

AROUND THE REGION

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Records and photographs for *Sandgrouse* 35 (2) should be sent by 15 July 2013 to atr@osme.org.

AFGHANISTAN

2000 **Common Cranes** *Grus grus* were at Bamyán town 9 Sep. This same location held seven **Oriental Turtle-doves** *Streptopelia orientalis meena* and six **Laughing Doves** *Spilopelia senegalensis* on 10 Sep. A **Turkestan Shrike** *Lanius phoenicuroides* was there 9 Sep together with ten **Long-tailed Shrikes** *Lanius schach* which increased to 20 on 10 Sep. Ten **Long-tailed Shrikes** were at Kushkak, Koh-i Baba, 9 Sep. Also present 9 Sep at Bamyán were an **Oriental Skylark** *Alauda gulgula* (again 10 Sep) and six **Pied Stonechats** *Saxicola caprata* (increasing to 15 on 10 Sep). Three **Pied Stonechats** were at Kushkak 9 Sep. A **Sykes's Warbler** *Hippolais rama* was at Bamiyan 10 Sep. Two **Grey-headed Goldfinches** *Carduelis (carduelis) caniceps* and a single **Eurasian Crimson-winged Finch** *Rhodopechys (s.) sanguineus* were at Kushkak 9 Sep together with eight **Grey-necked Buntings** *Emberiza buchanani*. A **Red-headed Bunting** *Emberiza bruniceps* was at Bamiyan 9 Sep and three 10 Sep.

CYPRUS

Two **Red-necked Grebes** *Podiceps grisegena* at Akrotiri salt lake (ASL) 4 Jul were the seventh record for Cyprus, the first since 1996. A **Ruddy Shelduck** *Tadorna ferruginea* was at Larnaca sewage works 15 Nov–4 Dec and another at ASL 19 Dec. An unprecedented passage of **White Storks** *Ciconia ciconia* occurred this autumn with 2600 arriving at ASL 22 Aug, circling daily from 09.30 h, but not leaving until weather conditions permitted 24 Aug—the largest numbers ever recorded in Cyprus. Eight **Dalmatian Pelicans** *Pelecanus crispus* over Armou 8 Dec, represented the ninth record and first since 1997. An adult male **Crested Honey Buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhynchus*

over ASL 21 Oct represents the first record for Cyprus if accepted. An **Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus* lingered along the coastal strip from Akrotiri to Paphos 22 Sep–4 Oct, a less than annual migrant.

A **Eurasian Dotterel** *Charadrius morinellus* was at Akrotiri gravel pits 11 Oct. An unusually high count of 15 **Jack Snipes** *Lymnocyptes minimus* at Larnaca salt lake 24 Dec was the largest group recorded in Cyprus. A **Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica* at ASL 12–30 Sep was the 19th record. A **Black-legged Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla* off cape Greco 19 Nov was the seventh record. A **Great Black-headed Gull** *Larus ichthyæetus* was at Larnaca sewage works 22 Dec. A **Caspian Tern** *Hydroprogne caspia* at Famagusta freshwater lake 3 Nov and one (probably the same bird) at Akhna dam 20–24 Nov. This species is a rare migrant. A **Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger* 7–9 Dec at Evretou dam, is the first December record. Several single **White-breasted Kingfishers** *Halcyon s. smyrnensis* at Kouklia 24 Aug–12 Dec, Bishop's Pool 1 Sep to year end and Phasouri reedbeds 16 Nov–13 Dec, were the 19th–21st records.

A **Richard's Pipit** *Anthus richardi* was at Phasouri reedbeds 25 Oct. The 11th record of **Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* was at Oroklina 5 Oct while a **Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva* at Agia Napa football fields 18 Sep was the 15th record since 1993. A juvenile **Rose-coloured Starling** *Pastor roseus* was at Mandria 1 Nov. Twenty wintering **Rock Sparrows** *Petronia petronia* were at Syngrasi 16 Dec. A **Common Rosefinch** *Carpodacus erythrinus* at Agia Napa sewage works 29 Aug was the tenth record whilst the **Western Cinereous Bunting** *Emberiza (c.) cineracea* there 4 Sep was the second autumn record in recent years.

EGYPT

A **Black Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas podobe* near Quasier 12 Oct will be the 11th record. A **Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla* at the Novotel hotel, Sharm el Sheik, Nov 15/16 was the fifth record for the country and the first since 1980.

GEORGIA

At Batumi the autumn total reached a staggering 575 770 **Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apivorus* with the best day totals being 99 038 on 30 Aug and 179 342 on 3 Sep, being their highest day counts ever recorded. In September two **Crested Honey Buzzards** *Pernis ptilorhynchus* were seen on the 4th, a single on the 7th, three on the 11th, two on 15th, a single 16th, two 19th and a single 26th. A single **Saker Falcon** *Falco cherrug* was seen 22 Sep.

