser.

**Lesser Spotted Eagle** *Aquila pomarina*

Four birds were seen with other migrating raptor species at St. Paul's Monastery.

**Steppe Eagle** *Aquila nipalensis*

An estimated 135 of these migrants were seen above St. Paul's Monastery, mostly immature birds.

**Bonelli's Eagle** *Hieraaetus fasciatus*

Two were picked out by one of the leaders during one of the heavier periods of passage at St Paul's Monastery but unfortunately the rest of the group couldn't get on to them. Once again Jordan came good when a pair showed extremely well low overhead in Dana NP.

**Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus*

Three flew north over El Gouna Farm, at least 15 flew north over St Paul's Monastery and one was seen at the start of the cement factory road. Most were pale phased birds.

NOTE: Clements places this species in the genus *Aquila*.

### Caracaras, Falcons Falconidae

**Lesser Kestrel** *Falco naumanni*

Two were seen well from the boat on Lake Nasser, the first time that this species has been recorded on this tour.

**Common (Eurasian) Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus*

Up to six of this species were recorded on 16 dates throughout Egypt and Jordan.

**Lanner Falcon** *Falco biarmicus*

A pair of these birds was seen circling over El Gouna Farm.

**Peregrine Falcon** *Falco peregrinus*

A singleton was seen flying and perched distantly at the Sharm el Sheikh Sewage works.

### Rails, Gallinules & Coots Rallidae

**Water Rail** *Rallus aquaticus*

One performed tremendously well at Moses Spring south of Suez, showing down to ten feet.

**Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla*

Excellent views were obtained of one these elusive skulkers on two consecutive days at Sharm el Sheikh Sewage ponds.

**African Swamphen** *Porphyrio madagascariensis*

Fairly common on the Rive Nile River and around Crocodile Island where birds were seen daily over five dates with a high of 15 seen between Edfu and Luxor.

NOTE: This species is lumped by Clements with Purple Swamphen *P. porphyrio* that enters Africa only in the extreme North-west and is otherwise widespread, as Purple Swamphen *P. porphyrio*.

**Common Moorhen***Gallinula chloropus*

Recorded on seven dates at scattered localities throughout Egypt with a high count of 200 on the River Nile between Edfu and Luxor. 40 were also present at Abassa fish ponds.

**Eurasian Coot***Fulica atra*

Four birds were seen near the lock at Esna.

**Stone-curlews, Thick-knees Burhinidae****Senegal Thick-knee***Burhinus senegalensis*

15 were seen during the boat trip on Lake Nasser, 11 were seen as we travelled along the River Nile towards Kom Ombo and 20 gave great views as we drove into Abassa fish ponds. Additionally one to three were recorded on five other dates including birds heard calling as they flew over Cairo at night.

**Stilts & Avocets Recurvirostridae****Black-winged Stilt***Himantopus himantopus*

The first two were seen on Lake Nasser followed by five between Aswan and Kom Ombo. 12 were found along the River Nile between Edfu and Luxor and six were at Moses Springs south of Suez.

**Plovers Charadriidae****Spur-winged Lapwing****(Plover)***Vanellus spinosus*

A very common wetland species, which was recorded at virtually every wetland on at least 13 dates, with up to 20 a day noted. The highest numbers were around Lake Nasser where 30 plus were seen.

**Grey (Black-bellied) Plover***Pluvialis squatarola*

One was seen distantly on the trip to the Gifton Islands and c130 were counted on the mudflats near Suez at low tide, some of which were already in breeding plumage.

**Common Ringed Plover***Charadrius haiticula*

Ten were recorded at Lake Nasser, three or four were present at Sharm el Sheikh sewage works and 100 were on the shore at Suez.

**Little Ringed Plover***Charadrius dubius*

Two were at Sharm El Sheikh Sewage works on our first visit with one there the following day. These birds are scarce in Egypt.

**Kentish Plover***Charadrius alexandrinus*

18 were found during our visit to Ras Mohammed including one pair with small chicks and six were on the shore at Suez.

NOTE: This species is lumped by Clements Snowy Plover *C. nivosus* of the New World as Snowy Plover *C. alexandrinus*.

**Painted Snipes Rostratulidae****Greater Painted Snipe***Rostratula benghalensis*

We once again enjoyed great views of a pair of these beautiful birds hiding on the edges of the Abassa fish ponds.

