

# AROUND THE REGION

Dawn Balmer & David Murdoch (compilers)

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Records and photographs for *Sandgrouse* 32 (1) should be sent by 15 December to atr@osme.org.

## BAHRAIN

The 5th **Sooty Gull** *Larus hemprichii* for Bahrain, an immature, was at the Novatel area on 26 Feb. Two **Pied Kingfishers** *Ceryle rudis* were at Adharri on 31 Jan and there was a peak of c50 **Hypocoliuses** *Hypocolius ampe-linus* on 26 Dec 2008. The first **Bimaculated Lark** *Melanocorypha bimaculata* since 1997 was at Hamalah on 14 Mar and a **Dark-throated Thrush** *Turdus atrogularis* was at Adharri on 31 Jan. Burri produced a couple of excellent sightings on 31 Jan with two, possibly three, **Common Chaffinches** *Fringilla coelebs* which was the 8th record and eight, possibly 10, **Common Linnets** *Carduelis cannabina* which was the 3rd accepted country record.

## CYPRUS

An exceptional count of 22 **Ruddy Shelducks** *Tadorna ferruginea* flew over Larnaca airport pools (south) on 3 Jan. Three **White-headed Ducks** *Oxyura leucocephala* were at Haspolat water treatment plant, Nicosia, on 10 Jan and one was at Larnaca sewage works until 3 Jan (from 13 Dec 2008). On 10 Jan there were 29 **Ferruginous Ducks** *Aythya nyroca* at Haspolat which was a high count. A **Red-breasted Merganser** *Mergus serrator* was seen at the mouth of the Potamos Liopetri, west of Agia Napa, on 18 Jan which is a regular known site for this rare winter migrant. An immature **Northern Gannet** *Morus bassanus* was at the offshore fish farm at Potamos Liopetri on 1 Feb, with singles off Cynthiana Beach hotel, Paphos, on 12 & 17 Apr; the first records since March 2007. On 10 Mar a **Golden Eagle** *Aquila chrysaetos* was at Mavrokolymbos dam which was possibly the 3rd record. **Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla* are less than annual on Cyprus; one at Aspro pools on 26 Mar

and one at Ezousas pools on 22 Apr was a good showing. It was also a good spring for **Cream-coloured Coursers** *Cursorius cursor* with three at Mazotos 9–20 Mar, one at Akrotiri gravel pits on 9 Mar and one at cape Drepanum on 10 Apr. A **Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni* was reported at Larnaca sewage works on 17 Apr and one was at Akhna dam on 28 Apr; there have been no records since 2004. A **Eurasian Dotterel** *Charadrius morinellus* at Mandria 24–25 Jan was the first ever January record, and this was followed by one at Larnaca desalination plant fields on 20 Mar, four at Paralimni lake on 1 Apr and one at Mazotos 3–5 Apr and these comprise the 5th–8th records since 2000. A total of three **Caspian Plovers** *Charadrius asiaticus* were recorded during the spring with a female at Spiros pools on 26 Mar, a female at Mandria 13–14 Apr and a male at the same location 15–23 Apr. A **Pomarine Skua** *Stercorarius pomarinus* was reported off Paphos at Cynthiana Beach hotel on 16 Apr which will be the 3rd record if accepted and **Arctic Skuas** *Stercorarius parasiticus* were off Petounta point on 3 Apr and one off Phaethon Beach hotel, Paphos, on 30 Apr. The 4th–6th records of **Black-legged Kittiwake** involved one at the Paphos lighthouse on 31 Jan, one at Meneou pools, Larnaca, on 27 Feb, with two present on 28 Feb and one remaining to 6 Mar. A **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** *Pterocles orientalis* at Karpas peninsula on 3 Apr was the 5th record since 1992. There was a **Laughing Dove** *Stigmatopelia senegalensis* at Sotira, near Paralimni lake, 8–25 May which was possibly the 3rd record if considered to be a genuine wild bird. Over 100 **Pallid Swifts** *Apus pallidus* were feeding over Oroklini marsh 15–19 Feb which was an exceptional count. A very early **Common Swift** *Apus apus* was seen

at Oroklini marsh on 29 Jan and was the first spring record in Europe this year. **Little Swifts** *Apus affinis* at cape Andreas on 29 Apr and up to three cape Greco on 30 Apr were the 10th–13th records for Cyprus. On 11 Apr a **White-throated Kingfisher** *Halcyon smyrnensis* was at Karpas peninsula, near Apostolos Andreas, and was the 15th record.

A **Horned Lark** *Eremophila alpestris* at Mandria on 14 Apr will be the 4th country record if accepted and an **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* at cape Greco on 31 Mar was the 4th record. **Rufous-tailed Bush Robins** *Cercotrichas galactotes* are less than annual so one at Baths of Aphrodite on 1 May was notable. **Caspian Stonechats** *Saxicola maurus variegatus* were recorded at Agia Napa sewage works area on 24 Mar, one at Phasouri reedbeds on 25 Mar and at least two Paphos lighthouse area on 29–31 Mar; there have only been eight previous records of this taxon. On 1 May there was an **Olive-tree Warbler** *Hippolais olivetorum* at cape Greco. The 12th and 13th records of **Asian Desert Warbler** *Sylvia nana* included one in salt scrub at Larnaca airport pool (south) 2–19 Jan and one at Paphos lighthouse area on 14 Apr. A **Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* was at Drouseia 4–6 Apr and will be the 9th country record and the first since March 2000 if accepted and a **Turkestan Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus phoenicuroides* at the Tomb of the Kings, Paphos on 12 Apr was the 15th record since 2000. It was an excellent spring for rare shrikes with a **Southern Grey Shrike** *Lanius meridionalis* at Mandria 8 Mar and one at cape Greco on 24 Mar (the 5th & 6th Cyprus records) and a **Steppe Grey Shrike** *L. meridionalis pallidirostris* was at cape Andreas on 13 Mar which was the 6th Cyprus record. A **Rook** *Corvus frugilegus* on farmland west of Fresh Water lakes near Famagusta, present from Oct 2008, remained until 23 Mar and was only 5th record in last 10 years. On 2 Apr a **Trumpeter Finch** *Bucanetes githagineus* was at cape Andreas, Karpas peninsula; there have been 11 records since 1996 and on 14 Apr a **Common Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus* was reported at cape Drepanum and will be the 7th record if accepted. The 11th–13th records since 1999 of **Cinereous Bunting** *Emberiza cineracea* included one at cape Drepanum 19–25 Mar, two at Anarita

park on 24 Mar and one at Paphos lighthouse area on 30 Mar.

