

# First confirmed breeding record of Spur-winged Lapwing *Vanellus spinosus* for Lebanon, 2006

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In the Middle East, the Spur-winged Lapwing *Vanellus spinosus* breeds in Syria (Kumerloeve 1962, 1967–69, Baumgart *et al* 1995), Cyprus (Flint & Stewart 1992, Stattersfield & Capper 2000), Turkey (Burfield & van Bommel 2004), Jordan (Andrews 1995, Shirihai *et al* 1999), Egypt (Goodman & Meininger 1989), Iraq (Allouse 1953), Saudi Arabia (Jennings 1981), Israel (Shirihai 1996, Shirihai *et al* 1999) and Yemen (Porter *et al* 1996) and is a vagrant to Kuwait (Gregory 2005), United Arab Emirates (Balmer & Betton 2004) and Oman (Eriksen *et al* 2003), and a scarce and irregular winter visitor to Iran (Scott & Adhami 2006).

In Lebanon, this species was once considered a vagrant (Cramp & Simmons 1983), an extremely rare passage migrant (Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi 1999), a rare passage migrant at Palm islands nature reserve (Figure 1, Ramadan-Jaradi & Ramadan-Jaradi 2001), but more recently (2003–4) was classed as a relatively common species (Ramadan-Jaradi *et al* 2005), during which period records strongly suggested breeding in summer, especially at: Aammiq, where a shot juvenile was seen hanging on the strands of a hunter's belt, 14 June 2003 (Ramadan-Jaradi *et al* 2005); on the Tyre Coast where the species was recorded May–July (GR-J), and at Cheikh Zennad where it was recorded March–June (GR-J, TB) and August (TB). Two birds chased two Hooded Crows *Corvus cornix* at the latter site on 26 May 1996 (TB).

A group of seven was at Aammiq on 24 April 1999, where display and attempted copulation was seen (Karin Boisclair-Joly in Richard Prior pers comm). Also: a pair was apparently holding territory at Aammiq in late March 2004 (Richard Prior pers comm), a pair was calling agitatedly and did not leave, SW lake Qaraoun 15 July 2005 (Colin Conroy & Richard Prior pers comm), and a pair was apparently incubating in a potato field alongside the seasonal ponds at Tel al Akhdar, north of Aammiq, 23 April–9 May 2006 (Richard Prior pers comm), unfortunately one of the pair was shot.

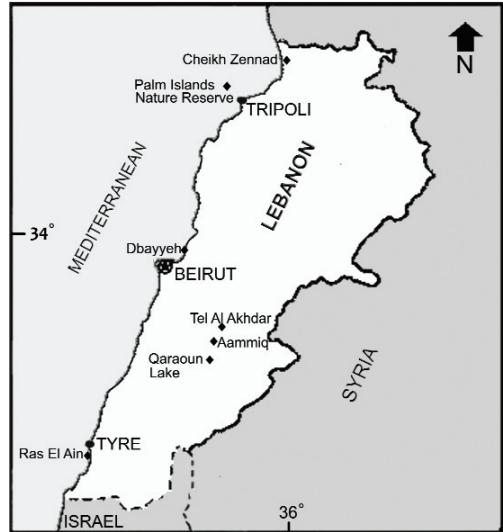


Figure 1. Map of Lebanon showing location of sites mentioned in the text.



Plate 1. Nest of Spur-winged Lapwing *Vanellus spinosus* at Ras el Ain in the Tyre Coast nature reserve, May 2006. © Farhat Farhat.

On 6 May 2006, two pairs of this unmistakable lapwing species were present at the organic farm of Ras el Ain in the Tyre Coast nature reserve. Ras el Ain has historic artesian wells and freshwater streams flow into the nearby sea. On 18 May, the Spur-winged Lapwings were not seen until immediately before sunset when one ran away in a crouched posture between cultivated legumes, suggesting a nest was nearby. Due to the encroaching darkness, we decided not to disturb the bird. On 22 May, GR-J received a telephone call from Dr Farhat Farhat, a non-birdwatcher who manages the organic farm. He had found and photographed, with his mobile phone, a nest containing a clutch of four eggs (Plate 1). On 30 May, from a nearby army tower, GR-J observed the nest whilst one of the parents was incubating the eggs. On 17 June, the nest contained one unhatched egg and sufficient shell fragments to suggest three chicks had hatched; meanwhile, a parent bird was feeding near a watercourse less than 100 m from us, most probably accompanied by chicks. All our attempts to find the second pair during this period failed. More recently, Spur-winged Lapwings were repeatedly reported frequenting the waterbody at Dbayyeh during summer 2007 (Shady Indary as reported to Birdtalklebanon@yahoo.com). TB visited the area on 1 September 2007 and photographed five birds there. All records of this species in Lebanon are within the period mid-February and late October, indicating that the Spur-winged Lapwing is a summer breeding visitor there.

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