**Sandpipers, Snipes Scolopacidae****Common Snipe***Gallinago gallinago*

A single bird was flushed at Moses Springs, south of Suez and two were found at Abassa fish ponds.

**Bar-tailed Godwit***Limosa lapponica*

One was found feeding along the seashore at Suez.

**Whimbrel***Numenius phaeopus*

We managed to locate one of these birds on the Ras Mohammed NP coastline.

**Eurasian Curlew***Numenius arquata*

Two were seen well with the above species on the coast at Ras Mohammed NP.

**Spotted Redshank***Tringa erythropus*

One flew behind the boat whilst on Lake Nasser but most people missed it. Fortunately three were seen by all at the Abassa fish ponds.

**Common Greenshank***Tringa nebularia*

Recorded on seven dates with double-figure counts on three dates at Sharm el Sheikh Sewage works where the highest count was 20. Also seen at Lake Nasser, along the Nile and at Abassa fish ponds.

**Green Sandpiper***Tringa achropus*

A single bird was seen at Sharm el Sheikh Sewage works with two there the following day.

**Wood Sandpiper***Tringa glareola*

Recorded at scattered wetland sites throughout Egypt on seven dates. Excellent views were obtained at Sharm el Sheikh Sewage works where the highest count was eight.

**Common Sandpiper***Actitis hypoleucos*

Birds were recorded on six dates with up to four at Lake Nasser and up to six at Sharm el Sheikh Sewage works.

**Ruddy Turnstone***Arenaria interpres*

A group of five was seen en route to the Gifton Islands and about 20 were feeding along the shoreline at Suez.

**Little Stint***Calidris minuta*

Recorded on six dates during the tour but the only birds during the first half of the trip were 12 at Lake Nasser. Later in the tour birds were seen on five dates with up to 28 at Sharm el Sheikh Sewage works and 120 were counted at Suez.

**Dunlin***Calidris alpina*

One was seen at Sharm el Sheikh Sewage works and 15 were found amongst the waders at Suez.

**Ruff***Philomachus pugnax*

Nine were present briefly on the shore at Suez but flew off before everyone could get on to them. The following day 60 flew over the Abassa fish ponds, whilst several also gave great views on the ground.

**Coursers, Pratincoles Glareolidae****Collared Pratincole***Glareola pratincola*

Five birds were seen well in flight over the golf course at El Gouna by several of the group and the same day another was seen over Sharm el Sheikh Sewage works.

**Black-winged Pratincole***Glareola nordmanni*

One which was seen well in flight over the Abassa fish ponds was a surprise. This is the first time that this species has been recorded on this tour.

**Gulls, Terns, Skimmers Laridae****Slender-billed Gull***Chroicocephalus ichthyaetus*

Nine were along the shoreline at Ras Mohammed NP and about 40 birds were seen near Suez.

**Black-headed Gull***Chroicocephalus ridibundus*

Recorded in small numbers at scattered sites throughout Egypt on seven dates with most on the Nile where 100 were counted between Aswan and Kom Ombo.

**White-eyed Gull***Ichthyaetus leucophthalmus*

100 of this attractive species were seen on the boat trip to the Gifton Islands with smaller numbers in the El Gouna area and off Ras Mohammed NP. Stunning close views were had from the snorkelling boat when birds came into bread. One was also seen offshore at Ain Sukhna.

**Sooty Gull***Ichthyaetus hemprichii*

Around 13 birds were seen at Gifton Island, near Hurghada. Like the above species superb views were had from the boat.

**Armenian Gull** *Larus armenicus*

A second winter bird was scoped distantly from the boat on the way to the Gifton Islands.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus*

A single bird flew over the hotel at Sharm el Sheikh and two were seen at Suez.

**Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica*

Four were seen at Lake Nasser with 20 at Aswan and six there the following day. Later in the trip one was with roosting terns at Suez.

**Caspian Tern** *Hydropogone caspia*

This widespread, large and distinctive bird was seen on three dates with six around the Gifton Islands, one off El Gouna and three at Ras Mohammed NP.

**Swift (Great Crested) Tern** *Thalasseus bergii*

One was seen distantly on the Gifton Islands. A good bird for Egypt and near the edge of the northern limit of its range.