IRAQ

Six adult **African Darters** *Anhinga rufa* were found on the Tigris in Baghdad, December. In the Dalmaj marshes and surrounding areas, large scattered **Marbled Duck** *Marmaronetta angustirostris* flocks of more than 350 individuals were seen October–December. **Tufted Ducks** *Aythya fuligula*, **Ferruginous Ducks** *Aythya nyroca* and **Common Pochards**



Plate 1. Macqueen's Bustard *Chlamydotis macqueenii* 30 Oct 2012, Dalmaj, Iraq. © Mudhafar A Salim



Plate 2. Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* 28 April 2012, Barzan area, Kurdistan, Iraq. © Muhammad Saddik Barzani

Aythya ferina were seen at Hawiza marsh on various dates in November. A large group of 23 **Macqueen's Bustards** *Chlamydotis macqueenii* were seen in scattered groups and individuals in October and November around the Dalmaj marshes (Plate 1). An **Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus* fitted with a tracking-device in Turkey was found dead in the Najaf desert near Al-Jawasm village, southwestern Iraq.

The Dalmaj marshes held more than 8000 **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa limosa* in November. A record from April/May 2012 was the first sighting for 100 years of **Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni* (two birds) in the Barzan area, northern Iraq (Plate 2); interestingly it was on a potential breeding site. 50 breeding pairs of **Namaqua Doves** *Oena capensis* in the Dalmaj marshes and the surrounding areas is the first confirmed breeding of this species for Iraq. In addition, there were three **Indian Silverbills** *Lonchura malabarica* in Baghdad plus **Hypocolius** *Hypocolius ampelinus* and **Yellow-throated Sparrow** *Gymnoris xanthocollis* in the Dalmaj marshes June 2012.

ISRAEL

A single **Red-breasted Merganser** *Mergus serrator* was at Nahsholim, Carmel coast, 20 Oct. Two **Brown Boobies** *Sula leucogaster* were off Eilat's North Beach 21 Nov. A **Leach's Storm Petrel** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* was off Akhziv, north Mediterranean coast, 8 Dec. **Black-winged Kites** *Elanus caeruleus* continue their colonization, with two new

pairs found breeding in the Yavne'el valley and near Afula. The second record of **Rough-legged Buzzard** *Buteo lagopus* was present at Urim, northwest Negev, 30 Nov–2 Dec (the first in winter 1984/5). Three **Saker Falcons** *Falco (c.) cherrug* have also been wintering at the same location along with 20 **Sociable Lapwings** *Vanellus gregarius*. Single **White-tailed Lapwings** *Vanellus leucurus* were at Yotvata 23 Sep, Eilat 29 Sep, Kfar Yehoshua, Jizreel valley, 7 Oct and Timorim, Judean lowlands, 23 Oct. A **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* at Neve Ur, Jordan valley, 22/23 Oct and another at Og reservoir, Judean desert, 21 Nov were the 11th and 12th records. A **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* was at Neve Ur 23 Oct. The adult **Great Black-backed Gull** *Larus marinus* that has been wintering since 2006 returned to Acre 13 Nov. Two **Lesser Crested Terns** *Thalasseus bengalensis* were at Eilat 19 Aug. There was an **Oriental Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia (o.) orientalis* at Nafha, central Negev, 10 Nov and at Agamon Hula 11 Nov.

Steppe Grey Shrikes *Lanius meridionalis pallidirostris* were at Maoz Hayim, Bet She'an valley, 25 Sep, Agamon Hula 12 Oct and another at Btekh, lake Kinneret, 17 Dec. A **Dunn's Lark** *Eremalauda dunni* was at Elifaz, south Arava, 14 Nov while **Oriental Skylarks** *Alauda gulgula* were at Eilat 7 Oct (one) and Maoz Hayim 16 Oct (two). A **Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* has been wintering at Shilat, Judean plains. A **Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola* ringed at IBRCE, Eilat, 10 Sep was the ninth record. A **Common Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella naevia* ringed at IBRCE, Eilat, 28 Aug and one found dead at Herzliya 9 Sep were the eighth and ninth records. Two **Menetries's Warblers** *Sylvia mystacea* were recorded at Wadi Mishmar, Judean desert, 18–19 Nov.

A **White-throated Robin** *Irania gutturalis* was at Eilat 14 Aug while a **Black Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas podobe* was at Sapir, north Arava, 5 Aug. A **Pied Stonechat** *Saxicola caprata* at Yeroham, central Negev, 18–23 Oct was the seventh record. **Pied Wheatears** *Oenanthe pleschanka* were at Netanya 24 Sep, Sde Boker 19 Oct and Yotvata 31 Oct. Single **Cyprus Wheatears** *Oenanthe cypriaca* were at Hazerim, north Negev, 16 Sep and at Lotan 21 Sep. There have been a number of records

of **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* this winter with five at Mitzpe Ramon 11 Nov, three at Elkana since 15 Nov and singles at several sites in the Arava. Two **Buff-bellied Pipits** *Anthus (rubescens) japonicus* were at Yotvata 21 Nov and another at Nafha 24 Nov. A **Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla* was at Lehavim, north Negev, 29 Nov while a **Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica* was at Uvda valley, south Negev, 28 Nov.