## EGYPT

Three **Yellow-billed Storks** *Mycteria ibis* were at Abu Simbel 15–16 Apr and a total of 56 **Black Storks** *Ciconia nigra* were circling around Ras Sukheir on 16 Apr and two second year birds were at Ain Sokhna marshes on 2 May. Two **Goliath Herons** *Ardea goliath* were at Wadi Lahami on 1 Mar. On 28 Feb two **Lappet-faced Vultures** *Aegypius tracheliotos* were seen 5 km north of Berendice and at least eight were seen at Al Shalaten. On 26 Apr a **Corncrake** *Crex crex* was seen at Wadi Dome resort. Possibly the first records of **White-tailed Lapwing** *Vanellus leucurus* in the Western Desert involved seven at Dakhla oasis on 2 Mar and five the following day. Two **Collared Plovers** *Charadrius tricollaris* were at Tut Amon, Aswan, on 30 Apr, the 2nd **Caspian Plover** *Charadrius asiaticus* for Egypt was at El Gouna golf course 9–13 May



**Plates 1 & 2.** Second **Caspian Plover** *Charadrius asiaticus* for Egypt, 9–13 May 2009, El Gouna golf course. © Margit & Kalle Kasiuk

(Plates 1 & 2) and at least three **Black-winged Pratincoles** *Glareola nordmanni* were also at the golf course on 9 Apr. A **Pharoah Eagle Owl** *Bubo ascalaphus* was at Karnack temple on 21 Apr and a **House Crow** *Corvus splendens* was seen just south of Sehel island in the Nile valley at Aswan on 25 Mar which was well away from the known populations largely around the Suez canal. On 2 Mar a first-winter or female **Hypocolius** *Hypocolius ampelinus* was present at Wadi Gimal and a **Moustached Warbler** *Acrocephalus melanopogon* was at Dakhla oasis on the same date which was away from known areas. **Greater Hoopoe-Larks** *Alaemon alaudipes* were recorded at Zafarana on 8 Apr and 25 km E of Cairo on 4 May. A male **Rufous-tailed Wheatear** *Oenanthe xanthopyrmyna* was at El Gouna 23–26 Feb and an adult male **Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush** *Monticola saxatilis* was at Wadi Dome on 6 Apr and a 2nd-year male was at El Gouna golf course on 13 Apr. A **Semi-collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula semitorquata* was recorded at Wadi Dome resort 6–7 Apr and two pairs of **African Pied Wagtails** *Motacilla aguimp* were at Abu Simbel 15–16 Apr.

## IRAN

A sub-adult **Masked Booby** *Sula dactylatra* was photographed from a boat 1 km off-shore at Khoore-e-Silikie, west of Jask, on 15 Jan and was the 2nd for Iran. A flock of 29 **Socotra Cormorants** *Phalacrocorax nigrogularis* was seen at Mobarak, Homozgan, on 23 Jan which is unusual for the time of year and two **Chinese Shrikes** *Lanius arenarius* were photographed at Bib Shirvan, Golestan, on 19 Jan. Nine **White-winged Larks** *Melanocorypha leucoptera* were photographed north of Gomishan, Golestan, on 25 Jan and two males and a female **White-winged Grosbeak** *Mycerobas carnipes* were in the Almeh valley, Golestan, on 22 Jan where there have been no reports in recent decades.

## IRAQ

At Al Asad airbase and surrounds a **Northern Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis* was seen on 17 Mar, a **Sociable Lapwing** *Vanellus gregarius* was a great find on 1 Mar, a male **Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis* was seen on 7 Apr and several flocks of 6–8 **Hypocoliuses** *Hypocolius*

*ampelinus* were observed on 2 Apr. Randel Rogers who has been birding the airbase area at Al Asad completed his tour of duty in mid April and we thank him for his regular updates on MEBirdNet and also thank all those birdwatchers who responded to his requests for help with bird identification.

During January and February Nature Iraq continued their winter surveys of important sites for birds in the Mesopotamian marshes (40 sites) and Kurdistan (12 sites). In the marshes, over 7100 **Marbled Ducks** *Marmaronetta angustirostris* were counted, with over 3000 at one site; **Pygmy Cormorants** *Phalacrocorax pygmeus* totalled over 14 900 (9000 at one site), **Slender-billed Gulls** *Larus genei* more than 8600 and **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa limosa* over 2300. On one wetland there were 2000 **Great Egrets** *Egretta alba* whilst the highest single count of **Little Grebes** *Tachybaptus ruficollis* was 880 and **Great Black-headed Gulls** *Larus ichthyaeus* 200.

Highlights of the Kurdistan survey were 410 **Lesser White-fronted Geese** *Anser erythropus* at Dukan lake where 145 **Great Black-headed Gulls** *Larus ichthyaeus* were also counted; 1200 **Ruddy Shelducks** *Tadorna ferruginea* at Mosul lake and 730 **Pygmy Cormorants** *Phalacrocorax pygmeus* at Altun Kopri marsh. **Iraq Babblers** *Turdoides altirostris* were encountered in new sites in the NE and a northwards range expansion of **White-eared Bulbul** *Pycnonotus leucotis* was recorded.

In April, a training course run by BirdLife and Nature Iraq visited seven sites in Kurdistan within c100 km of Sulimaniyah. Birds of prey were abundant: **Egyptian Vultures** *Neophron percnopterus* breeding commonly in all areas (over 30 pairs counted), **Short-toed Eagles** *Circaetus gallicus* (12 pairs), **Golden Eagles** *Aquila chrysaetos* (2 pairs), **Long-legged Buzzards** *Buteo rufinus* (16 pairs), **Lesser Kestrels** *Falco naumanni* (at least 3 pairs) and a pair of **Barbary Falcons** *Falco pelegrinoides*. There was a breeding colony of **Slender-billed Gulls** *Larus genei* (300 pairs) on Darbandikhanan along with 30 pairs of **Common Terns** *Sterna hirundo*. Many passerines were starting to take up territories or breed and the following gives a feel of the relative abundance of a selected few in the NE Kurdistan hills: **Sombre**





**Plate 3.** Eastern Rock Nuthatch *Sitta tephronota*, April 2009, NE Kurdistan hills, Iraq. © Khalid Faik



**Plate 4.** Western Rock Nuthatch *Sitta neumayer*, April 2009, NE Kurdistan hills, Iraq. © Khalid Faik



**Plate 5.** White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis*, April 2009, NE Kurdistan hills, Iraq. © RF Porter



**Plate 6.** Cinereous Bunting *Emberiza cineracea*, April 2009, NE Kurdistan hills, Iraq. © RF Porter

**Tit** *Poecile lugubris* (20 pairs), **Long-tailed Tit** *Aegithalos caudatus* (2 pairs), **Eastern Rock Nuthatch** *Sitta tephronota* (22 pairs, Plate 3), **Western Rock Nuthatch** *Sitta neumayer* (4 pairs, Plate 4), **Eurasian Nuthatch** *Sitta europaea* (4 pairs), **White-throated Robin** *Irania gutturalis* (11 pairs, Plate 5), **Rufous-tailed Wheatear** *Oenanthe xanthopyrmyna* (2 pairs), **Finsch's Wheatear** *Oenanthe finschii* (16 pairs), **Corn Bunting** *Emberiza calandra* (23 pairs) and **Cinereous Bunting** *Emberiza cineracea* (4 pairs and flock of 12, Plate 6). A total of ten pairs of **Semi-collared Flycatchers** *Ficedula semitorquata* were counted and appeared to be



**Plates 7 & 8.** Female and male Semi-collared Flycatchers *Ficedula semitorquata*, April 2009, NE Kurdistan hills, Iraq.  
© RF Porter

on territory in oak and willow woodlands belts (Plates 7 & 8).