**Lesser Crested Tern** *Thalasseus bengalensis*

Nine birds were seen amongst roosting terns at Suez.

**Sandwich Tern** *Thalasseus sandvicensis*

Five birds seen with other species on the Suez coast.

**Little Tern** *Sternula albifrons*

50 were recorded around the Gifton Islands, three flew over El Gouna golf course and at least 80 were present at Suez.

**Common Tern** *Sterna hirundo*

Over 100 were seen on our boat trip to the Gifton Islands, ten were off El Gouna the following day and five were seen on Ras Mohammed NP. The highest count though was 140 roosting at Suez.

**Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybrida*

An estimated 50 were around Lake Nasser and this was a common bird along the River Nile where we saw birds daily, the highest count being 250 between Aswan and Kom Ombo. Elsewhere a flock of 30 flew north over El Gouna golf course. Many of the birds were in breeding plumage.

**White-winged Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus*

Like the above species this bird was first recorded at Lake Nasser where c150 were present. It too was a common bird along the River Nile with daily records during the cruise including 150 between Aswan and Km Ombo.

### Pigeons, Doves Columbidae

**Common (Rock) Pigeon** *Columba livia*

Commonly seen at scattered localities throughout the trip. Many of the birds seen in the Sinai and in the wilder areas of Jordan were truly wild and pure-bred Rock Pigeons and can be safely ticked by the purist!

**European (Eurasian) Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur*

Small numbers were recorded on five dates during the first half of the trip with a peak count of 15 flying north in little groups along the Lake Nasser shoreline.

**Eurasian Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto*

First recorded at El Gouna, it proved common during the latter half of the tour with sightings on nine dates.

**Laughing Dove** *Streptopelia senegalensis*

Commonly recorded and one of the birds that was seen daily throughout the tour in good numbers.

**Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis*

A very confiding female gave incredible views at El Gouna Farm whilst a flighty male was present at Wadi Feiran.

**Parrots Psittacidae**

**Rose-ringed Parakeet** *Psittacula krameri*  
Up to seven were recorded flying over the Oasis Hotel in Cairo.

**Cuckoos & Coucals Cuculidae**

**Senegal Coucal** *Centropus senegalensis*  
One gave great views at the Abassa fish ponds.

**Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus*  
One was seen just after dawn flying past the hotel in Amman. Unfortunately a leader only bird.

**Owls Strigidae**

**Pharaoh Eagle-Owl** *Bubo ascalaphus*  
Two of the participants had brief but good views of a single bird at Kom Ombo temple but it didn't hang around long and soon flew to an inaccessible area.

**Little Owl** *Athene noctua*  
Three were a pleasant surprise as we left Wadi As Sir in Jordan and they gave excellent close views.

**Nightjars Caprimulgidae**

**Egyptian Nightjar** *Caprimulgus aegyptius*  
A single bird was seen by all near the airport bay at Abu Simbel as dusk was fast descending.

**Swifts Apodidae**

**Alpine Swift** *Tachymarptis melba*  
One of these very powerful flyers was watched by one tour participant and a leader as it flew down the gorge in the Dana Reserve in Jordan. A new species for this tour.

**Pallid Swift** *Apus pallidus*  
Up to 30 were recorded on nine dates both in Egypt and Jordan, mainly in towns.

**Kingfishers Alcedinidae**

**Common Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis*  
One was seen at El Gouna and another showed well for all the same day at Hurghada whilst another also showed well at Abassa fish ponds.

**White-throated Kingfisher** *Halcyon smyrnensis*  
One was a regular sighting in the grounds of the Iberotel in Cairo at the start of the tour. Later in the tour three were around Abassa and one was seen along a canal in Cairo. In Jordan three were in Wadi As Sir.

**Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis*  
These noisy birds were seen on 11 dates and in particularly good numbers along the River Nile where up to 15 a day were recorded.

**Bee-eaters Meropidae**

**Green Bee-eater** *Merops orientalis*  
Small numbers of these colourful birds were seen on six dates at scattered sites throughout Egypt. The highest count, of eight was at Crocodile Island, with six there the following day.

**Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** *Merops persicus*  
Best views were had at Abassa where six were seen on wires but the highest count came from El Gouna golf course where a total of 19 were recorded. Birds were seen at other localities six other dates including eight at Crocodile Island.

