

# AROUND THE REGION

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Records and photographs for *Sandgrouse* 33 (1) should be sent by 15 Dec to atr@osme.org.

## AFGHANISTAN

Records were received from Richard Seargent, Camp Bastion, Helmand province. He recorded many common migrants during the spring including 20+ **Demoiselle Cranes** *Anthropoides virgo* overhead on 10 Mar, four **White-tailed Lapwings** *Vanellus leucurus* on 17 Mar, a **Scrub Warbler** *Scotocerca inquieta* singing and holding territory 26–30 Mar, a **White-throated Robin** *Irania gutturalis* on 30 Mar and a **Rosy Pipit** *Anthus roseatus* 21 and 26 Jan. Away from Camp Bastion, three **Red Crossbills** *Loxia curvirostra* were at Cha-en Anjir, Helmand, 26 Jan.

## ARMENIA

A **Greater Scaup** *Aythya marila* was recorded at Lake Sevan during mid-winter counts and is the third or fourth record for Armenia.

## BAHRAIN

A **Purple Swamphen** *Porphyrio porphyrio* in the reeds of the effluent outfall behind Dilmen Poultry plant, Hamalah, on 23 Jan was the first for Bahrain. There were five **Cream-coloured Coursers** *Cursorius cursor* at Busateen mid-May. A sizeable breeding colony of **Turtle Doves** *Streptopelia turtur* was located to the south of Al Areen wildlife park this spring. This site was known to hold birds in the 1980s and 24 nests were recorded this spring, all in desert broom bushes. Also recorded for the first time in several years were nesting **Namaqua Doves** *Oena capensis* at two sites; one in the south of the island and one in the Hamala experimental station. The second **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* for Bahrain was at A'Ali agriculture farm on 20 Feb; the previous record was 20–27 March 1986. There was a significant roost of **Hypocoliuses** *Hypocolius ampelinus* in

southeast Jasra within the grounds of a royal palace. The roost had over 200 birds in Dec 2009 and numbers dropped to less than 100 birds by the end of Jan and only 10s of birds by the end of Feb. A **Semi-collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula semitorquata* was at Awali 24 Apr.

## CYPRUS

An adult **Gannet** *Morus bassanus* was off Paphos lighthouse 30 Mar, a **Saker Falcon** *Falco cherrug* at Akrotiri on 8 Mar, followed by birds at Phinikas 1 Apr and Mandria the next day. A **Little Crane** *Porzana parva* was at Aspro dam pools 14 Jan and single **Baillon's Crakes** *Porzana pusilla* at lower Xeros valley 2–5 Apr and Aspro dam pools 11–15 Apr. At Karpas peninsula 22–24 Mar one **Demoiselle Crane** *Anthropoides virgo* and 350 **Common Cranes** *Grus grus* were recorded. A peak of 10 **Greater Sand Plovers** *Charadrius leschenaultii* was at Spiros pool on 13 Mar, one **Caspian Plover** *Charadrius asiaticus* was at Paphos airport 3 Apr, two were at Larnaca airport 4 Apr, and a male at Mandria 10 Apr, joined by a female the next day and one was at Larnaca sewage works fields 12 and 15 Apr. On 21 Mar a **Eurasian Dotterel** *Charadrius morinellus* was at Akrotiri GP and six were at Akrotiri salt lake 29 Mar. Also at Akrotiri GP were three **Cream-coloured Coursers** *Cursorius cursor* 19–25 Mar and one there 4 and 27 Apr. A **White-tailed Plover** *Vanellus leucurus* was at Pissouri 20 Mar, the 8th record since 2000. Four **Great Black-headed Gulls** *Larus ichthyaetus* at cape Zevgari on 15 Mar was a good count. Five **Laughing Doves** *Streptopelia senegalensis* seen flying in from the sea at Mandria 11 Apr will be only the second wild record if accepted and a female **Namaqua Dove** *Oena capensis* was at Lara, Akamas, 5 May, the second for Cyprus if accepted as

wild. Two **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** *Pterocles orientalis* flushed from the ground at Agios Filon, Karpas peninsula, 8 Apr, was only the 6th record in the last 10 years. A **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* at Asprokremmos dam 13 Jan was the earliest record for five years. A **White-throated Kingfisher** *Halcyon smyrnensis* was reported at Akrotiri salt lake 29 March.

