

REVIEWS

Cyprus Bird Report 2007

BirdLife Cyprus. 2008.

Softback. 170 pages, colour photos, line drawings, graphs and tables.

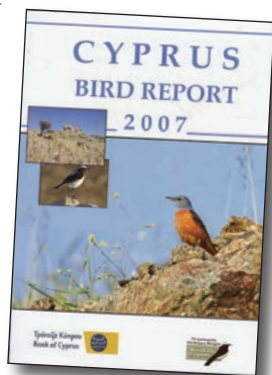
£15

Available from OSME sales

A total of 261 species was recorded in 2007, quite a reduction on the 288 and 290 in 2006 and 2005 respectively, but due in no small part to the extensive drought in recent years. The long-term decline in winter and spring rainfall is of real concern for the future of wetland habitats in Cyprus.

Some 33 500 records were submitted and 75 rare bird sightings were reported, of which c50% were accepted. Amongst the highlights were the first records of Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus*, Dunn's Lark *Eremalauda dunni*, Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*, Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba yarellii* and Mountain Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus lorenzii*—all of which are reported in detail. These five were all discovered in the space of five weeks, between 13 March and 21 April, and the Bateleur record was also the first of the species in Europe. Another significant record was the first uncaged Rock Sparrow *Petronia petronia*—despite that this species is widespread and common just 150 km to the north in Turkey. Also of note were the second records of Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica* and Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus*, the fourth and fifth records of Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*, and the seventh record of Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*.

This is an impressive report, using many graphs and tables to illustrate seasonal movements, whilst an excellent selection of line drawings and colour photographs illustrate some of the less-common visitors.



A ringing report summarises the most significant movements recorded including a Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*, which became the first Cyprus-ringed bird to be found in the Central African Republic. Sadly, having made a journey of 3500 km it was prepared as a special meal for a Polish missionary!

Keith Betton

Where to Watch Birds in Northern Cyprus

Steve Cale

Privately published. 2008.

Softback. 92 pages, 22 maps.

£15.99

Available www.steve-cale-artist.co.uk

Steve Cale is a talented illustrator and an experienced bird guide. He has visited northern Cyprus many times, mostly leading bird groups, and is very familiar with its birdlife. After the beautiful frontispiece of a Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius*, he continues with a historical summary of divided Cyprus, where to stay, driving tips and climate, before the 'meaty' bits, the top birding sites. Twenty-two areas are detailed with the help of hand-drawn maps, placed at the back of the book and which fold out to double size. Familiar to many, he lists the Karpas peninsula as his favourite place and every location there is described in detail. There are dozens of photographs and paintings of all the interesting species by the author. One of the nicest illustrations is the White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis* . . . if only the rarities committee received field sketches of this quality! There is a summary of other wildlife, including orchids, reptiles and butterflies. All sites are shown using their Turkish name, and Steve acknowledges BirdLife Cyprus by using the official country checklist and requests that all



bird sightings are sent to the Recorder. The book is richly adorned with photographs and sketches, and is thoroughly recommended to anyone visiting northern Cyprus.

Colin Richardson

Shorebirds of the Northern Hemisphere

Richard Chandler

Christopher Helm/A & C Black. 2009.

Softback. 448 pages, 850 colour photographs, many colour maps.

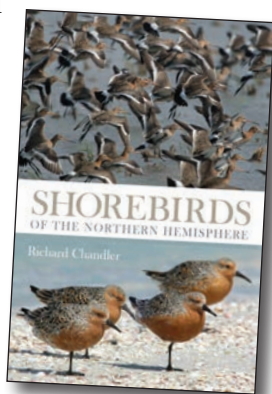
£29.99

ISBN 978-1-4081-0790-4

In 1989 Richard Chandler published an excellent little photographic guide, *North Atlantic shorebirds*. That book has now evolved and been further developed to cover 134 species occurring in the 'Northern Hemisphere', although the definition of the region used here excludes

northern South America and much of Africa south of the northern edge of the Sahara. Thus several species with ranges extending into the 'real' Northern Hemisphere, for example Spot-breasted Plover *Vanellus melanocephalus*, Crowned Lapwing *V. coronatus* and others, are excluded.

The introduction, illustrated with a selection of appropriate photographs, includes a discussion of plumages and moults, and various aspects of shorebird behaviour. Single-page family introductions are followed by individual species accounts. Each account has a number of generally excellent photographs, varying from one for Jerdon's Courser *Rhinoptilus bitorquatus* to 22 in the case of Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*. Where possible, with polytypic species, at least one photograph of each distinct subspecies is included. The majority of photographs are the author's own work, and most are new to me, but a significant number are the product of other photographers and include some that have



appeared elsewhere. Each image's caption points out useful notes concerning ageing, moult or identification.