JORDAN

The second record of **Striated Heron** *Butorides striata* was at Al Azraq wetland reserve 5 and 13 Nov (Plate 3). 1500+ **Armenian Gulls** *Larus armenicus*, the largest single count ever in Jordan, were recorded at Ikeider (near Irbid) rubbish tips and adjacent sewage ponds 9 Dec. **Syrian Serins** *Serinus syriacus* were seen south of Madaba 15 Oct, up to 50 daily at Fujeij and Rajif in early November and one southwest of Madaba 14 Dec (Plate 4).



Plate 3. Striated Heron *Butorides striata* 13 November 2012, Al Azraq, Jordan. © Omar A'abed



Plate 4. Syrian Serins *Serinus syriacus* 3 November 2012, King's highway, near Petra, Jordan. © Feras Rahahleh

KUWAIT

A single **Great Crested Grebe** *Podiceps cristatus* was at Jahra pools in November and another was swimming in the newly created lagoons at Sabah Al Ahmad sea city in December. A **Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca* at Jahra pools reserve (JPR) 7 Nov was the ninth record. Four **Long-tailed Ducks** *Clangula hyemalis* at JPR 7 Nov (Plate 5) was the first record. Over 2000 migrating **Steppe Buzzards** *Buteo b. vulpinus* were seen during a period of a few days at Khuwaisat in September. A **Black-winged Kite** *Elanus caeruleus* was in the Jahra area in September and two **Levant Sparrowhawks** *Accipiter brevipes* were at Al Abraç in October. A **Demoiselle Crane** *Anthropoides virgo* at JPR 6 Oct was the eighth record. A **Spur-winged Lapwing** *Vanellus spinosus* at Jahra East outfall (JEO) on 8 Nov was the 11th record. A **Mediterranean Gull** *Larus melanocephalus* was at Green island, Kuwait city, 2 Feb, the sixth record.

A **Hooded Wheatear** *Oenanthe monacha* at JEO 22 Nov was the eighth record. The first record of **Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola* occurred at JPR 26 Aug while a **Blyth's Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus dumetorum* at Sabah Al Ahmad nature reserve (SAANR) on 15 Sep was the third record. **Booted Warblers** *Hippolais caligata* at JEO 27 Aug and SAANR 28 Aug are the second and third records, while the second record of **Eastern Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus orientalis* occurred at JPR 31 Aug. 30+ **Hypocoliuses** *Hypocolius ampelinus* were seen early on a few mornings in November at Green island. A **Mesopotamian Crow** *Corvus (cornix) capellanus* on 23 Oct at JPR was the first record (Plate 6). Two



Plate 5. Long-tailed Ducks *Clangula hyemalis* at Jahra pools reserve 7 November 2012, Kuwait. © Mike Pope



Plate 6. Mesopotamian Crow *Corvus cornix capellanus* 13 January 2013, Jahra pools reserve, Kuwait. © Gary Brown

Eurasian Siskins *Carduelis spinus* stayed at Al Abraç in December whilst three **Dead Sea Sparrows** *Passer moabiticus* were at JPR 14 Nov, the 14th record.

LEBANON

A **Crested Honey Buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhynchus* and 125 **Levant Sparrowhawks** *Accipiter brevipes* were amongst 18 raptor species over Bhamdoun, Mount Lebanon, 16 Sep.

OMAN

116 **Little Grebes** *Tachybaptus ruficollis* at Al Ansab wetlands 30 Jul is a new maximum for the site. A number of pelagic boat trips up to 5 km offshore from the Seeb and Muscat areas produced 18 **Persian Shearwaters** *Puffinus persicus* (10 Oct), four **Flesh-footed Shearwaters** *Puffinus carneipes* (19 Aug), 45 **Jouanin's Petrels** *Bulweria fallax* (10 Oct), up to 25 **Wilson's Storm Petrels** *Oceanites oceanicus* (22 Jul and 19 Aug) and **Swinhoe's Storm Petrels** *Oceanodroma monorhis* on 22 Jul (one) and 19 Aug (three). A **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* was at Wadi Darbat 13 Nov and two there 29 Dec. There has been a large influx of **Abdim's Storks** *Ciconia abdimii* this autumn with a record 310 at Raysut sewage treatment plant 28 Dec. Birds were also seen further north—158 roosted overnight at Khawr



Plate 7. A Common *Grus grus* and five Demoiselle Cranes *Anthropoides virgo*, East Khawr, Salalah, Oman, 27 Dec 2012. © Hanne & Jens Eriksen

Ghawi (Al Kahil) 21 Nov before heading north the following morning. A single bird was at Dawkah 27 Dec. Two **Little Bitterns** *Ixobrychus minutus* at Al Ansab wetlands 6 Aug is an interesting record and may indicate possible breeding. An adult summer plumage **Chinese Pond Heron** *Ardeola bacchus* at Qatbit motel 20 Sep is the second record for Oman and the Middle East. An **Intermediate Egret** *Egretta intermedia* was at Al Qurum park 7 Nov.