The thirteenth record of **Asian Desert Warbler** *Sylvia nana* was at Akrotiri 9 Mar and the fourteenth at Akhna dam 19 Apr. There was a good showing of **Wallcreepers** *Tichodroma muraria* with one at Avagas gorge 10 Jan, at least one at Kensington cliffs 1–8 Mar, with 2 there 7 Mar. An adult **Rose-coloured Starling** *Sturnus roseus* was at Asprokremmos dam 4 Apr. There was a good run of interesting wheatears at Karpas peninsula 22–24 Mar with c40 **Isabelline Wheatears** *Oenanthe isabellina*, c50 **Cyprus Wheatears** *Oenanthe cypriaca* and two **Pied Wheatears** *Oenanthe pleschanka*; the latter will be the second record if accepted. There were at least 63 **Desert Wheatears** *Oenanthe deserti* on the south coast 6–12 Mar. A **Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata* at Paphos airport 1 Jan was unseasonal. Three **Semi-collared Flycatchers** *Ficedula semitorquata* were recorded on the island 26 Mar. The first **White-winged Snowfinch** *Montifringilla nivalis* for Cyprus was reported at Macheras forest 3 Jan. There were c200 singing **Corn Buntings** *Emberiza calandra* at Karpas peninsula 22–24 Mar, a **Trumpeter Finch** *Bucanetes githagineus* at Mandria on 31 Mar and a **Pine Bunting** *Emberiza leucocephalos* reported at Troodos on 2 Jan will be the sixth record if accepted. There were single **Cinereous Buntings** *Emberiza cineracea* at Agia Napa sewage works 22 Mar, Amathus 25 Mar and cape Greco 2 Apr.

## EGYPT

Up to 12 **Yellow-billed Storks** *Mycteria ibis* were at Abu Simbel 4–6 Apr, 46 **Black Storks** *Ciconia nigra* were roosting in the desert north of Hurghada 29 Apr and a **Eurasian Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* was at Abu Simbel 5 Apr. A pair of **Three-banded Plovers** *Charadrius tricollaris* was at Aswan 24 Apr and on 1 May two pairs and a probable juvenile were seen. A male **Caspian Plover** *Charadrius asiaticus* was at El Gouna golf course 4 Apr and two **Black-**

**winged Pratincoles** *Glareola nordmanni* were seen there on the same date, with another at Abassa 17 Apr. A **Pharaoh Eagle Owl** *Bubo ascalaphus* was at Kom Ombo temple 7 Apr, two **Hooded Crows** *Corvus cornix* at Naama Bay 10 Mar and one at Nuweiba, Sinai, two days later. On 11 Mar a **Hypocolius** *Hypocolius ampelinus* was at Nabi, Sinai, a **Savi's Warbler** *Locustella luscinioides* at Sharm el Sheikh sewage works 12 Apr and a male **Rüppell's Warbler** *Sylvia rueppelli* was seen near Feiran oasis 9 Mar. The first **Yellow-throated Sparrow** *Gymnoris xanthocolis* for Egypt was at Marsa Alam's Brayka Bay resort 5–6 Jun. Eleven **Sinai Rosefinches** *Carpodacus synoicus* were at Santa Katarina monastery, Sinai, 12 Mar, a **Corn Bunting** *Emberiza calandra* at Naama Bay 10 Mar and a **House Bunting** *Emberiza striolata* at Santa Katarina monastery 15 Apr. A survey in the rarely visited area of Gebel Elba was carried out in Apr and provided excellent baseline information for future visits. **Rosy-patched Bush-shrikes** *Rhodophoneus cruentus* were seen in two locations; one in Wadi Adeib and a pair in Wadi Akwamatra but the report (<http://birdinginegypt.com/trip-reports.php>) suggests a decline in numbers of this species.

## GEORGIA

A list of unusual bird records in Georgia during 2009 is presented on the unofficial website of the Bird Conservation Union of Georgia ([www.bcug.narod.ru/2009.html](http://www.bcug.narod.ru/2009.html)) and records from 1997–2008 are also on the site eg a **Hobby** *Falco subbuteo* was recorded 2 Dec 2009 in Batumi, Ajaria, southwest Georgia, a very late record of this species.

## IRAQ

During the 2010 winter surveys in Kurdistan, Iraq, there were several interesting findings including 630 **Lesser White-fronted Geese** *Anser erythropus* (nearly 3% of the world population), two **Red-breasted Geese** *Branta ruficollis*, two **Pine Buntings** *Emberiza leucocephalos*, three **Little Bustards** *Tetrax tetrax* (the first recorded in Iraq since 1940s), 246 **Great Black-headed Gulls** *Larus ichthyæetus*, 14 **Alpine Accentors** *Prunella collaris*, nine **Eastern Imperial Eagles** *Aquila heliaca*, one **Red Kite** *Milvus milvus* and 20 **Eurasian Siskins** *Carduelis spinus*.