The accompanying text concentrates on identification and ageing, whilst calls but oddly not song are also briefly discussed. Other sections cover 'status', 'habitat and distribution', 'racial variation', 'similar species' and 'references'. The emphasis on those subspecies identifiable in the field is a particularly valuable aspect of the book. In general the text seems accurate and references the most up-to-date developments in identification.

The distribution maps appear to be largely derived from those published in *Shorebirds* by Hayman *et al* (1986), and include some minor errors. For example, neither Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* nor Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* is mapped for the coasts of the Oman and Yemen, where both species are readily encountered during winter.

When asked to review this publication, I wondered about the need for another photographic guide to shorebirds. Two similar publications were recently published covering North American species, which of course overlap significantly in scope with this publication. There isn't a great deal to choose between them, but the increased scope of this publication offers something different. This is a useful collection of shorebird photographs from one of the world's finest bird photographers, and I'm sure many will find it a valuable purchase.

Chris Bradshaw

Birds of the Horn of Africa

Nigel Redman, Terry Stevenson &

John Fanshawe, illustrated by John Gale & Brian Small

Christopher Helm/A & C Black. 2009.

Softback. 496 pages, 213 colour plates, many colour maps.

£29.99

ISBN 978-0-7136-6541-3

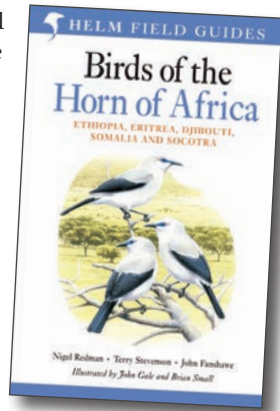
This one-stop field guide usefully covers Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia and, of particular relevance to OSME members, Yemen's Socotra archipelago. It will certainly serve you well on a trip to any of these countries (although the guide to take to Socotra remains Helm's *Field guide to the birds of the Middle East*

by Porter *et al*) and would otherwise be recommended for its biogeographical interest alone. As usual, the giant Sudan misses the cut (will the publishers please note).

A standard layout is used, with maps and text opposite the plates, and traditionalists will

be pleased with the order, which commences with Ostrich *Struthio camelus* and terminates in buntings. Taxonomy and nomenclature follow the African Bird Club checklist (available at www.africanbirdclub.org), but the guide additionally treats a number of forms either as full or as 'incipient' species, including the following endemic to Socotra, Socotra Buzzard *Buteo* sp, Socotra Scops Owl *Otus socotranus*, Socotra Golden-winged Grosbeak *Rhynchostruthus socotranus* and Abd al Kuri Sparrow *Passer hemileucus*, all making their premier appearances, whereas from elsewhere Degodi Lark *Mirafra degodiensis* has 'bitten the dust' along with the short-lived Bulo Burti Bush-shrike *Laniarius liberatus*.

Over 1000 species are depicted, with over 2600 illustrations on the 213 plates. The illustrations are of the usual high standard, although, for example, some of the swifts look rather well fed, the head and bill of most of the crows appear too small and in the field, to my eyes, female Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark *Eremopterix nigriceps* never looks like the bird depicted here. Even so, these minor points should not hinder making correct identifications. Whilst the illustrations themselves can rarely be faulted, why the predominantly winter-visiting 'large white-headed gulls' (Lesser Black-backed *Larus fuscus*, Heuglin's *L. heuglini* and Caspian *L. cachinnans*) should be shown in summer but not winter plumage must be an oversight.



The species accounts follow sections on 'how to use this book'; 'bird identification'; a lengthy glossary; geography, climate and habitats; Important Bird Areas and organisations (mainly conservation NGOs) and their respective websites. Each species account is necessarily concise, some of necessity longer than others, and present key identification features and calls, as well as notes on habitat and, where appropriate, altitudinal range. The font size used may be too small or print too faint for some to read the text with ease. (Brave would be a publisher to pare down treatment of widespread species, such as many waders, to allow greater space for 'other' species, or even to reduce a guide's weight: not that this is an especially heavy one). Alternative common names are given, and indexed, whilst unusually for a field guide the status of threatened species is also noted. Subspecies occurring are described and usually also illustrated (the *capensis* Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* shown in flight is missing its wingbar).

The maps show clearly in colour various categories from resident or visiting breeder to migrant/winter visitor (differentiating common from sparser occurrence), as well as mapping the occurrence of vagrants. The text adds further distributional information and occurrence details as necessary.

Whilst neither long-awaited nor anticipated, this splendid new guide fills an erstwhile void, even if certain of the countries concerned remain at times volatile or out of bounds to foreigners (not Socotra though), whilst remembering it is still seemingly best not to try to arrive anywhere here by boat. With that proviso, you should definitely buy this guide, even if only for some carbon-saving armchair ornithology.

Simon Aspinall

Note: This field guide is a very useful complement to *Birds of Ethiopia & Eritrea* by John Ash & John Atkins, also recently published by A & C Black.