**European Bee-eater***Merops apiaster*

This is a beautiful species and we were fortunate to see several parties. 17 flew north over Aswan, 20 flew north along the River Nile north of Aswan and the following day six flew north over Kom Ombo. Later in the trip four were over Wadi Feiran, 28 were disturbed from roost at St Katherine's Monastery (leader only) and 14 flew north over St Paul's Monastery.

**Hoopoes Upupidae****Eurasian Hoopoe***Upupa epops*

Always a favourite on tour small numbers (up to seven a day) were seen on 14 dates in both Egypt and Jordan. Birds were often very confiding allowing prolonged close views.

*NOTE: Clements only recognises two species of Hoopoe; Eurasian U. epops and Madagascar U. marginata. One further species is widely recognised namely African U. africana, a sub-Saharan resident.*

**Woodpeckers Picidae****Eurasian Wryneck***Jynx torquilla*

One was seen very well by most clients in the garden of Iberotel in Cairo before the official start of the tour and another was seen by some of the party in Wadi Feiran.

**Syrian Woodpecker***Dendrocopos syriacus*

We had an excellent look at four birds in the Wadi As Sir on the first morning in Jordan.

**Shrikes Laniidae****Woodchat Shrike***Lanius senator*

One or two were seen on six dates mainly in Egypt but with two in Wadi As Sir in Jordan.

**Masked Shrike***Lanius nubicus*

Single birds were recorded on seven dates but three were present on Crocodile Island. One in the garden of the Iberotel in Cairo was particularly obliging.

**Figbirds, Orioles Oriolidae****Eurasian Golden Oriole***Oriolus oriolus*

A male was seen briefly in flight at our lunch stop as we travelled north from St Katherine's towards Suez.

**Crows, Jays Corvidae****Eurasian Jay***Garrulus glandarius*

Ten of these birds were around Wadi As Sir near Amman, where they showed well.

**House Crow***Corvus splendens*

Only recorded in the Suez area where we logged up to 50 on two dates.

**Hooded Crow***Corvus cornix*

Commonly seen throughout Egypt and Jordan with log entries for 12 dates. Despite being a common bird this is a very striking corvid.

**Brown-necked Raven***Corvus ruficollis*

Quite regularly encountered at scattered sites throughout Egypt with log entries on nine dates, mainly in dry, rocky areas. The highest count was ten as we travelled from Luxor to El Gouna.

**Fan-tailed Raven***Corvus rhipidurus*

Around 6 birds were seen during our visit to the ancient city of Petra.

**Tits & Chickadees Paridae****Great Tit***Parus major*

Two birds showed well in the gardens and trees of Wadi As Sir.

**Larks Alaudidae****Greater Hoopoe-Lark***Alaemon alaudipes*

Four of these wonderful larks, with a call reminiscent of a young boy learning to whistle, were seen between Ain Sukhna and St Paul's Monastery where great views were obtained.

**Desert Lark***Ammomanes deserti*

We saw our first bird in the town of St Katherine and the following day two birds were seen well near St. Katherine's Monastery. Three were seen along the cement factory road and one was seen in the Dana Reserve in Jordan.

**Greater Short-toed Lark***Calandrella brachydactyla*

A flock of 21 was present on two dates on the shore of Lake Nasser.

**Crested Lark***Galerida cristata*

This is the common lark in Egypt and up to 20 were recorded on nine days during the tour, the largest numbers being seen in the Abu Simbel area.

**Bulbuls Pycnonotidae****White-spectacled Bulbul***Pycnonotus xanthopygos*

Ten were seen at Wadi Feiran on both our visits and a couple were in the grounds of St Katherine's Monastery. Up to ten were also seen on our two days in Jordan, mainly in Wadi As Sir.

**Common Bulbul***Pycnonotus barbatus*

Seen quite commonly at scattered sites throughout Egypt with records of up to 20 on nine dates.

**Swallows, Martins Hirundinidae****Sand Martin (Bank Swallow)***Riparia riparia*

Small numbers were seen at several sites on eight dates but the only notable count was 200 attending nests at Abassa fish ponds.

**Barn Swallow***Hirundo rustica*

Recorded commonly on every day of the tour. The Egyptian race *H.r. savignii* which are a deep rusty reddish colour were seen on several occasions at scattered sites.