**Plate 1.** Marbled Ducks *Marmaronetta angustirostris* en masse, 5 February 2010, Baghdadiya, Iraq. © Mudhafar Salim/Nature Iraq



**Plate 2.** Upcher's Warbler *Hippolais languida* on nest, May 2010, Iraq. © RF Porter



**Plate 3.** White-winged Snowfinch *Montifringilla nivalis*, June 2010, Piramagroon mountain, Kurdistan, Iraq. © Korsh Ararat/Nature Iraq



**Plate 4.** White-winged Snowfinches *Montifringilla nivalis*, June 2010, Piramagroon mountain, Kurdistan, Iraq. © Korsh Ararat/Nature Iraq

The central and western deserts of Iraq are one of the main migration routes for raptors in Iraq. In spring, over 450 **Lesser Kestrels** *Falco naumanni*, 500 **Black Kites** *Milvus migrans* and **Black-eared Kites** *Milvus migrans lineatus*, four **Eastern Imperial Eagles** *Aquila heliaca* and six **Pallid Harriers** *Circus macrourus* were seen.

In the unique, regenerating, southern marshes several amazing findings were recorded including 7000 **Greater Flamingos** *Phoenicopterus roseus*, 30 000 **Northern Shovelers** *Anas clypeata*, 41 000 **Marbled Ducks** *Marmaronetta angustirostris* (more than the known world population, Plate 1), 19 000 **Eastern Greylag Geese** *Anser anser rubirostris*, 9000 **Red -crested Pochards** *Netta rufina*, 2500 **Ferruginous Ducks** *Aythya nyroca*, 6000 **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa limosa*, 6000 **Pygmy Cormorants** *Phalacrocorax pygmeus*, 8000 **Dead Sea Sparrows** *Passer moabiticus*,

and seven **Hypocoliuses** *Hypocolius ampelinus*. **White-crowned Wheatear** *Oenanthe leucopyga* was also added to the Iraq bird list.

In Mar 2010, Nature Iraq conducted the Critically Endangered **Sociable Lapwing** *Vanellus gregarius* survey. Thirteen sites were surveyed and signals were obtained from one of the satellite-tagged Sociable Lapwings inside Iraq, near Haditha. Although no lapwings were found, 177 **Demoiselle Cranes** *Anthropoides virgo*, 220 **Western Yellow Wagtails** *Motacilla flava*, 15 **Citrine Wagtails** *Motacilla citreola* and a **Semi-collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula semitorquata* were observed.

In May and June Richard Porter joined Nature Iraq's bird team during Key Biodiversity Areas survey and the Nature Iraq/ BirdLife International annual training course. Many new breeding areas were found and first breeding was proven in Iraq for **Common Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris*, **Upcher's Warbler**



*Hippolais languida* (Plate 2) and **Eastern Orphean Warbler** *Sylvia crassirostris* (found breeding at six and two sites respectively) were recorded. A total of 26 pairs of **Egyptian Vultures** *Neophron percnopterus* were located, as well as two pairs of **Peregrines** *Falco peregrinus*, two pairs of **Rufous-tailed Wheatears** *Oenanthe xanthopyrmyna*, two pairs of **Barbary Falcons** *Falco pelegrinoides* and a singing **Eastern Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus orientalis*. **Great Reed Warblers** *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* were nesting at two sites, and at one **Sedge Warblers** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* were on territory—if breeding is proved this would be new for Iraq. A pair of **Mourning Wheatears** *Oenanthe lugens* was on territory at Piramagroon and **European Rollers** *Coracias garrulus* were breeding at nine sites.

In addition, **Cinereous Buntings** *Emberiza cineracea* of the eastern form *semenowi* were found at 12 sites (60 pairs in total). **Little Swifts** *Apus affinis* were breeding in two colonies of over 10 and 50 pairs in caves at Chami Razan and Dukan respectively and **Alpine Swifts** *Tachymarptis melba* at two colonies, at Ahmed Awa and Bekhal waterfall. Six **Desert Finches** *Rhodospiza obsoleta* were found at three sites and were probably nesting.

Nature Iraq did an ecotourism trip to Piramagroon mountain, one of the most important IBAs in Kurdistan. Important breeding discoveries were made including **White-winged Snowfinch** *Montifringilla nivalis* (Plates 3 & 4), **Golden Eagle** *Aquila chrysaetos*, **Lammergeier** *Gypaetus barbatus*, **Winter Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes* (first breeding record for Iraq) and **Black Redstart** *Phoenicurus ochruros*.