## ISRAEL

A male **Common Eider** *Somateria mollissima* was off Ashdod on 17 Feb and will be the 3rd record for Israel if accepted; the previous record was in 1979. A count of 76 **White-headed Ducks** *Oxyura leucocephala* was made at Hulda reservoir in the second week of Feb. On 21 Feb there was a **Great Shearwater** *Puffinus gravis* off Jaffa which will be the 4th record for Israel if accepted; the last record was in 1995. A **Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster* was off Eilat north beach on 24 Mar. A

**Crested Honey Buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhyncus* overwintered at Eilat's date plantations from 31 Dec through to Feb and was perhaps a returning individual from last winter whilst migrants were over Eilat Mts during the first half of May. A **Tawny Eagle** *Aquila rapax* was reported migrating over Lahav, N Negev, on 7 Mar and a **Verreaux's Eagle** *Aquila verreauxii* was in the Eilat Mts the previous day. An adult **Demoiselle Crane** *Anthropoides virgo* was at Hula lake from 9–19 Feb, three migrated over Arad, N Negev, on 25 Mar, one was at Timorim, S Judean plains, 18–30 Apr. Eleven **Sociable Lapwings** *Vanellus gregarius* were at Urim in early Feb and the 2nd **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* for Israel was at Acre, N Mediterranean coast, from 24 Jan to 20 Mar. The first **Kittlitz's Plover** *Charadrius pecuarius* since 2000, a male, was at KM 20 salt pans, Eilat, 13–21 Mar. Two **Caspian Plovers** *Charadrius asiaticus* were at Yotvata, S Arava, on 1 May, a **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* was trapped and ringed at Hula lake on 31 Mar and the 8th **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* for Israel was at Eilat KM 20 salt pans on 23 Apr. A second calendar-year **Audouin's Gull** *Larus audouinii* was at Ma'agan Michael on 13 Apr and the 4th **Sabine's Gull** *Xema sabini* was at the same location from 23 April and throughout all of May. There was an exceptional influx of **Black-legged Kittiwakes** *Rissa tridactyla* to the Mediterranean coast with a record of 60 on 21 Feb. A pair of **Green Bee-eaters** *Merops orientalis* (ssp *cya*) nested in the Jordan valley. It was a good winter for **Thick-billed Larks** *Ramphocoris clotbey* with 17 near Shivta, C Negev, on 22 Jan, one in Eilat Mts on 29 Mar and five at Hameysha, S Negev, on 8 May. There was also a **Dunn's Lark** *Eremalauda dunni* at Hameysha, S Negev, on 25 Mar. A **Booted Warbler** *Iduna caligata* was trapped and ringed near Mitzpe Ramon, C Negev, on 3 May and will be the 4th record if accepted. Up to five **Rufous-tailed Wheatears** *Oenanthe xanthopyrmyna* were in the Judean desert this winter, a **Hume's Warbler** *Phylloscopus humei* was at Kfar Ruppim, Bet She'an valley on 16 Jan and a male **Menetries's Warbler** *Sylvia mystacea* was at KM 24, S Arava, on 30 Mar and another was at Ein Yahav, N Arava, on 3 May. The overwintering **Black Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas podobe* remained in Eilat from

Dec 2008 through to Feb, and another was at Holland park on 9 Mar. A male **Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka* was near Arad 27–30 Mar and there were several tens of pairs of **Pale Rock Finches** *Carpospiza brachydactyla* breeding at Mt Amasa, S Judean hills, in May.

## JORDAN

Ten **White-eyed Gulls** *Larus leucophthalmus* were south of Aqaba on 12 Apr, four **Namaqua Doves** *Oena capensis* were at Shuna on 24 Mar and a male was in the Aqaba area on 18 Apr. A pair of **Hume's Owls** *Strix butleri* was at Petra on 28 Mar and one was heard at Dana village on 14 Apr. A male **Daurian Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus isabellinus* was at Wadi al Butm on 23 Mar and 11 **Masked Shrikes** *Lanius nubicus* were in the Aqaba area 17 Apr. A notable count of 50 **Fan-tailed Ravens** *Corvus rhipidurus* were along the northern Dead Sea between Suweimah and Ma'in spring on 24 Mar. **White-cheeked Bulbuls** *Pycnonotus leucogenys* are apparently well established at Azraq with 10 seen daily in Mar. Migration counts were carried out in the Aqaba area during Apr with 60 **Eastern Olivaceous Warblers** *Iduna pallida* on 16 Apr, an **Eastern Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus orientalis* on 12 Apr, 500 **Eurasian Blackcaps** on 17 Apr and an **Eastern Orphee Warbler** *Sylvia crassirostris* on 16 Apr. Four **Ménétries Warblers** *Sylvia mystacea* were in Azraq area in Mar, a male **Cyprus Warbler** *Sylvia melanothorax* was at Wadi al Butm on 21 Mar and a female was between Qasr Amra and Amman on 23 Mar. Three **Arabian Babblers** *Turdoides squamiceps* were at Wadi Dana on 26 Mar and up to 60 **Tristram's Starlings** *Onychognathus tristramii* were along the northern Dead Sea between Suweimah and Ma'in spring on 24 Mar. Impressive counts of 120 **Thrush Nightingales** *Luscinia luscinia* and 60 **Common Nightingales** *Luscinia megarhynchos* were in the Aqaba area on 17 Apr. Six **Cyprus Wheatears** *Oenanthe cyprica* were in Azraq/Shaumari area during Mar, two **Finsch's Wheatears** *Oenanthe finschii* were near Wadi Dana 26–27 Mar and a female **Hooded Wheatear** *Oenanthe monacha* was at Wadi Rum on 16 Apr. A **Rufous-tailed Rock Thrush** *Monticola saxatilis* was in the Aqaba area on 18 Apr and five **Collared Flycatchers** *Ficedula albicollis* were there the previous day.