**Eurasian Crag Martin***Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

One flew over St Katherine's town (leader only) then up to ten were seen in the Dana Reserve and at Petra in Jordan.

**Rock Martin***Ptyonoprogne fuligula*

Regularly seen throughout Egypt with up to 20 on ten dates, the largest numbers being found around Lake Nasser.

**Common House Martin***Delichon urbica*

Up to 15 recorded on 12 dates at scattered sites throughout Egypt but just two seen in Jordan at Petra.

**Red-rumped Swallow***Hirundo daurica*

One to four birds seen on seven dates throughout Egypt but the largest number recorded on the tour was in Jordan where two were in Wadi As Sir and four were opposite our hotel in Petra.

**Leaf Warblers & Allies Phylloscopidae****Cetti's Warbler***Cettia cetti*

One bird showed very well in Wadi As Sir, Jordan and became the first sight record of this species which had previously only been heard on this tour.

**Willow Warbler***Phylloscopus trochilus*

One was seen in the garden of the hotel at Ain Sukhna on two dates.

**Common Chiffchaff***Phylloscopus collybita*

Six were found in the grounds of Ramses 11 temple, then later in the tour one or two were seen on five dates at El Gouna and Wadi Feiran amongst other places.



**Eastern Bonelli's Warbler***Phylloscopus bonelli*

Three were seen on the tour with the first found as we left the hotel in Abu Simbel. Another was in the grounds of St Katherine's Monastery and the third was a leader only bird in the grounds of our hotel at Ain Sukhna.

**Wood Warbler***Phylloscopus sibilatrix*

Two were seen on our first visit to Wadi Feiran with three there the following day. The grounds of the hotel at Ain Sukhna produced about ten for one member of the tour who opted to stay at the hotel although only one remained the following day. The final bird was seen in the Dana Reserve in Jordan.

**Reed Warblers & Allies Acrocephalidae****Clamorous Reed Warbler***Acrocephalus stentoreus*

This large, vocal warbler was first heard at Aswan where we eventually saw five. More birds were heard singing as we floated down the River Nile and up to four were seen at Crocodile Island. At least ten were around the Abassa fish ponds where one provided exceptional views.

**Sedge Warbler***Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*

Only seen at Crocodile Island where up to two were seen on our walks around the island.

**Eurasian Reed Warbler***Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Six were found on our first walk round Crocodile Island with four there the following day. Two were also seen at Abassa fish ponds.

**Eastern Olivaceous Warbler***Hippolais pallida*

A common species seen at scattered localities throughout Egypt and Jordan, especially during the first week of the tour when up to six were seen daily and more were heard singing. Later in the tour six were found in Wadi As Sir.

**Savi's Warbler***Locustella luscinioides*

One which we found in a small reedbed at Sharm-el Sheikh sewage works was a bit of a surprise and was the first record of this species for the tour.

**Cisticolas & Allies Cisticolidae****Zitting Cisticola***Cisticola juncidis*

The first was heard as we floated north towards Luxor and four were seen on both our walks round Crocodile Island. Others were heard singing at Abassa fish ponds.

**Graceful Prinia***Prinia gracilis*

Commonly seen at wetland sites throughout Egypt. Large numbers at our Abu Simbel hotel and two were seen in Wadi As Sir in Jordan.

**Sylviid Babblers Sylviidae****Eurasian Blackcap***Sylvia atricapilla*

Single birds were seen on four dates during the latter part of our stay in Egypt with more found in Jordan including six in Wadi As Sir and two at Petra.

*NOTE: Clements just calls this Blackcap.*

**Lesser Whitethroat***Sylvia curruca*

This is a very common warbler in the region and small numbers (up to five) were seen on 14 days during the tour, at most sites with some trees or shrubs. The largest numbers were around St. Katherine's Monastery where about 15 were present in the gardens. Birds could be heard calling most days.

**Common (Greater) Whitethroat***Sylvia communis*

Unlike its cousin this species was very scarce with a single bird in the garden of the Iberotel in Cairo and another seen at El Gouna Farm.

**Sardinian Warbler***Sylvia melanocephala*

A female was seen in the wadi opposite our hotel in Petra and the following morning two males were coaxed into view in the same wadi. This species is normally very skulking so we did well to get the views we did.

**Rüppell's Warbler***Sylvia rueppelli*

A singing male showed superbly during our lunch stop in the desert as we relocated from St. Katherine's to Suez. Amazingly it never made it into the top ten!