## ISRAEL

Four **Greater White-fronted Geese** *Anser albifrons* were at Shomrat, northwest Galilee, 13 Jan and two were at Zohar, south coastal plains two days later. A **Red-throated Diver** *Gavia stellata*, the fourth record and present since Dec 2009, remained to 12 Feb. The fifth record of **Great Shearwater** *Puffinus gravis* was off Jaffa 3 Feb. There were good numbers of **Leach's Storm Petrel** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* with 15 off Jaffa on 25 Jan and also recorded 4 Feb. A **Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster* remained off Eilat's North Beach Feb–May at least and the

overwintering **Crested Honey Buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhyncus* remained at Eilat throughout Feb until 21 Mar at least. A **Black-winged Kite** *Elanus caeruleus* of the African form *caeruleus* was found exhausted at Wadi Paran, north Arava, on 22 Feb but died the next day and an adult **Verreaux's Eagle** *Aquila verreauxii* was observed on several occasions during Apr over the Eilat mountains. A **Demoiselle Crane** *Anthropoides virgo* remained at Hula during Feb and at least eight were recorded on migration throughout the country in Mar. A **Lesser Sand Plover** *Charadrius mongolus* at KM20 pools, Eilat, 14–24 Mar will be the third for Israel if accepted. At least eight **Caspian Plovers** *Charadrius asiaticus* were recorded during Mar in Yotvata and Eilat, a **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* was at Hula lake on 24 Apr and two were there 20 May and one at Hazor 21 May. A **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* at Shlomi, northwest Galilee on 15 Jan was unseasonal. First-winter **Audouin's Gulls** *Larus audouinii* were at Maoz Hayim, Bet Shean valley, on 10 Jan and at Ashdod 13 Jan, a second-winter was at Ashdod 26 Mar with one also there 26 Apr. An adult **Great Black-backed Gull** *Larus marinus* remained at Acre during Jan and an **Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea* was off Eilat's North Beach 10 Apr. The fifth **Oriental Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia orientalis* (race *meena*) for Israel was at Ashdod 27 Feb.

On 6 June there were five chough sp *Pyrrhocorax* at mount Hermon. Following exceptional winter rainfall, several tens of pairs of **Thick-billed Larks** *Ramphocoris clotbey* were found breeding in the Eilat mountains, S Negev, and Arava during Mar and this number rose to perhaps several hundred pairs during April. By Jun just single birds remained in the area. There was a **Dunn's Lark** *Eremalauda dunni* at Hameishar, south Negev, 26 Mar and during Apr a major breeding event was recorded with perhaps several tens of pairs in the Arava valley, the largest such since 1989. A **Sykes's Warbler** *Iduna rama*, fifth for Israel if accepted, was at Eilat 8 Apr and a singing male **Western Orphean Warbler** *Sylvia hortensis* at Ein Gedi 13 Apr will be the first for the country if accepted. There was a good number of **Menetries's Warblers** *Sylvia mystacea* with one at Yotvata, 15–22 Mar, one at Eilat 22 Mar and two ringed at IBRCE, Eilat,

in early Apr. There were two **Black Scrub Robins** *Cercotrichas podobe* at Yotvata 13–17 Mar and six were recorded during Apr at Eilat and south Arava valley. There were two at Yotvata on 7–8 May and an unusual summer record at Hazeve 2 Jun. A female **Rufous-tailed Wheatear** *Oenanthe (xanthoprymna) xanthoprymna* was at Heftziba quarry, Harod valley, during Feb, a **Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka* at Yotvata, 18–22 Mar and one at Makhtesh Ramon, central Negev, 18 Mar. Six **Cyprus Wheatear** *Oenanthe cyprica* were seen during Mar at Nizzana, Eilat, Ketura and south Dead Sea. A **Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva* at En Afek, northwest Galilee on 4 Jan was unseasonal. There was a large invasion of **Pale Rockfinches** *Carpospiza brachydactyla* with hundreds of pairs moving into central and east Negev in Mar and breeding during Apr following exceptional winter rain. By Jun many pairs were completing their third breeding attempt in the high Negev mountains. A **Blyth's Pipit** *Anthus godlewskii* at Hameishar on 22 Mar will be the fourth record for Israel if accepted and the second **Red-headed Bunting** *Emberiza bruniceps* for Israel was a male at Nizzana on 15 May; the first was in 1976.