Four **Palestine Sunbirds** *Cinnyris osea* were at Dana village on 15 Apr, 40 **Indian Silverbills** *Lonchura malabarica* were at Shuma on 24 Mar and three **Citrine Wagtails** *Motacilla citreola* were at Azraq during Mar. Eight **Syrian Serins** *Serinus syriacus* were at Wadi Dana on 24 Mar and three were in Dana village on 15 Apr. There were three **Desert Finches** *Rhodospiza obsoletus* in the Aqaba area on 12 Apr, 21 **Sinai Rosefinches** *Carpodacus synoicus* were at Petra on 28 Mar, one was south of Petra on 13 Apr, five at Petra on 14 Apr, 2 northwest of al-Tafila and 2 at Wadi Rum on 16 Apr. Fifty **Ortolan Buntings** *Emberiza hortulana* were in the Aqaba area on 17 Apr.

## KAZAKHSTAN

A few highlights for 2008 from Arend Wassink's "Birds of Kazakhstan: new and interesting data part 2" (*Dutch Birding* 31 (2) 2009) are listed below.

Five pairs of **Relict Gulls** *Larus relictus* nested on Sredniy island at Alakol lake, east Kazakhstan, where this species bred 2001–03 and 2005. A **Pale Sand Martin** *Riparia diluta* was found at Karazhar, Korgalzhyn nature reserve, on 16 May; this is the first record in Aqmola province and the northernmost in Kazakhstan. The 4th record of **East Siberian Wagtail** *Motacilla ocularis*, a first-summer, was at Aydarly, Almaty province, on 26 May and the 1st record of **White-capped Redstart** *Chaimarrornis leucocephalus*, an adult male, was in the Almaarasan gorge, Ili-Alatau national park, Almaty province on 8 Sept. A first-summer male **Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis* was at Tengiz, Atyrau province, on 21 Apr and was the 6th record and on 17 Nov a male **Meadow Bunting** *Emberiza cioides* was at Kornilovka and was the 3rd record for south Kazakhstan.

## KUWAIT

A juvenile **Socotra Cormorant** *Leucocarbo nigrogularis* was seen at Zour port on 3 Apr and three were there on 10 Apr. The 2nd record of **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* for Kuwait, a first-summer male, was seen at Sulaibiya Pivot Fields on 10 May; the first record was a dead bird at Hujaijah 9 May 2002. A **Crested Honey Buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhyncus* was at Al Abraha on 1 Jan and four adult **Egyptian Vultures** *Neophron percnopterus* were



recorded migrating over Sabah Al-Ahmed natural reserve (SAANR) on 14 Apr. Twenty **Crab-plovers** *Dromas ardeola* were at Doha spit on 15 Apr, three **Red-wattled Lapwings** *Vanellus indicus* were at Abdaly farms on 16 Apr, three **Sociable Lapwings** *Vanellus gregarius* remained at Pivot Fields in Jan, 800 **Lesser Sand Plovers** *Charadrius mongolus* were at Doha spit on 13 Apr and a pair of **Caspian Plovers** *Charadrius asiaticus* was at Doha spit on 10 Apr and a male was at Jahra East Outfall on 14 Apr. A **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* was at Jahra farms 4–5 May and was the first record for a number of years. Doha spit hosted 186 **Terek Sandpipers** *Xenus cinerea* and 80 **Broad-billed Sandpipers** *Limicola falcinellus* on 15 Apr. There were c160 **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus* near Jahra East Outfall on 14 Apr and the 4th record of a **Red Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius* was at the same site 30 Apr–1 May. The 4th **Stock Dove** *Columba oenas* for Kuwait was at the Pivot Fields on 1 Jan and four **Namaqua Doves** *Oena capensis* were reported between 10–16 April. The 1st **Asian Koel** *Eudynamis scolopaceus* for Kuwait was at Abdali farms 22–29 Feb and the **Indian Roller** *Coracias benghalensis* remained at Jahra farms Jan until 11 Apr. There were 13 **Hypocoliuses** *Hypocolius ampelinus* at Sulaibikhat nature reserve on 11 Apr, two at Al-Abraq Al-Khabari on 15 April and three at Abdaly farms the following day. **Eurasian Crag Martin** *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* is a scarce migrant and one was recorded on migration at Jahra farms on 11 Apr. A male **Dark-throated Thrush** *Turdus atrogularis* remained at Al Abraq into Jan. The 1st record of **Mongolian Finch** *Bucanetes mongolicus* for Kuwait involved a flock of six at SAANR on 5 Mar, with 12 there on 20 Mar, and the 1st **Hawfinch** *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* for Kuwait was seen briefly at Jahra farms on 27 Dec 2008.

## LEBANON

There was a series of records of **Black-legged Kittiwakes** *Rissa tridactyla* in mid-February, with a maximum of six at Tripoli on 22 Feb. **Ruddy Turnstones** *Arenaria interpres* peaked at 11 individuals on 23 Mar, again at Tripoli.

## OMAN

A single **Greater White-fronted Goose** *Anser albifrons* was at Khor Mughsayl in January, the only record of this uncommon winter visitor. The four **Lesser Whistling Ducks** *Dendrocygna javanica* found in November 2008 at Khor Mughsayl stayed into March, with two on 5 Mar. Two **Marbled Ducks** *Marmaronetta angustirostris* were also at Mughsayl on 26 Mar; this species occurs very occasionally at the coastal khors in the Salalah area. Most records have been assumed to represent escapes but since movements within and between the fragmented wild populations are poorly understood, it remains possible that these were wild birds. Numbers of **Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca* at Khor Mughsayl increased to ten 17–31 Jan and there were five at Al Ansab in the north on 3 Mar. A maximum of 80 **Persian Shearwaters** *Puffinus persicus* per hour passed during sea watches at Ras al Hadd from 22–25 May with several probable **Sooty Shearwaters** *Puffinus griseus* there; one **Sooty Shearwater** on 25 May was confirmed. The **Black Storks** *Ciconia nigra* seen near Salalah in November–December 2008 remained in the area with up to three at Khor Mugsayl on various dates January–February. Two immatures were at Wadi Darbat on 9 Apr. The single **African Spoonbill** at East Khor first reported on 24 Nov 2008 was last seen on 14 May. A single **Frigatebird** *Fregata* sp was off Yiti, near Muscat, on 29 Apr and another flew east at Ras al Hadd on 23 May; frigatebirds are vagrants to the Omani coastline. Up to three of the **Crested Honey Buzzards** *Pernis ptilorhynchus* seen in the Salalah area November–December seemingly over-wintered; the last record was of two birds on 24 Apr. The **White-breasted Waterhen** *Amaurornis phoenicurus* at Qitbit in early December 2008 was still there 1–2 Jan and presumably the same bird was seen on several dates until 17 Apr. The 2nd record for Oman of **Watercock** *Gallicrex cinerea* was found at a small khor east of Sadh on 28 and 31 Dec 2008. Amazingly another vagrant, this time from Africa rather than Asia, was also at the same khor on 28 Dec 2008 (but not on 31 Dec), the 2nd record of **Lesser Moorhen** *Gallinula angulata*. Two **Common Cranes** *Grus grus* were at Sahanawt farm, Salalah, 19–31 Jan. The 14th record of **Spur-winged Lapwing** *Vanellus spinosus*, a single bird, was