A **Crested Honey Buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhynchus* was at Muntasar 4 Nov while up to six were seen in the Salalah area from 8 Nov, continuing the increasingly regular over-wintering of this species in the area. A single was at Al Qurum park 17 Nov—an unusual record for the north. **Eurasian Griffon Vulture** *Gyps fulvus* is an uncommon passage migrant but one was at Tawi Atair 8 Nov and probably the same bird at Wadi Darbat 13 Nov. **Lappet-faced Vultures** *Torgos tracheliotos* are uncommon in southern Oman so two at Wadi Darbat 13 Nov and three 18 Nov are interesting records. Twelve **Short-toed Snake Eagles** *Circaetus gallicus* at Wadi Darbat 13 Nov is a new maximum. An adult male **Shikra** *Accipiter badius* was at Mughsayl 23 Nov—this species is a rare visitor to Oman. An adult male **Northern Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis* was at Wadi Darbat 21 Dec, the third record. Eight **Greater Spotted Eagles** *Aquila clanga* (one *fulvescens*) were at Wadi Darbat 13

Nov while 23 were at Qurayyat 18 Nov (four *fulvescens*). A **Lesser Spotted Eagle** *Aquila pomarina* at Khawr Taqah 9 Nov would be the tenth record. Twenty **Lesser Kestrels** *Falco naumanni* were seen 11 Oct on Jebel Qara near Salalah—this species is rare in autumn. Single **Amur Falcons** *Falco amurensis* were seen passing southwest 16–21 Nov at Shannah (opposite Masirah island), Duqm, Ras Mirbat and West Khawr with one inland record at Wadi Rabkut 24 Nov.

A single **Macqueen's Bustard** *Chlamydotis macqueenii* was at Qatbit oasis 16 Nov. A **Common Crane** *Grus grus* was at Wadi Darbat 11 Oct and six at Sahanawt farm 25 Nov. A single remained in the Salalah area (feeding at East Khawr and roosting at Sahanawt farm) until at least 31 Dec. Five **Demoiselle Cranes** *Anthropoides virgo* first seen at Sahanawt farm 25 Oct followed the same routine as the latter Common Crane and were still present on 31 Dec (Plate 7). Two **Little Crakes** *Porzana parva* were at Mughsayl 7 Nov. The first record for Oman and the Middle East of **Ruddy-breasted Crake** *Porzana fusca* was found at Wadi Darbat 23 Nov and remained there until 4 Dec. The long-staying **Red-knobbed Coots** *Fulica cristata* at West Khawr were seen with chicks 2 Aug (four adults and two chicks seen). Three adults and four downy chicks were there 28 Dec. Oman is an important migration stop and wintering ground for the critically endangered **Sociable Lapwing**

Vanellus gregarius. 69 were at Sahanawt farm 19 Nov and 72 on 26 Dec, with smaller numbers (maximum seven 28 Nov) at Sohar Sun farm (SSF) from 2 Nov. A juvenile **Caspian Plover** *Charadrius asiaticus* was at SSF 30/31 Jul, the only record this autumn. **Great Knots** *Calidris tenuirostris* are regular visitors to Barr al Hikman but rare elsewhere so one at East Khawr 19 Jul was both early and unusual. A **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* was at Al Ansab wetlands 2–16 Nov. **Long-toed Stint** *Calidris subminuta* is an uncommon visitor to Oman so two at SSF 22–25 Jul is of note. 700 **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus* were seen on a pelagic trip off Seeb 24 Sep. **Small Pratincoles** *Glareola lactea*, an uncommon passage migrant, were seen 18 Nov at East Khawr (three), 25 Nov at SSF (one) and 20 Dec at Khawr Baleed (five). An adult **Great Black-headed Gull** *Larus ichthyaetus* at Qurayyat 18 Nov was a very early arrival. Six **Baltic Gulls** *Larus fuscus fuscus* at Khawr Rouri 26 Jul were unusual in terms of date and number. Four adult **Lesser Noddies** *Anous tenuirostris* were at East Khawr on 9 Aug.

A **Pied Cuckoo** *Oxylophus jacobinus* singing at East Khawr 19 Jul was interesting—presumably one of the influx last winter, but did it attract a mate? Records have been increasing in recent years though usually this species is seen on Masirah and occasionally as overshoots on the mainland. An early record of **Asian Koel** *Eudynamis scolopaceus* in the north 7 Aug at Muscat international airport and one 8 Oct at the nearby Wave residential area are interesting—were they the same bird? A record of **Arabian Spotted Eagle Owl** *Bubo (africanus) milesi* at SSF 7 Sep is a further confirmation that this species is present in the north and not just the south as had been initially thought. A **Short-eared Owl** *Asio flammeus* at Ras A'Sawadi 23 Oct was an early record. Pelagics off Seeb on 19 Aug and 10 Oct each produced two **European Nightjars** *Caprimulgus europaeus*. An **Egyptian Nightjar** *Caprimulgus aegyptius* was at Qatbit 3–4 Nov. Two **Alpine Swifts** *Tachymarptis melba* were seen at Khawr Taqah 9 Nov—this species is a rare migrant in Oman. Three **European Rollers** *Coracias garrulus* were seen 6 Jul at SSF—a very early or a very late record. Nine were also there 25 Sep. A **Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis* was at East Khawr 5–10 Nov and

another at Khawr Baleed 20 Dec (the same bird?), the seventh record. 20 **European Bee-eaters** *Merops apiaster* (including at least five young birds) were on Jebel Akhdar 19 Jul.