## JORDAN

At Aqaba there were 20 **Ferruginous Ducks** *Aythya nyroca* 24 Dec 2009 and three **Brown Boobies** *Sula leucogaster* offshore there on the same date, with up to three 21–25 Mar. Also at Aqaba, there were two **Black Kites** *Milvus migrans* 25 Dec 2009. There was a **Greater Spotted Eagle** *Aquila clanga* at Al Humayna 26 Dec 2009 and one at Kerark 29 Dec 2009 and three **Steppe Eagles** *Aquila nipalensis* and two **Eastern Imperial Eagles** *Aquila heliaca* at Aqaba 24 Dec 2009. The first **Black-legged Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla* for Jordan, a juvenile, was at Aqaba 23–25 Dec 2009. Birders also recorded numerous wintering *brevirostris*-type **Chiffchaffs** *Phylloscopus collybita* at Aqaba in Dec 2009. There were five **Arabian Warblers** *Sylvia leucomelaena* in Aqaba mountains in Mar, single **Black Scrub Robins** *Cercotrichas podobe* at Aqaba allotments 21 and 26 Mar, a male **Semi-collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula semitorquata* in Aqaba palm plantations in Mar and a singing male **Pale Rockfinch** *Carpospiza brachydactyla* in Aqaba mountains Mar. Four

**Tree Pipits** *Anthus trivialis* at Aqaba on 24 Dec 2009, and another there next day, were unseasonal.

## KAZAKHSTAN

A summary of recent news from Kazakhstan has been published in Wassink *Dutch Birding* 32: 128–130. Highlights are presented below. A first-winter **Velvet Scoter** *Melanitta fusca* at Karashengel hunting reserve, Almaty province, 19 Dec 2008 and a **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* at Karakol lake, Mangghystau, 14 Dec 2008 were both first winter records for Kazakhstan. The first **Indian Pond Heron** *Ardeola grayii* for the country, an adult, was at Sorbulak lake, Almaty province, 16 July 2009 and an immature **Lammergeier** *Gypaetus barbatus* at Karatau mountains near Shetpe, Mangghystau province, on 11 May 2009 was the first record for western Kazakhstan. There was an exceptional show of **Lesser Sand Plovers** *Charadrius mongolus* 21 May 2009 with flocks of 14 and 151 birds found at Fetisovo plateau and peninsula, Mangghystau, respectively and, on 24 May, 39 birds were still present at the latter location. There have been only eight previous records. The first winter record of **Dunlin** *Calidris alpina* involved eight birds 14 Dec 2008 at Karakol lake, Mangghystau province. **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa limosa* of the eastern subspecies *melanuiroides* were found on 4 May 2009 (one male) and 7 May 2009 (two males) at Kyzylkol lake, south Kazakhstan province; the fourth and fifth records of this subspecies. Two **Eurasian Curlews** *Numenius arquata* were recorded 14 Dec 2008 at Karakol lake, Mangghystau province, and are the first winter record for the country.

A first-summer **Black-legged Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla* was photographed from a ship on 21 and 25 April 2008 in Kazakh territorial waters in the northern Caspian sea and what was likely to be the same bird was seen on 30 Apr and 1 May 2008 in the Caspian sea off Bautino, Mangghystau province; this is a new species for Kazakhstan. The fifth record of **Mediterranean Gull** *Larus melanocephalus* was seen 13 May 2009, an adult, at the Caspian coast at Fetisovo, Mangghystau province. A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus fuscus* (Baltic Gull) was found dead 28 June 1982 southeast of Ebeyti, Aqtöbe province.

It was ringed as a nestling in Finland 26 Jul 1981. This is the first record of Baltic Gull (and Lesser Black-backed Gull of any subspecies). A first-summer female **Pied Bush Chat** *Saxicola caprata* was recorded 17 May 2009 at Kenderli, Mangghystau province, and another female was photographed at Kenderli 24 May 2009; these are the first records for western Kazakhstan. Between 12 Apr–3 May 2009 seven **Semi-collared Flycatchers** *Ficedula semitorquata* were found at Kenderli, Mangghystau province, and on 25 April 2009, a first-summer male was at Fetisovo plateau, Mangghystau province; these are the second and third records for the country. The first winter record of **Meadow Pipit** *Anthus pratensis* involved 15 birds on 14 Dec 2008 at Karakol lake, Mangghystau province. Two **Masked Wagtails** *Motacilla personata* were found 13 Jan at Slavnov, Zhambyl province, and were the second winter record for the country. Several **Two-barred Crossbills** *Loxia*

*leucoptera* were found amongst flocks of **Red Crossbills** *L. curvirostra* at Tautekeli valley, southern Altai, 27 Jan 2008 and were the fourth record for Kazakhstan and first record in winter.