at Sahanawt farm, Salalah, 24–31 Jan. Sixteen **Sociable Lapwings** *Vanellus gregarius* were at Sahanawt farm 22–31 Jan, possibly some of the birds seen at Jarziz farm in December 2008. Sixteen **Cream-coloured Coursers** *Cursorius cursor* were at Jarziz farm, Salalah, on 4 Feb and 14 were seen not far away at Khor Razat on 12 Mar. Four **Baltic Gulls** *Larus fuscus* were found along 14 km of the Batinah coastline near Al Bidaya on 12 Mar. Up to 500 **Bridled Terns** *Onychoprion anaethetus* per hour passed Ras al Hadd each morning from 22–25 May with a single **Pomarine Skua** *Stercorarius pomarinus* there on 24 May. A single **Asian Koel** *Eudynamis scolopacea* was at Khor Rouri on 5 Jan and two were at Muscat on 16 Feb; this species is unusual in northern Oman. This has been a good year for **Alpine Swifts** *Tachymarptis melba*; as well as the autumn reports, 45 were seen over Salalah on 31 Dec 2008, the largest group for over 20 years. A **Grey-headed Kingfisher** *Halcyon leucocephala* was at Ayn Hamran on 5 Jan, an unusually early record and possibly over-wintering. The 4th record of **Malachite Kingfisher** *Alcedo cristata* was at Khor Mugsahyl on 26 Jan. The 5th record of **Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis*, at Qurm park, first seen in December 2008, was last seen there on 10 Feb. A **Eurasian Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla* was at Qitbit on 8 Jan.

An adult female **Brown Shrike** *Lanius [cristatus] cristatus* at Ayn Hamran on 31 Jan is the second record this winter, the 1st being

a juvenile/first winter bird, and would be the 2nd record for Oman if accepted. The 5th record of **Wire-tailed Swallow** *Hirundo smithii* was at Salalah rubbish dump on 8 Feb. Single **Hume's Leaf Warblers** *Phylloscopus humei* at Montasar and at Qitbit on 7 Jan were probably the birds found in December 2008. Two **Bank Mynahs** *Acridotheres ginginianus* were at A'Suwadi on 26 Feb, only the 8th record of this species, although it has bred twice. A **Wattled Starling** *Creatophora cinerea* was recorded at Thumrait 24 Feb–3 Jun, the last of a group of seven that arrived in Aug 2007. Sixty **Pied Wheatears** *Oenanthe pleschanka* were on Saye plateau, Musandam, on 9 Apr, including one of the form *vittata*, which is rare in Oman. Two male **Black-eared Wheatears** *Oenanthe (hispanica) melanoleuca* at that same location 20–21 Mar are only the 9th record for Oman. Four hundred **Yellow Wagtails** *Motacilla flava* were at Jarziz farm, Salalah, on 14 Feb, together with 1000 **White Wagtails** *Motacilla alba*. The 5th record if accepted of **Blyth's Pipit** *Anthus godlewskii* was at Jarziz farm on 22 Feb.

## QATAR

A **Great Knot** *Calidris tenuirostris* at Ras Al Allaq on the southeast coast on 10 Dec 2008 is the 1st record for Qatar. Seven non-breeding **Eurasian Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* were at Al Dhakira, Qatar, on 21 May (Plate 9); one colour-ringed on both legs had been ringed as



**Plate 9.** Eurasian Spoonbills *Platalea leucorodia*, 21 May 2009, Al Dhakira, Qatar. The colour-ringed bird (middle) was ringed as a nestling on 18 May 2008 at Bolluk lake, near Konya, Turkey. © Jamie Buchan





**Plate 10.** Pharaoh Eagle-Owl *Bubo ascalaphus desertorum* nestlings, 27 Feb 2009, Qatar. © Jamie Buchan

a nestling on 18 May 2008 at Bolluk lake, near Konya, Turkey, 2240 km away. There were two confirmed breeding records of **Pharaoh Eagle-Owl** *Bubo ascalaphus* in Qatar in late February; one pair raised one young, the other at least two (Plate 10). A pair of **Yellow-throated Sparrows** *Gymnoris xanthocollis* was at Mazra'at Traina, Jeryan Al Batna, 17–18 Apr, with three male **Black-headed Buntings** *Emberiza melanocephala* on 18 Apr.

## SAUDI ARABIA

ABBA Survey 40, in February, covered wintering birds in the whole of northern Saudi Arabia, a generally treeless plain from near the Arabian gulf coast to the gulf of Aqaba; the main study area was within c200 km of the borders with Jordan and Iraq. The rains were good in the 1990's but there has been widespread drought for most of the last ten years and in many areas there was a complete absence of green vegetation. The range of species present in winter is limited but 13 species of raptors, five owls, nine larks and seven wheatears were recorded, generally in low numbers. **Lappet-faced Vulture** *Aegypius tracheliotos* was breeding at one site but no wintering vultures were found. At one farm, **Hen Harriers** *Circus cyaneus* were relatively numerous and 500 wintering **Black Kites** *Milvus migrans* were coming in from nearby areas to roost in tall trees; this count

is more than previously recorded wintering in the region. During over 1500 km of driven transect counts, 63 **Eastern Imperial Eagles** *Aquila heliaca* were recorded; when extrapolated over the whole study area, this figure suggests that over 4000 of this species may winter in northern Saudi Arabia, a very significant part of the world population. Previous surveys of the area recorded thousands of **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse** *P. orientalis* and **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** *P. alchata* with a few **Sociable Lapwings** *Vanellus gregarius* and several hundred **Eurasian Dotterels** *Charadrius morinellus*. On this occasion, neither Dotterel nor Sociable Plover were seen and only a few dozen Pin-tailed Sandgrouse were found, at one arable farm near Tabuk. The absence of these species can be attributed to the drought conditions. Breeding range extensions were recorded for **Desert Eagle Owl** *Bubo ascalaphus*, **Alpine Swift** *Tachymarpis melba*, **Long-billed Pipit** *Anthus similis* and **Desert Finch** *Rhodospiza obsoleta*. Lark numbers were low but included **Thick-billed Lark** *Ramphocoris clotbey* at three or four sites. Only a single **Dunn's Lark** *Eremalauda dunni* was recorded contrasting with previous ABBA surveys in the region when they were regarded as common and widespread; this nomadic species clearly wintered elsewhere in 2009. Several small flocks of **Eurasian Linnets** *Carduelis cannabina*, which has not been previously recorded in northern Saudi Arabia, were found at a farm near Tabuk. This ABBA Survey was sponsored by the NCWCD, Riyadh. A full report is in preparation; a soft copy can be obtained from Mike Jennings at [arabianbirds@dsl.pipex.com](mailto:arabianbirds@dsl.pipex.com).