Migrant shrikes were in good numbers at Qatbit motel 20 Sep—one **Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio*, 35 **Daurian Shrikes** *Lanius isabellinus* and five **Turkestan Shrikes** *Lanius (i.) phoenicuroides*. Records of **Hypocoliuses** *Hypocolius ampelinus* included two at Mudday 14 Nov, four at Qatbit 17 Nov, 24 at Shisr 24 Nov and, most unusually, one in the north at Medinat Sultan Qaboos, Muscat, 1 Dec. **Dunn's Lark** *Eremelauda dunni* is a rare breeding resident and difficult to locate but two were seen at Mudday 24 Aug and two near Qatbit 25 Nov. Two **Hume's Leaf Warblers** *Phylloscopus humei* were at Qitbit 25 Nov and one at Shisr 27 Dec. Three **Common Mynas** *Acridotheres tristis* were at Qitbit 23 Aug (two 20 Sep)—the first record for this central desert location. A **Thrush Nightingale** *Luscinia luscinia* was seen in Wadi Darbat 11 Oct with one there also 6 and 10 Nov (tenth record). 30 **Common Nightingales** *Luscinia megarhynchos* were also at the same location 11 Oct. Four **Isabelline Wheatears** *Oenanthe isabellina* at SSF was an early record. A **Semi-collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula semitorquata* was at Wadi Darbat 23 Nov, the first record for some years. A male and female **Nile Valley Sunbird** *Anthodiaeta metallica* were at Qatbit 25 Nov and a pair at Shisr on the same date. 300 **Yellow-throated Sparrows** *Gymnoris xanthocollis* were at the Wave, Muscat, on 2 Sep. A **Meadow Pipit** *Anthus pratensis* was at SSF 16 Nov. A single **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* was at Wadi Darbat 13 Nov while a record six were at Hilf 23 Dec. Sixty **Yemen Serins** *Crithagra menachensis* were found at Shaat (82 km west of Salalah) on 24 Nov—a probable new breeding site. 11 **Eurasian Siskins** *Carduelis spinus* were on Sayq plateau 11 Dec. A **Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla* at Qatbit 27 Oct was the ninth record.

QATAR

There were two sightings of **European Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus*, a rare passage migrant—a juvenile at Irkayya farm (IF) 23 Sep and another at Ras Al Shindwee 5 Oct. Two juvenile **Black Kites** *Milvus migrans* were



Plate 8. Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciatus* 21 October 2012
Irkayya farm, Qatar. © Neil Morris



Plate 9. Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla* 4 November
2012, Sailiya sewage treatment plant, Qatar. © Neil Morris

at IF 11/12 Oct. **Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus* is a rare winter visitor and passage migrant, so two birds (dark morph, age not fully determined) at IF 4 Nov are of note. A juvenile **Bonelli's Eagle** *Aquila fasciatus* at IF 25 Sep was the first record for Qatar and it was still there 7 Dec (Plate 8). **Merlin** *Falco columbarius* is a rare winter visitor and passage migrant so a female at IF 7–16 Nov is an interesting record.

Two records of **Water Rail** *Rallus aquaticus*, a rare winter visitor and passage migrant—one Abu Nakhla 2 Nov and one Sailiya (west) sewage treatment plant run-off area 4 Nov. **Little Crake** *Porzana parva* is also a rare visitor but there have been two records this autumn—a juvenile at Abu Nakhla 7 Sep

and another at Ras Al Shindwee 21 Sep, the third and fourth records. The first record of **Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla* occurred 4 Nov at Sailiya (west) sewage treatment plant (Plate 9). An adult and juvenile **Sociable Lapwing** *Vanellus gregarius* were at the latter site 9 Nov. Two **Caspian Plovers** *Charadrius asiaticus*, a rare passage migrant, were at IF 14 Sep. The second record of **Eurasian Dotterel** *Charadrius morinellus* was at IF 9–11 Nov. There have been a number of records of **Short-eared Owl** *Asio flammeus*, a rare winter visitor, this autumn. One was at IF 5–25 Oct, while six were there 9–16 Nov. One was found dead at Qatar sand treatment plant 28 Oct. A **Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis* (a rare winter visitor) was at Abu Nakhla 26 Oct.

The second and third records of **Garden Warbler** *Sylvia borin* were at Al Corniche, central Doha, 23 Sep and IF 10 Oct. The second and third records of **Eurasian Siskin** *Carduelis spinus* were at Umm Bab desalination plant 27 Nov–1 Dec (three birds) and IF 7 Dec. **Striolated Bunting** *Emberiza striolata* is a vagrant to Qatar so an adult male at Learaig 5 Oct is of note.