## KUWAIT

An adult **Lesser Flamingo** *Phoeniconaias minor*, the second for Kuwait, was at Sulaibikhat bay 16–27 Jan and a **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* was at Sabah Al-Ahmed NR 1 May. The first **Amur Falcon** *Falco amurensis* for Kuwait was photographed at SAANR 29 May (Plate 5). Several hundred **Demoiselle Cranes** *Anthropoides virgo* were recorded from 19 Mar, with a peak of 70 at SAANR (Plate 6). There are only four previous records. It is thought they were blown from their normal western Arabian peninsula migration route to the east coast by the gale force westerly winds at the time. The first breeding record of **White-tailed Lapwing** *Vanellus leucurus* in Kuwait



**Plate 5.** Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis*, 29 May 2010, Sabah Al-Ahmed NR, Kuwait. © Mohammed Khorshed



**Plate 6.** Demoiselle Cranes *Anthropoides virgo*, 23 March 2010, Sabah Al-Ahmed NR, Kuwait. © AbdulRahman Al-Sirhan



**Plate 7.** Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus*, 10 April 2010, Jahra Farms, Kuwait. © AbdulRahman Al-Sirhan



**Plate 8.** Hume's Wheatear *Oenanthe albonigra*, 5 February 2010, Kuwait. © AbdulRahman Al-Sirhan



occurred in Jahra Pools reserve in May and the first **Ashy Drongo** *Dicrurus leucophaeus* for Kuwait and Western Palearctic was at Jahra Farms 3–10 Apr (Plate 7). A **Hume's Wheatear** *Oenanthe albonigra* was still at SAANR on 29 Jan and present 5 Feb (Plate 8). A **Desert Finch** *Rhodospiza obsoletus* was at Al Abraq 30 Apr.

## OMAN

Highlights were two first records: a **Melodious Warbler** *Hippolais polyglotta* at Ayn Hamran, near Salalah, 18 Jan, and a **Basra Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus griseldis* at As Sayh, Musandam, 1 May (the latter the same week as one in Abu Dhabi). A juvenile **Common Hawk Cuckoo** *Hierococcyx varius* seen and photographed at Hilf, Masirah island, 14 Jan was only the 2nd record; the first, in 1988, was also from Masirah.

There were 11 **Greater White-fronted Geese** *Anser albifrons* at Khawr Rawri 19 Jan and 23 Feb and a single bird at Al Mughsayl 20–21 Jan, presumably the same birds as in December 2009. **Ferruginous Ducks** *Aythya nyroca* wintered in good numbers at several localities in the Salalah area, with a maximum of 23 at Khawr Rawri 19 Jan. Sea-watching at Ras al Hadd 29–31 May produced the 8th record of **Sooty Shearwater** *Puffinus griseus* (30 May), a rarely seen **Swinhoe's Storm Petrel** *Oceanodroma monorhis*, 950 **Persian Shearwaters** *Puffinus persicus*, 95 **Flesh-footed Shearwaters** *Puffinus carneipes*, 12 **Jouanin's Petrels** *Bulweria fallax*, 3000+ **Bridled Terns** *Onychoprion anaethetus* and two **Arctic Skuas** *Stercorarius parasiticus*. A count of 13 **Black-necked Grebes** *Podiceps nigricollis* at Khawr Ghawi was an unusually high figure. A single **Lesser Flamingo** *Phoeniconaias minor* at Qurayyat 25 Feb–1 Mar was the first for northern Oman. **Red-billed Tropicbirds** *Phaethon aethereus* are rarely seen from shore during the winter months, so two off Raysut cliffs 22 Feb was noteworthy. **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* was considered a vagrant but for the past few years small numbers have been occurring regularly at the coastal khawrs of southern Oman; up to three were at Khawr Rawri in Jan, with five 10 Feb and two 23 Feb. **Abdim's Storks** *Ciconia abdimii* are irregular in winter at farms in the Dhofar region; 16 were at Salalah lagoons 11 Jan. **Intermediate Egrets** *Egretta*

*intermedia* were at Mugsayl (one, 21 Jan and one, 23 Feb) and Khawr Rawri (five, 24 Apr). **Crested Honey Buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhynchus* has recently become something of a regular winter sighting in the south; single birds were at East Khawr 11 Jan, Salalah lagoons 12 Jan, Darbat 13 Jan, and Jarziz farms (two 16–17 Feb and one 20 Feb). Over 300 **Steppe Eagles** *Aquila nipalensis* were at Raysut rubbish dump 17 Feb with >1000 **Western White Storks** *Ciconia ciconia*. A **Greater Spotted Eagle** *Aquila clanga* at Qurayyat 29 Apr was unusually late. A single **Amur Falcon** *Falco amurensis* was at Dawkah 22 Jan with four there 19 Feb. Single **Barbary Falcons** *Falco (peregrinus) peregrinoides* were at Wadi Uyun 16 Feb, Jarziz farms 14 and 20 Feb, and Liwa, northern Oman, 28 Feb. The 1st sighting for 2010 of **Sooty Falcon** *Falco concolor* was of eight birds over the Royal Palace, Muscat, 23 Apr.