## SYRIA

This report includes valuable observations from rarely visited areas towards the eastern border, notably the Jebel Abdul Aziz, a protected range in the north-east, and the basalt desert in the south-east, as well as Abu Qubeis protected area in the heavily forested coastal mountains. Unfortunately, the impact of excessive and unsustainable hunting is a recurrent theme. **See-see Partridge** *Ammoperdix griseogularis* was recorded from the usual site at Halabbiyah, but also from lake Khatuniyeh on the Iraqi border on 11 Mar and Jebel Abdul Aziz on 24 March. This species is probably widespread throughout the

north-east. Up to 300 **White-headed Ducks** *Oxyura leucocephala* were seen at Sabkhat al-Jabbul January–March with 40+ **Marbled Ducks** *Marmaronetta angustirostris*; the latter species clearly does winter in Syria, if only in low numbers. A distressing record is a 1st for Syria : a flock of five **Red-breasted Geese** *Branta ruficollis* were all shot at Sabkhat al-Jabbul in February 2007; two of the birds had been stuffed and were examined in a hunter's collection in March (2009). Four **Northern Bald Ibises** *Geronticus eremita* left their Ethiopian wintering grounds but only three reached the breeding site near Palmyra. Two sub-adults returned from unknown wintering grounds and yet again there were two breeding pairs. However, although four young hatched only one survived the first three weeks (two had apparently fallen out of their nests). Thus the last wild colony in the Middle East still hangs on. Regrettably, efforts to introduce Turkish birds to supplement the population have been delayed for another year.

Several days of regular observations at Abu Qubeis in early April turned up good numbers of storks and raptors, notably a group of four **Eurasian Griffon Vultures** *Gyps fulvus* flying north on 3 Apr, presumably birds on passage, and two **Northern Goshawks** *Accipiter gentilis* between 31 Mar and 5 Apr. A male Northern Goshawk seen on three occasions may have been a breeding bird, not a migrant; this species has never been proven to breed in Syria and there are few records. A **Cinereous Vulture (Eurasian Black Vulture)** *Aegypius monachus* was seen in October 2008 at Talila reserve near Palmyra and a group of eight **Greater Spotted Eagles** *Aquila clanga* was photographed soaring above Shnan in the Euphrates valley on 9 Mar. Single **Eastern Imperial Eagles** *Aquila heliaca* were near Palmyra on 21 Mar and near Hasakah on 24 Feb, perhaps birds wintering in Saudi Arabia. An **Eleonora's Falcon** *Falco eleonorae* at the Euphrates suspension bridge, Deir ez-Zor, on 17 Apr was flying with **Hobbies** *Falco subbuteo* and a **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* and allowed direct comparison. **Little Crakes** *Porzana parva* were seen at Deir ez-Zor on 23 Feb and Sed Wadi Abied on 20 Mar, 5 and 16 Apr, with **Spotted Crakes** *Porzana porzana* at Sed Wadi Abied on 5 and 16 Apr; both species are scarce (or rarely seen) passage migrants.



**Plates 11 & 12.** Remains of Sociable Lapwings *Vanellus gregarius*, 13 March 2009, northern Syrian steppes. © Remco Hofland

A breeding record of **Macqueen's Bustard** ('**Eastern Houbara**') *Chlamydotis macqueenii* in the south-east in March was widely publicised; the last time a Houbara was seen in Syria it was soon shot. Searches for **Sociable Lapwings** *Vanellus gregarius* revealed what we have long feared; hunters shoot large numbers of this species when the birds pass through the northern steppes in early spring. Piles of heads and wings were photographed on 13 Mar from a site north-west of Deir ez-Zor (Plates 11 & 12); hunters reported six hundred birds there the previous day. There were several other sightings in the northern steppes, fortunately of live birds. These key observations may at last explain why this species has declined so rapidly and is now Critically Endangered; surely it is essential to provide better protection to prevent these unacceptable losses. Improved coverage of the northern steppes also turned up valuable observations of **Eurasian Dotterels** *Charadrius morinellus*: over 50 in the basalt desert east of Suwaida



**Plates 13 & 14.** Basalt Wheatear *Oenanthe lugens*, 27 Feb 2009, basalt desert east of Jebel Druze, Syria. © Nico Martinez

on 27 Feb, five on 24 Feb and four 11–13 Mar in the Jazira, five at Ar Ruweira on 10 Mar and 59 near Deir ez-Zor between 14 and 17 Mar. A **Caspian Plover** *Charadrius asiaticus* at lake Khatuniyeh on 13 Mar was perhaps the 2nd Syrian record. Both are steppe species probably very under-recorded in Syria. The rarest wader this year was a **Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres* at Sabkhat al-Jabbul on 7 Mar, only the 2nd Syrian record (the 1st being in August 2008). Other interesting waders included a pair of **Red-wattled Lapwings** *Vanellus indicus* at lake Khatuniyeh on 11 Mar (the species may well breed in the area); four **Bar-tailed Godwits** *Limosa lapponica* and two **Black-winged Pratincoles** *Glareola nordmanni* near Deir ez-Zor on 10 Apr; and a **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinerea* at Mheimideh on 18 Apr. Flocks of up to 16 **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus* were counted with observations from Mheimideh on 12 and 15 Mar and 6 and 11 Apr, and at Sed Wadi Abied on 5 Apr; this is a regular if uncommon migrant. Nine **Black-legged Kittiwakes** *Rissa tridactyla* were seen off Ugarit, north of Lattakia, on 10 Feb, apparently part of an influx into the eastern Mediterranean (see the entry for Lebanon). There were only two records of **Sandgrouse**,

both **Pin-tailed Pterocles** *alchata*: two near Deir ez-Zor on 13 Mar and c50 at Jebel Abdul Aziz between 24 and 29 Mar, even though there was better coverage of the steppes than usual. It is clear that the present levels of hunting in the Badia are unsustainable and many steppe species are rapidly disappearing from Syria (please send us all records of these species). A **Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis* at Talila near Palmyra on 17 Apr is little surprise as most Syrian observations have been from this area, but one in the far south near Deraa on 21 Apr was exceptional. A **Short-eared Owl** *Asio flammeus* near Deir ez-Zor between 14 and 17 Mar is the first record for several years.

Twelve species of larks, nine shrikes (if '**Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus*' is treated as three) and ten wheatears were recorded. Single **Chinese Shrikes** *Lanius (isabellinus) arenarius* were photographed at Jabbul on 7 Mar (eating a **Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus collybita*) and at Shnan on 9 Mar and single **Daurian Shrikes** *Lanius (isabellinus) isabellinus* were at Jabbul on 7 Mar and at Mheimideh on 12 Mar; both forms are widespread and easily seen in Syria in winter. There were record counts of **Water Pipit** *Anthus spinoletta* (2500+ at Mheimideh on 12 Mar) and **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* (25 at Ba'ath lake on 8 Mar).