SAUDI ARABIA

[Sabkhat Al Fasl (SAF), Jubail, is a wetland site 125 km north of Dhahran. Ash Shargiyah development company farm (ASDCF), Fadhili, is 40 km from Jubail.]

110 **Northern Shovelers** *Anas clypeata* were at Dhahran 18 Oct with two **Ferruginous Ducks** *Aythya nyroca* there 15 Nov. Three juvenile **Greater Flamingos** *Phoenicopterus roseus* were an unusual sight inland at Dhahran 23 Nov. A single juvenile **Eurasian Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* was at Dammam port mangroves 18 Jun with five juveniles at SAF 26 Jul. 62 **Western Great Egrets** *Ardea alba* at SAF 13 Nov was a high count for the Eastern province. An adult male **Crested Honey Buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhynchus* was at SAF 29 Nov. 250 migrating **Black Kites** *Milvus migrans* roosted in a pivot field 25 km north of Tabuk 27 Sep while 2200 roosted 28 Sep in pivot fields 25 km southeast of Tabuk. Fifteen **Black-eared Kites** *Milvus (migrans) lineatus* were at Batinah island (Abu Ali) 22 Jun and appear to be the first confirmed records of this taxon for the Eastern province with two birds over Marjan compound, Jubail, 13 Jul and



Plate 10. Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* | November 2012, Sabkhat Al Fasl, Jubail, Saudi Arabia. © Jem Babbington

a juvenile at SAF 27/28 Sep. A **Long-legged Buzzard** *Buteo rufinus* was at SAF 22 Nov and a max count of 25 **Western Marsh Harriers** *Circus aeruginosus* at that site 29 Nov. A max count of fifteen **Greater Spotted Eagles** *Aquila clanga*, including thirteen juveniles, at SAF 16 Nov (Plate 10) with a max five juvenile birds at Dhahran 15 Nov. A single **Eastern Imperial Eagle** *Aquila heliaca* was at SAF 18 Oct and 29 Nov and a juvenile **Little Crake** *Porzana parva* was there 27 Sep. An adult **Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla* was at Dhahran 8 Oct.

One adult **Crab Plover** *Dromas ardeola* was at Dammam/Al Khobar wader roost south, Tarut bay, 18 Jun with numbers increasing gradually to four by 10 Aug. Other records included one at Jubail corniche 22 Jun, an adult and begging juvenile at Batinah island, Abu Ali, 26 Jul and two adults at Dammam port mangroves 27 Jul. Two **Northern Lapwings** *Vanellus vanellus* were at Dhahran 12 Nov. An adult **Spur-winged Lapwing** *Vanellus spinosus* was at Dhahran 8 Aug with another 27–30 Sep and a third adult at ASDCF 12 Oct. These were only the fifth to seventh records for the Eastern province. Ten **Sociable Lapwings**

Vanellus gregarius were 10 km north of Tabuk 15 Nov, the largest number seen in Saudi Arabia for some years. A moulting adult **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* was at ASDCF 12 Oct. A single **Pin-tailed Snipe** *Gallinago stenura* was at Dhahran settling pond 24 Oct. 50 **Broad-billed Sandpipers** *Limicola falcinellus* were at Dammam wader roost 20 Jul and 162 were at Dhahran Expro high tide roost, Tarut bay, 10 Aug (Plate 11). 35 **Collared Pratincoles** *Glareola pratincola* were in a pivot field northwest of Riyadh at Ha'ir 25 Aug. An adult **Armenian Gull** *Larus armenicus* was at Al Khobar corniche 30 Nov and 106 **Caspian Terns** *Hydroprogne caspia* were at SAF 28 Sep.

Single **Egyptian Nightjars** *Caprimulgus aegyptius* were at SAF 5, 12 and 19 Jul with two 26 Jul. A **Basra Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus griseldis* was at Dhahran 24 Sep. A large movement of **White-throated Robins** *Irania gutturalis* involving at least 100 birds occurred 16–21 Aug in the Baha area of the Asir mountains (southwest Saudi Arabia). A first year **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* was at Dhahran 22–28 Sep. A **Red-breasted**



Plate 11. Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* 31 August 2012, Sabkhat Al Fasl, Jubail, Saudi Arabia. © Jem Babbington

Flycatcher *Ficedula parva* was at Dhahran 10 Oct and a **Corn Bunting** *Emberiza calandra* was there 16 Nov.

TURKEY

Winter came early this year and a number of species that normally visit later were recorded in October and November. Three **Bewick's Swans** *Cygnus columbianus* at Kızılırmak delta 9 Nov and a single **Red-breasted Goose** *Branta ruficollis* in Erzurum plain 16 Nov are early arrivals. Two **Marbled Ducks** *Marmaronetta angustirostris* in Kars 13 Aug may give hope for the eastern population. The long staying **Eider** *Somateria mollissima* at Istanbul in Riva is no longer there but a male, possibly the same bird, showed up in Karaburun 20 Nov. **Red-throated Diver** *Gavia stellata* was already present at Büyükçekmece lake 15 Nov. A sea watching trip off Altınkum, Muğla, resulted in a record number of 120 **Storm Petrels** *Hydrobates pelagicus* on 28 Aug, showing that the species is indeed present off the Turkish coast. A **Northern Gannet** *Morus bassanus* was already at the most northeastern corner of the Mediterranean sea in Milleyha, Hatay, on 20 Oct. The **Lesser Flamingo** *Phoeniconaias minor*

on Kulu lake 24 Oct–2 Nov might well be the same individual observed earlier in the year.