**Starlings Sturnidae****Tristram's Starling***Onychognathus tristramii*

Three were seen at St. Katherine's Monastery and at least ten were in the Dana Reserve in Jordan.

**Thrushes Turdidae****Common (Eurasian) Blackbird***Turdus merula*

Single birds were seen in the grounds of the Oasis Hotel in Cairo but this species was far more common in Jordan with c20 in Wadi As Sir. Four were also seen in Petra.

**Chats, Old World Flycatchers Muscicapidae****Thrush Nightingale***Luscinia luscinia*

We enjoyed excellent views of a bird in Wadi Feiran.

**Common Nightingale***Luscinia megarhynchos*

Up to two birds were found in the garden of the Iberotel hotel in Cairo where we had excellent views of this often skulking species. Two were also found at El Gouna and single birds were seen on both visits to Wadi Feiran. Finally two were seen along the cement works road.

**Rufous-tailed Scrub-Robin***Erythropygia galactotes*

One was seen very well at Lake Nasser and another was seen more briefly in gardens at the entrance to the Sakkara Pyramid.

**Common Redstart***Phoenicurus phoenicurus*

The first was a leader only bird (a male) in the garden of the hotel at Ain Sukhna but the same day another male was found in the wadi through which the cement works road runs, the latter giving nice views. Another male was seen as we travelled south towards the Dana Reserve in Jordan. This species was surprisingly scarce during the tour as was the next species.

**Whinchat***Saxicola rubetra*

The first were seen on the same day at Ras Mohammed NP and Sharm el Sheikh Sewage works. A male was at St Paul's Monastery and another male was seen in the grounds of the hotel at Ain Sukhna (leader only).

**Northern Wheatear***Oenanthe oenanthe*

By far the highest numbers were seen at Lake Nasser where 60 were counted on our first visit with 40 still present the following day. Small numbers were seen on seven other dates towards the end of our time in Egypt including ten on El Gouna golf course.

**Black-eared Wheatear***Oenanthe hispanica*

We recorded this species on seven dates during the tour and saw several stunning males. At least ten were present around Airport Bay at Lake Nasser otherwise one to three were recorded. The only bird in Jordan was a female in Wadi AS Sir.

**Mourning Wheatear***Oenanthe lugens*

A male, seen well at the end of the cement factory road was the only one seen in Egypt but a male was seen at the Dana Reserve and two males were found in the Petra ruins.

*NOTE: This extremely variable complex with an extensive range and many distinctive isolated populations is a perfect candidate for multi-splitting. This was the O.I. lugens race*

**Hooded Wheatear***Oenanthe monacha*

A male showed very well along the cement factory road where it was observed chasing after flies in the very distinct manner of this species.

**White-crowned (White-tailed) Wheatear***Oenanthe leucopyga*

This species was common around Abu Simbel where we recorded up to eight over four days and we had six more as we travelled through the desert on the Sinai Peninsula.

**Blackstart***Cercomela melanura*

Three birds were seen very well on our first visit to Wadi Feiran with one there the following day.

**Blue Rock Thrush***Monticola solitarius*

A male was seen briefly by one of the leaders but flew behind a large rock face before any of the group could get onto it.

**Spotted Flycatcher***Muscicapa striata*

Another species that was amazingly scarce, we found just one bird during the whole trip, in the wadi opposite our hotel in Petra and that was a leader only bird.

**European Pied Flycatcher***Ficedula hypoleuca*

Two, including a stunning male were seen well in the garden at the St. Katherine's Monastery.

**Collared Flycatcher***Ficedula albicollis*

One was seen on two dates at the rear of our hotel in St Katherine's with two the same day at Wadi Feiran and the following day another was found in the gardens at St Katherine's Monastery. Another was found along the cement factory road. All birds were males in breeding plumage.

**Semi-collared Flycatcher***Ficedula semitorquata*

A very instructive first summer male was present for two days before the official start of the tour in the garden at the Iberotel in Cairo and the bird was seen by several tour participants.

**Sunbirds Nectarinidae****Nile Valley Sunbird***Hedydipna metallica*

Up to three birds were seen at various sites such as the Temple of Philae over three days as we travelled along the River Nile but as usual Crocodile Island seemed to be over run with these beautiful birds as we found at least 20 there with ease. This bird was voted bird of the trip by quite a margin.