**Plate 15.** White-crowned Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga*, 27 Feb 2009, basalt desert east of Jebel Druze, Syria. © Nico Martinez



**Plate 16.** The dark form *annae* of Desert Lark *Ammomanes deserti*, 27 Feb 2009, basalt desert east of Jebel Druze, Syria. © Nico Martinez

Visitors to Syria should be able to find Citrine Wagtail at any time of year. Likewise, several groups recorded **Cyprus Wheatear** *Oenanthe cypriaca*, which is clearly a widespread spring migrant. Seven species of wheatear were seen in Jebel Abdul Aziz between 24 and 29 Mar, including four **Rufous-tailed Wheatears** *Oenanthe (xanthoprymna) xanthoprymna*, a form rarely recorded from Syria which is probably an early spring migrant to the north-east; one was also seen at Aumair on 12 Mar. Better still, on 27 Feb, the basalt desert east of Jebel Druze turned up several **Basalt (Mourning) Wheatears** *Oenanthe lugens* (Plates 13 & 14) and a male **White-crowned Black Wheatear** *Oenanthe leucopyga* (Plate 15), the first well-documented record for Syria, as well as the dark form *annae* of **Desert Lark** *Ammomanes deserti* (Plate 16), described by Richard Meinertzhagen, who named it after his granddaughter. There is surely much more to find in the Syrian drylands. Better coverage of the desert oases turned up some nice warblers, for instance two records of **Rüppell's Warbler** *Sylvia rueppelli*, several records of **Eastern Orphean Warbler** *Sylvia (hortensis) crassirostris* and **Ménétries's Warbler** *Sylvia mystacea* and two **Eastern Bonelli's Warblers** *Phylloscopus orientalis*; the last is the scarcest and all records are welcome (accompanied by descriptions please). **Syrian Serins** *Serinus syriacus* were seen at the usual site at Bloudan but also

not far away at Burqush on 3 Apr. A flock of buntings west of Damascus on the Beirut road on 22 Feb included 200 **Yellowhammers** *Emberiza citrinella*, a record count, and two **Pine Buntings** *Emberiza leucocephalos*. It would be no surprise if both species turn out to be widespread in winter in the Syrian coastal mountains, another neglected area.

## TAJIKISTAN

News has recently come out of one or two **Snow Pigeons** *Columba leuconota* in the Varzob valley north of Dushanbe in October 2008; the exact date is unknown. There have been very few observations of this species in the last two decades although it may well be a regular breeding bird.

## TURKEY

Up to 97 **Mute Swans** *Cygnus olor* were in the Kızılırmak delta in May; five **Greater Scaup** *Aythya marila* were at the same site on 15 Mar, and two were at Filyos, Zonguldak, on 1 Feb; two **Common Eiders** *Somateria molissima* were recorded at Riva, İstanbul, on 30 May; two **Velvet Scoters** *Melanitta fusca* were at Terkos lake, İstanbul, on 22 Feb; a single **Common Scoter** *Melanitta nigra* was at Filyos on 18 Jan; a **Long-tailed Duck** *Clangula hyemalis* was at Enez, Edirne, on 28 Mar; and ten **White-headed Ducks** *Oxyura leucocephala* were at Mogan lake, Ankara,



**Plate 17.** Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus*, 26 Apr 2009, Batman, Turkey. © Cemal Özsemir



**Plate 18.** Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus*, 3 Mar 2009, Asarcık, Turkey. © Kiraz Erçiyas

on 9 May. There was a single **Red-throated Diver** *Gavia stellata* at Filyos on 6 and 9 Mar, two at Sinop on 27 Feb and one at Samsun on 13 Jan. The 2nd Turkish record of **Lesser Flamingo** *Phoenicopterus minor* was one in the Gediz delta, İzmir, on 30 Jan. Thirteen **Western White Storks** *Ciconia ciconia* in the Kavak delta, Çanakkale, on 13 Jan was an unusual winter record. Raptors of note during the period included four **White-tailed Eagles** *Haliaeetus albicilla* at Yedikır dam, Amasya, on 8 Feb and one at Sarıyer, İstanbul, on 30 Apr; a **Cinereous Vulture** *Aegypius monachus* in the Kızılırmak delta on 18 Apr, the first record for the site; single **Greater Spotted Eagles** *Aquila clanga* in the Kavak delta on 6 Jan, at Beykoz,

İstanbul, on 1 Apr and Manyas lake, Balıkesir, on 14 Mar; and single **Eastern Imperial Eagles** *Aquila heliaca* in the Kavak delta on 6 Jan and at Vize, Kırklareli, on 2 Jan. A record of 48 **Demoiselle Cranes** *Anthropoides virgo* migrating over Ankara on 21 Mar was notable; three were at Filyos on 17 Mar. Interesting waders reported included three **Red-wattled Lapwings** *Vanellus indicus* at Batman on 26 Apr (Plate 17); 34 **Sociable Lapwings** *Vanellus gregarius* near Şanlıurfa on 7 Mar; six **Eurasian Dotterel** *Charadrius morinellus* at Riva on 25 Mar; a **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* from Niğde on 24 Apr; a **Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus* at İğneada, Kırklareli, on 21 Mar; three **Red Knot** *Calidris canutus* at Küçükçekmece lake, İstanbul, on 11 Jan, with one at Terkos lake on 7 Jan; three **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus* at Nizip, Gaziantep, on 4 Apr, an early date for this species; and three **Black-winged Pratincoles** *Glareola nordmanni* at Kuyucuk on 18 May. Two **Great Black-backed Gulls** *Larus marinus* at Filyos on 5 Jan continued the recent run of this species in this part of the Black Sea. A **Black-legged Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla* and an **Arctic Skua** *Stercorarius parasiticus* were seen in Antalya on 22 Mar. **Great Grey Shrikes** *Lanius excubitor* were at Manyas lake on 14 Mar and at Filyos on 26 Mar. Another former vagrant now recorded more regularly is **Bohemian Waxwing** *Bombycilla garrulus*, with three in Asarcık, Samsun, on 3 Mar (Plate 18) and one in Çaycuma, Zonguldak, on 8 Jan. Single **Pied Wheatears** *Oenanthe pleschanka* were reported from Filyos on 11 May and the Göksu delta on 27 Mar and a **Cyprus Wheatear** *Oenanthe cypriaca* was at Subaşı, Antakya, on 1 Apr. Finally, there was a **Twite** *Carduelis flavirostris* at Akkaya, Niğde, on 3 Jan and the 4th Turkish record of **Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica* was reported from the Middle East Technical University, Ankara, on 15 Mar.

## UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

The sub-adult **Golden Eagle** *Aquila chrysaetos* found in December 2008 on Sila'a peninsula was seen again on 6 Mar and a **Lappet-faced Vulture** *Aegypius tracheliotos* was on Jebel Hafit in early April. A female **Merlin** *Falco columbarius* was at Khor al-Beida on 27 Mar and the 15th **Black-winged Kite** *Elanus caeruleus* for UAE was at Al Wathba lake on 28

Jan. An unringed adult male **Macqueen's Bustard** ('Eastern Houbara') *Chlamydotis macqueenii* was seen at Al Wathba camel race-track 16–18 Feb. A **White-breasted Waterhen** *Amaurornis phoenicurus* found at Dubai Pivot Fields (Dubai PF) on 9 Apr was present at least until 16 Apr with a **Little Crane** *Porzana parva* there on 11 Apr. A flock of six **Sociable Lapwings** *Vanellus gregarius* at Lahbab fields on 9 Jan was the highest count in the UAE; the individual found at Ghantoot in October 2008 remained into January. Other interesting waders included a **Eurasian Woodcock** *Scolopax rusticola* in Safa park on 22 Dec 2008, the 16th UAE record; a **Red Knot** *Calidris canutus* at Khor al-Beida 8–24 Mar, the 8th UAE record; and single **Grey Phalaropes** *Phalaropus fulicarius* at Al Wathba camel racetrack 5–6 Mar and at Al Wathba lake from 16 May, the 3rd and 4th UAE records. A **Common Gull** *Larus canus* at Dreamland beach/Fujairah port beach from 27–30 Mar was the 24th UAE record and a first-winter **Mediterranean Gull** *Larus melanocephalus* found in Safa park on 10 Dec 2008 until February was the 9th UAE record. On 30 Jan, a **Common Woodpigeon** *Columba palumbus* seen flying over the Dubai PF was the 8th UAE record but twelve **Common Woodpigeons** near Wafi city in Dubai on 5 Feb onwards were considered to be escapes from the palace. An **Alpine Swift** *Tachymarptis melba* passed through the Dubai desert conservation reserve on 6 Apr and five were at the extreme end of Sila'a peninsula on 10 Apr. An **Asian Koel** *Eudynamis scolopacea* was reported from Mushrif national park on 2 Mar and the 2nd **Pied (Jacobin or Black-and-White) Cuckoo** *Oxylophus jacobinus* for UAE was at Ajban farms from 4–7 Jan. This has been an exceptional winter for **Pied Kingfishers** *Ceryle rudis* with at least four individuals: one at Khor Zawra 7–19 Nov 2008; one in Abu Dhabi eastern lagoon from 26 Jan–9 Feb; one photographed on Musaffah, near Abu Dhabi, on 11 Feb; and one at Sir Bani Yas island found on 19 Feb that stayed into May. A **White-throated (Smyrna) Kingfisher** *Halcyon smyrnensis* at Khor Kalba on 20 Feb was the 9th UAE record.

The first-winter male **Brown Shrike** *Lanius (cristatus) cristatus* found at Dubai PF on 2 Dec 2008 remained into April; this was the 5th UAE record. A **Long-tailed Shrike** *Lanius*

*schach* at Wamm farms, Dibba, on 14 Mar was the 6th UAE record. Twelve **Hypocoliuses** *Hypocolius ampelinus* found on Sila'a peninsula in November 2008 remained into March. The 8th **Streak-throated Swallow** *Petrochelidon fluvicola* for the UAE roosted at Al Warsan lakes on 27 Dec 2008 and was seen up to 17 Jan. A **Brown-throated Martin** *Riparia paludicola* was at Al Ain compost plant on 23 Dec 2008. A **Moustached Warbler** *Acrocephalus melanopogon* found in the reeds at Dubai PF on 17 Dec 2008 remained into March. An **Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina* was on Sila'a peninsula on 8 May. **Hume's Leaf Warblers** *Phylloscopus humei* were present in Jebel Ali gardens from 31 Dec 2008 to 3 Jan; in Mushrif national park on 5 Jan; at Ajban farms from 5–9 Jan; and Khalidiyah from 28 Dec 2008 to 10 Mar. A **Dark-throated Thrush** *Turdus (ruficollis) atrogularis* was in Dubai creekside park on 17 Dec and a **Ring Ouzel** *Turdus torquatus* on Lulu island, Abu Dhabi, from 20 Dec 2008 to 7 Feb. The 18th record for UAE of **Mistle Thrush** *Turdus viscivorus* was found in the Mercure hotel gardens, Jebel Hafit, on 21 Jan, and remained into March. A **Black Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas podobe* on Sila'a peninsula 5–6 Apr was the 5th UAE record. A '**Caspian' Stonechat** *Saxicola [torquatus] variegatus* was at Mirfa fodder field from 27 Feb till at least 8 Mar and the 1st **Red-flanked Bluetail** *Tarsiger cyanurus* for Arabia, discovered in December 2008, stayed in Safa park until 12 March. An **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* was in Mushrif national park on 5 Jan.

## UZBEKISTAN

A **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* photographed at Maloe Solenoe lake, Ecocentre Jeiran, near Bukhara, on 15 Apr (Plate 19) is the 1st



**Plate 19.** Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*, 15 April 2009, Ecocentre Jeiran, Bukhara, Uzbekistan. © Timor Kaysarov





**Plate 20.** Sociable Lapwing *Vanellus gregarius*, 9 May 2009, Ecocentre Jeiran, Bukhara, Uzbekistan. © Ilya Volodin

documented record from Uzbekistan; it is not unexpected as there is an unpublished record from the same location on 14 Aug 1999 and the species' range is expanding in neighbouring Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. A **Sociable Lapwing** *Vanellus gregarius* at Ecocentre Jeiran on 9 May was the first Uzbekistan record since 2000 (Plate 20).

## SOCOTRA (YEMEN)

A **Little Crane** *Porzana parva* at Wadi Zerak on 21 Feb was only the 3rd record for Socotra. A flock of five **Gull-billed Terns** *Gelochelidon nilotica* at Deham on 21 Feb is the largest

recorded from Socotra; a **Crab-plover** *Dromas ardeola* there was the 2nd record. Three **Cotton Pygmy Geese** *Nettapus coromandelianus*, the 3rd record for Socotra, two **White-browed Coucals** *Centropus superciliosus* and a **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* were at Sirhin lagoon on 27 Feb with a **Yellow Bittern** *Ixobrychus sinensis*, further indication that the latter species might now be resident on Socotra. An **Oriental Honey-buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhynchus* was at Qalansiyah lagoon on 28 Feb; this is the 1st record for Socotra and only the 2nd for Yemen. Two **Slender-billed Gulls** *Chroicocephalus genei* at Detwah lagoon on 1 Mar were the 3rd record for Socotra.

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Dawn Balmer, 7 Fisher Way, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2LD, UK. [dawn.balmer@bto.org](mailto:dawn.balmer@bto.org)

David Murdoch, Flat 3, 5 Eaton Crescent, Bristol BS8 2EJ, UK. [damurdoch@hotmail.com](mailto:damurdoch@hotmail.com)



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