A **White-breasted Waterhen** *Amaurornis phoenicurus* and five **Common Cranes** *Grus grus* were at Dawkah 22 Jan. A male and a female **Little Crake** *Porzana parva* were at Mugsayl 23 Feb. Record numbers of **Sociable Lapwings** *Vanellus gregarius* were present at farms in southern Oman during Jan (max 48 at Sahnwaht farm 9 Jan and 29 at Jarziz farms 22 Jan). An **Asian Koel** *Eudynamis scolopaceus* was at Hilf, Masirah, 14 Jan with one at Al Balid farm 18 Feb. There were 15 **Arabian Scops Owls** *Otus (sengalensis) pamela* at Wadi Darbat 15 Feb, an unusually high count, and a single **Arabian Spotted Eagle Owl** *Bubo (africanus) milesi*. Two **Hume's Owls** *Strix butleri* were at Wadi Ashawq 14 Feb and two at Wadi Ash Shuaymiyyah 21 Feb. The **Indian Roller** *Coracias benghalensis* is one of the most ubiquitous birds in northern Oman but a single at Jarziz farms 11 Jan was very surprising. A **Malachite Kingfisher** *Alcedo cristata* at Wadi Mughsayl 11 Jan was only the 4th for Oman.

Up to three **Red-backed Shrikes** *Lanius collurio*, **Lesser Grey Shrikes** *Lanius minor*, **Woodchat Shrikes** *Lanius senator* and **Masked Shrikes** *Lanius nubicus* were present from mid-April to early May at As Sayh and Sall Ala, Musandam, with much larger numbers of **Daurian Shrikes** *Lanius isabellinus*, **Turkestan Shrikes** *Lanius (isabellinus) phoenicuroides* (max 35) and **Southern Grey Shrikes** *Lanius meridionalis* (max 25). Four to five **Oriental**

**Skylarks** *Alauda gulgula* were at Sun farms, Sohar, 25–27 Feb. A **Wire-tailed Swallow** *Hirundo smithii* at Qurryat 20–25 Feb and two at Al Lansab lagoons 23 Feb were the 5th and 6th records. Rare warblers included a **Moustached Warbler** *Acrocephalus melanopogon mimicus* at Qurryat 7 Feb (8th record and the first since 1999), a **Hume's Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus humei* at Ain Hamran 28 Jan (8th record) and a **Savi's Warbler** *Locustella luscinioides* at Thumrait air base 26 Jan–22 Feb (10th record). Up to three **Barred Warblers** *Sylvia nisoria* were at Sall Ala and As Sayh, 16–24 Apr. A **Common Nightingale** *Luscinia megarhynchos* was heard singing at Jarziz farms 21–25 Feb. **White-throated Robins** *Irania gutturalis* are regular in spring at Musandam; up to seven were at Sall Ala 20–24 Apr, but a **Black Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas podobe* there 18–20 Apr was only the 3rd record. One male and three female **Eversmann's Redstarts** *Phoenicurus erythronotus* were at As Sayh 15 Jan. A **'Caspian Stonechat'** *Saxicola maurus variegatus* was at Rahab farm 22 Feb and a **Semi-collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula semitorquata* at Sall Ala 22 Apr. Two **Richard's Pipits** *Anthus (novaeseelandiae) richardi* were at Jarziz farms 21 Feb. Up to five **Blyth's Pipits** *Anthus godlewskii* at Sun farms, Sohar, 7–17 Feb and one at Jarziz farms 17–18 Feb were the 5th and 6th records. **Meadow Pipits** *Anthus pratensis* are possibly overlooked in Oman; up to three birds at Sun Farms 7–11 Feb and one at Muntasar 18 Feb were only the 9th and 10th records. A **Buff-bellied Pipit** *Anthus (rubescens) japonicus* was at Sun farms 10 Jan, the 6th record. An **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* was at Jarziz farms 20 Feb. A **Grey-necked Bunting** *Emberiza buchanani* was at As Sayh 1 May (4th record). A record count of 129 **Ortolan Buntings** *Emberiza hortulana* was at As Sayh 23 Apr with 12 **Black-headed Buntings** *Emberiza melanocephala*.