**Palestine Sunbird***Cinnyris osea*

We failed to find this bird in Wadi Feiran but fortunately they are quite common in Jordan and we had great views in Wadi As Sir where we found about five and at Petra where we saw two. When seen in good sunlight these apparently all dark birds are surprisingly colourful.

**Old World Sparrows Passeridae****House Sparrow***Passer domesticus*

Common and seen daily throughout the tour.

**Streaked Weaver***Ploceus manyar*

Two males were found with fresh nests amongst the reeds at the Abassa fish ponds.

**Wagtails & Pipits Motacillidae****Western Yellow Wagtail***Motacilla flava*

Good numbers were seen on 12 dates during our tour through Egypt, except in the Cairo area. The highest counts were up to 50 on El Gouna golf course, 40 at Sharm el Sheikh Sewage works and 35 in the grounds of the hotel at Ain Sukhna. The attractive and distinctive black-headed *M. f. feldeggi* was frequently recorded during our tour.

NOTE: Clements just calls this bird Yellow Wagtail.

**White Wagtail***Motacilla alba*

This species was seen quite frequently during the tour with records for nine dates although there was no count higher than six.

**African Pied Wagtail***Motacilla aguimp*

Two birds were seen at Ramses 11 temple and four more were seen from our boat as we toured Lake Nasser, here at their most northerly distribution.

**Tawny Pipit***Anthus campestris*

This large pale pipit was found in good numbers at Lake Nasser where 25 were seen on our first visit to Airport Bay with ten still present the following day. Four were also seen at the Hoopoe-lark site south of Ain Sukhna.

**Tree Pipit***Anthus trivialis*

One to three were recorded on six dates at Crocodile Island, El Gouna, Wadi Feiran but there was a fall whilst we were at Ain Sukhna which produced 20+ in the hotel gardens.

**Red-throated Pipit***Anthus cervinus*

This species was recorded on nine dates and as with Yellow Wagtail the favoured locations were El Gouna and Sharm el Sheikh Sewage works. The highest daily count was 50 and some of the birds were already in bright summer plumage.

**Finches Fringillidae****European Greenfinch***Carduelis chloris*

A fine singing male was found at the Petra visitor centre on the final day of the tour. An easy bird to miss on this tour.

**European Goldfinch***Carduelis carduelis*

Single birds were recorded on consecutive days in the grounds of the Oasis hotel in Cairo.

**Common Linnet***Carduelis cannabina*

A total of about six was seen as we travelled towards Petra including four in Wadi As Sir and a pair in the Dana Reserve.

**Trumpeter Finch***Rhodopechys githaginea*

Four were seen at very close quarters at the usual stakeout in the Valley of Kings.

**Sinai (Pale) Rosefinch***Carpodacus synoicus*

Three female birds were seen well near the monastery at St. Katherine and a flyover male was a leader only bird at Petra, Jordan.

**Buntings & Allies Emberizidae****Ortolan Bunting***Emberiza hortulana*

About eight were seen as we travelled through Jordan on the way to Petra split between Wadi As Sir and the Dana Reserve.

**Cretzschmar's Bunting***Miliaria caesia*

A singing male was enjoyed in Wadi As Sir, Jordan.

**Striolated Bunting***Emberiza striolata*

One was a very good find at St. Katherine's Monastery, a new bird for the tour.

**Annotated List of Mammals recorded**

Note: Names and taxonomical order of the land mammals follow that of "The Kingdon Field Guide to African Mammals"; additional names are given in parenthesis and are likely to appear in other popular field guides.

**Total species recorded: 2**

**Dogs & Allies Canidae****Red Fox***Vulpes vulpes*

One was seen very well at El Gouna and another was seen as we travelled back into Sharm el Sheikh from the sewage works.

**Brown Rat***Rattus norvegicus*

Four were seen on Crocodile Island.

### Annotated List of Butterflies

Butterflies: Tolman T and Lewington R. 2008. Collins Butterfly Guide. Collins. The most complete guide to the butterflies of Britain and Europe. Note this guide doesn't cover Egypt but other papers have been consulted.