A **Red Kite** *Milvus milvus* was at Saroz bay, Çanakkale, on 23 Oct. A single **Black-winged Kite** *Elanus caeruleus* in Milleyha, Hatay, on 4 Nov may prove a pattern of visiting birds in late autumn from the south. Two **Eurasian Griffon Vultures** *Gyps fulvus* were in Nizip, Gaziantep, 10 Nov—this species is rare in southeast Turkey in winter. A juvenile **Shikra** *Accipiter badius* caught at Aras ringing station 30 Aug was the second record, the first being a bird caught by sparrowhawk catchers on the Black sea coast in 2011. The early divers and waterfowl were accompanied by a number of **Rough-legged Buzzards** *Buteo lagopus*—one in Gümüşhane 18 Nov, a record number of five over Büyükçekmece lake, Istanbul, 17 Nov and singles 26 and 29 Nov were most likely passage birds moving to the central plateau. An adult **Lanner Falcon** *Falco biarmicus* at Büyükçekmece lake was first seen 22 Nov and stayed a week. During migration, a juvenile **Saker Falcon** *Falco cherrug* hunted near Riva pastures, Istanbul, 29 Sep. November always produces migrant **Little Bustards** *Tetrax tetrax* along the Black sea coast, but an unexpected

bird was on Bolu Dörtdivan highlands 10 Nov. The passage of **Sociable Lapwings** *Vanellus gregarius* was well documented. Eight were in Erzurum marshes 22 Sep, three in Bismil 25 Sep and a staggering flock of 1300 birds in the traditional area at Ceylanpınar on the Syrian border 7 Oct. Seven **Bar-tailed Godwits** *Limosa lapponica* 13 Jul at Beypazarı is an unexpected mid-summer sighting for this rare coastal migrant. Single **Terek Sandpipers** *Xenus cinereus* were in Alacati marshes 13 Jul and in Milleyha, Hatay, 9 Aug. A single **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* in Çukurova delta 30 Sep was the sixth record for the country. A long staying **Grey Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius* 15–29 Sep in Tuzla Adana was the fourth record.

After long northerly storms in the Black sea 19–25 Nov, a heavily moulting **Pomarine Skua** *Stercorarius pomarinus* turned up in Karaburun, Istanbul. Single **Eurasian Eagle Owls** *Bubo bubo* often turn up in big cities—an injured individual was found in Istanbul 5 Aug and a single in Ankara 8 Dec. Milleyha produced a passage **Short-eared Owl** *Asio flammeus* on 10 Nov. After a long absence, **White-throated Kingfisher** *Halcyon smyrnensis* seems to be back on the Euphrates—singles were photographed at Birecik 1 Nov and 1 Dec. The most southern **White-backed Woodpecker** *Dendrocopos leucotos* was recorded again in the Amanos mountains, Hatay on 14 Jul.

Regular visits to the eastern Black sea have proven that **Booted Warbler** *Iduna caligata* is indeed a regular autumn migrant. A single was present 3 Sep on the coast at Rize, another 8 Sep and four on 9 Sep. The number of unusual leaf warblers was not as high as autumn 2011. A single **Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus viridanus* was ringed in Cernek ringing station, Samsun, 19 Aug and a single **Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* showed up in Sinop 2 Nov. **Spectacled Warbler** *Sylvia conspicillata* seems to be a regular passage and winter visitor to Hatay. Two were present on 29 Oct at Kırıkhan. **Common Myna** *Acridotheres tristis* may be spreading. One singing in Topkapı palace, İstanbul 21 Sep is the first record for the European side, and a single in Gazi University 7 Sep may be the return of the species to Ankara. **Pied Wheatears** *Oenanthe pleschanka* probably bred



Plate 12. White-eared Bulbul *Pycnonotus (leucogenys) leucotis* 19 October 2012, Birecik, Turkey. © Emin Yoğurtcuoğlu

in the far northwest of the country at Gala lake, Enez—four juveniles were present 10 Aug. A **Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti* was at Büyükçekmece lake 21 Oct and another Milleyha, Hatay, 29 Sep.