The following species were identified during the tour:

<b>Swallowtail</b>	<i>Papilio machaon</i>
<b>African Migrant</b>	<i>Oporia crataegi</i>
<b>Large White</b>	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>
<b>Greenish Blacktip</b>	<i>Elphinstonia charlonia</i>
<b>Plain Tiger</b>	<i>Danaus chrysippus</i>
<b>Painted Lady</b>	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>
<b>Marbled White</b>	<i>Melanargia galathea</i>

### Annotated List of Dragonflies

Dragonflies. Dijkstra K-D. B. and Lewington R. Field Guide to the Dragonflies of Britain and Europe. British Wildlife Publishing. Note this guide does not cover Egypt but most identified species were photographed.

The following species were identified during the tour:

<b>Common Bluetail</b>	<i>Ischnura elegans</i>
<b>Blue Emperor</b>	<i>Anax imperator</i>
<b>Lesser Emperor</b>	<i>Anax parthenope</i>
<b>Long Skimmer</b>	<i>Orthetrum trinacria</i>
<b>Slender Skimmer</b>	<i>Orthetrum sabina</i>
<b>Desert Darter</b>	<i>Sympetrum sinaiticum</i>
<b>Broad Scarlet</b>	<i>Crocothemis erythraea</i>
<b>Violet Dropwing</b>	<i>Trithemis annulata</i>
<b>Red-veined Dropwing</b>	<i>Trithemis arteriosa</i>
<b>Banded Groundling</b>	<i>Brachythemis leucosticta</i>

Finally, and I suspect unusually for a tour report, we finish with a poem written by two of the tour participants Ross and Jeanne Burkhardt, which touches on many of the aspects of our Egypt and Petra adventure.

#### Ten Intrepid Kiwis, or “Pharaohs, Queens & Rockjumper Scenes”

Here's a brief synopsis (in the form of a poem)  
Before we all head out for Petra, or for home.

From Aswan to Luxor, from Sharm to Giza,  
These Egyptian birds were sure to please ya.

Cairo: what an amazing, busy city -  
Rushing traffic, smog that's almost gritty.

And now Egypt's history - thanks to Abdullah -  
Is less of a mystery. Shookran! W'ullah!

Mark, our Kiwi King, clearly knew the ropes;

He really delivered on our birding hopes.

Our Number Two Guide also was tops -  
Rockjumper Rainer in his blue flip-flops.

Susan H., trying to return home to France,  
Had to learn the steps of the volcanic ash dance.

She came to Egypt with her husband, Bill;  
Each lifer bird tick gave him a thrill.

Jerie - from Canada - so gentle and quiet -  
Enjoyed Happy Hour on a mostly wine diet.

Husband Peter entertained us all, by chance,  
When he displayed the famous Lake Nasser snake dance.

The veteran Jersey birders, Karen and Susan,  
Found ample time for their souvenir choosin'.

Toting her scope, Elizabeth (of the glove)  
Snorkeled the reef - 'twas amazing from above.

Peter - now Ptah- earned his new nickname  
With his statue request of Karnak fame.

And who became the happy Birthday Queen  
With her smile on the Nile? Why, my sweet Jeanne.

Yours truly tried out this Arabic phrase:  
"Barra-ka-low-feek!" - it never ceased to amaze.

Red Sea snorkel, green palm fronds,  
White-throated kingfisher, sewage ponds.

King Tut treasures, Ramses the Two,  
Movenpick, Stella, coughing (ah-choo!)

Mosques, minarets, numerous photo ops,  
Bins, "Bags out!" and the many tourist cops

Endless buffet dinners, "Bird of the Trip,"  
Doing the log each night, the Nile by ship.

Yes, ten intrepid Kiwis and their guides had fun,  
And now the Birds and Antiquities jaunt is done.

*Ross & Jeanne Burkhardt  
Sakara, Egypt  
April 19, 2010*

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**Photo credits:** Hieroglyphics of birds by M. Lilje, Blue-cheeked Bee-eater and Masked Shrike by M. Beevers, Nile Valley Sunbird by M. Lilje, Little Green Bee-eater, Blackstart and Trumpeter Finch by M. Beevers, White-eyed Gull by M. Lilje, Baillon's Crake and Ruppell's Warbler by M. Beevers, Eurasian Hoopoe by M. Beevers, Greater Hoopoe-Lark by Werner Suter, Palestinian Sunbird and Little Owl by M. Beevers.

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