Unusual pipits were concentrated this year in Mileyha, Hatay. A single **Richard's Pipit** *Anthus richardi* was there 10 Nov, the second record, and the first record of **Blyth's Pipit** *Anthus godlewskii* was on 17 Nov. A wintering **Tawny Pipit** *Anthus campestris* was there 8 Dec and singles of **Buff-bellied Pipit** *Anthus (rubescens) japonicus* on 4 and 17 Nov. The first record of the **White-eared Bulbul** *Pycnonotus (leucogenys) leucotis* finally came from Birecik when two were seen on 19 Oct (Plate 12). The species was known to move north along the Euphrates in Syria and was therefore expected to occur some time in Turkey. A single **Rock Bunting** *Emberiza cia* 7 Sep at Toygar Tepe, Istanbul, may be the first modern record for the province. Finally a male **Red-headed Bunting** *Emberiza bruniceps* in breeding plumage in Rize 7 Sep is probably the first proven record of the species. All other records are a century old and probably relate to cage birds.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

The tenth record of **Cotton Pygmy Goose** *Nettapus coromandelianus* was at Zakher lake 8–26 Dec. A **Marbled Duck** *Marmaronetta angustirostris* at Al Warsan lakes 14–29 Nov was the sixth record while a **Greater Scaup** *Aythya marila* at Ruwais water treatment plant 9–10 Nov was the first. Up to 300 **Jouanin's**



Plate 13. Himalayan Griffon Vulture *Gyps himalayensis* 13 October 2012, Dubai desert conservation reserve, United Arab Emirates. © Stephen James



Plate 14. Brown-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus brunnicephalus* 12 Dec 2012, Dibba harbour, United Arab Emirates. © Tommy Pedersen

Petrels *Bulweria fallax* (seventh record) seen during Khor Kalba pelagic boat trips (24 Oct–16 Nov) was an unprecedented count since the previous maximum was only two.

This was surpassed by a count of 609 birds on 21 Dec. A fledgling **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* 20 Aug in Al Ain was the first UAE breeding record. A **Himalayan Griffon Vulture** *Gyps himalayensis* at the Dubai desert conservation reserve 13–16 Oct (Plate 13) is the first for Arabia. It was in the company of 47 **Lappet-faced Vultures** *Torgos tracheliotos* (a new UAE maximum count), four **Eurasian Griffon Vultures** *Gyps fulvus* and a **Cinereous Vulture** *Aegyptius monachus* (first record). Some of these birds lingered to 31 Oct. A juvenile **Shikra** *Accipiter badius* at Sila'a peninsula 28 Sep–6 Oct and at Kharran 24 Nov are the second and third vagrant records (there are resident birds in Dubai). A first-winter **Mediterranean Gull** *Larus melanocephalus* at Al Warsan lakes 22 Nov is the tenth record while an adult **Black-legged Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla* in Dibba harbour 7–11 Dec is the fifth record. An immature **Brown-headed Gull** *Chroicocephalus brunnicephalus* Dibba harbour 11/12 Dec (Plate 14) was the seventh record and first since 2001. A single **Lesser Noddy** *Anous tenuirostris* was recorded 16 Nov during a Khor Kalba pelagic (sixth record).

A **Brown Shrike** *Lanius cristatus* 20–24 Nov at Wadi Bih was the seventh record. A **Mesopotamian Crow** *Corvus (cornix) capellanus* 26 Nov–7 Dec on Siniyah island is the first record for the UAE. A **Wire-tailed Swallow** *Hirundo smithii* was at Zakher lake 30/31 Dec. The sixth record of **Black Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas podobe* was at Sila'a peninsula 15–16 Nov. A **Caspian Stonechat** *Saxicola maurus variegatus* at Al Wathba camel racetrack 22 Nov is the first autumn record. A **Taiga Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicilla* was present at Wamm farms 25 Nov–3 Dec while another was in Safa park from 30 Nov onwards (fourth and fifth records). A **Buff-bellied Pipit** *Anthus (rubescens) japonicus* was at Al Hamrania nursery 26 Nov. A new roost of up to 100 **Hypocoliuses** *Hypocolius ampelinus* was discovered in the mangroves on Yas island from 20 Nov onwards. The first record since 2001 of **Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla* was in Wadi Bih 26 Oct.

YEMEN

On 29 Nov at Al Hiswah marsh, Aden, more than 200 **Abdim's Storks** *Ciconia abdimii* were seen circling overhead. The birds were seen

later that day roosting at the Aden sewage lagoons. It is interesting that unusually large numbers were seen in Oman at the same period—see above. Also at Al Hiswah more than 200 **Western White Storks** *Ciconia ciconia* were seen among numerous wintering waders and waterfowl. A total of nine **African Sacred Ibises** *Threskiornis aethiopicus* were counted at Al Hiswah and the Al Mansoorah causeway but only a single **Black-headed Heron** *Ardea melanocephala* was observed. On 1 Nov seven **Eurasian Griffon Vultures** *Gyps fulvus* were feeding on dead chickens at Sanhan about 25 km south of Sana'a. Two **Short-toed Snake Eagles** *Circaetus gallicus* were at Al Hiswah 29 Nov with a juvenile **Greater Spotted Eagle** *Aquila clanga*. About 50 **Steppe Eagles** *Aquila nipalensis* of various ages were feeding with the Eurasian Griffon Vultures at Sanhan on 1 Nov—increasing to 70 on 8 Nov. A juvenile **Eastern Imperial Eagle** *Aquila heliaca* was at Sanhan 1 Nov, increasing to four on 8 Nov (three juveniles and an adult). Two juveniles and a subadult were at Al Hiswah 29 Nov.

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