## QATAR

New species for Qatar were **Variable Wheatear** *Oenanthe (picata) picata* at Al Ruwais 27 Nov 2008 and **Cretzschmar's Bunting** *Emberiza caesia* at Sealine beach resort 19 Mar. At least two pairs of **Purple Herons** *Ardea purpurea* have been found breeding at Abu Nakhla, the first breeding records for Qatar and the Gulf. An adult male **European**



**Plate 9.** Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius*, 12 March 2010, Arakhiya farm, Qatar. © Dileep Kumar

**Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* at Al Khor Community 26 Apr was the 2nd record. An adult female **Merlin** *Falco columbarius* was at Arakhiya farm 30 Jan–5 Feb. A juvenile **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* at Arakhiya farm 12 Mar was the 3rd record and the first since 1982 (Plate 9). An **Alpine Swift** *Tachymarptis melba* was at Al Corniche, Doha, 9 Jan. An adult **White-throated Kingfisher** *Halcyon smyrnensis* Al Dhakira 5 Feb was the 2nd record and the first since 1991. The first proven breeding record of **Bar-tailed Lark** *Ammomanes cinctura* was from southern Qatar 26 Mar. Other good records included a **Garden Warbler** *Sylvia borin* at Arakhiya farm 7 May; a female **Eastern Orphean Warbler** *Sylvia crassirostris* at Ras Abrouq 26 Mar; a **Finsch's Wheatear** *Oenanthe finschii* at Fuwairit 6 Feb; a female **Hooded Wheatear** *Oenanthe monacha* at Fuwairit 12 Feb; and a pair of **Trumpeter Finches** *Bucanetes githagineus* at Fuwairit 12 Feb, the 2nd record.

## SAUDI ARABIA

A survey of an oilfield area in the eastern Rub al Khali in late May/June found 12 potentially-breeding species, nine of which were present presumably because they can utilise man-made habitats. A wastewater site had **Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus* with chicks as well as two or three pairs of **Red-wattled Lapwings** *Vanellus indicus*. The latter were not frantic enough to be breeding at the time but their presence suggested they might well breed later in the season or in future years; this species has been gradually spreading westward in the UAE. **Turtle**



**Doves** *Streptopelia turtur* of the race *arenicola* were courting and likely to breed. Migrants included a **Striated Heron** *Butorides striata* unusually far inland (and possibly the first for western Saudi Arabia) and a flock of 13 **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus*.

## SYRIA

Several contributors acknowledge the invaluable support of the Syrian Society for Conservation of Wildlife (SSCW) and the Desert Commission in assisting with their visits. More birders visited Syria this spring than ever before and the quality of the records was correspondingly high; outstanding records included the second reports of **Mute Swan** *Cygnus olor*, **Red-breasted Goose** *Branta ruficollis* and **Slavonian Grebe** *Podiceps auritus*, the first **Demoiselle Cranes** *Anthropoides virgo* and **Radde's Accentors** *Prunella ocularis* for many years and two **Baillon's Crakes** *Porzana pusilla*, the first apparently since 1905! However, the story of the Palmyra colony of the **Northern Bald Ibis** *Geronticus eremita* appears to be coming to a sad end: of five birds in 2009, two 'disappeared' on migration. Three birds made it back, one pair is breeding in the hills north of Palmyra and one young has left the nest. On the positive side, huge counts of the RDB Endangered **White-headed Duck** *Oxyura leucocephala* at Sabkhat al-Jabbul confirm that a major proportion of the world population winters there. Several exciting new areas were explored. Sabkhat Rawda is a huge and remote lake on the Iraqi border visited as part of a survey for **Lesser White-fronted Geese** *Anser erythropus*. It held an

incredible c24 000 **Ruddy Shelducks** *Tadorna ferruginea* in Feb and on a brief visit 17 Apr **Avocets** *Recurvirostra avosetta* showed signs of breeding, **Great Sand Plovers** *Charadrius leschenaultii* were common and a large flock of **Greater Flamingos** *Phoenicopterus roseus* could barely be discerned through the heat haze. This is clearly an area of exceptional potential; there is no hunting (it is too close to the Iraqi border) and it could easily hold a breeding colony of Greater Flamingos.

Surveys of the protected areas at Abu Qubeis (coastal mountains), Jebel Abdul Aziz (in the Jazira) and Forouloq (near Kassab) yielded valuable results, emphasising their conservation importance. **See-see Partridges** *Ammoperdix griseogularis* were at Karakozak dam (4) and Lower Khabur reservoir dam (2) in March and Jebel Abdul Aziz (2) 12 Apr, as well as the 'usual' site at Halabbiyah. At least four **Black Francolins** *Francolinus francolinus* were heard near the Palm Village hotel, Damascus, 4–5 May; this is very surprising as their nearest known locality is the Euphrates valley, 400 km across the desert. Perhaps they were released. Four **Mute Swans** *Cygnus olor* were at lower Khabur reservoir 9 Apr. Up to 72 **Lesser White-fronted Geese** *Anser erythropus* were at Sabkhat al-Jabbul this winter; this RDB Vulnerable species clearly winters regularly in northern Syria. Two **Red-breasted Geese** *Branta ruficollis* were at Jabbul 16 Feb. At least 2300 **White-headed Ducks** *Oxyura leucocephala* were at Jabbul 19 Feb with 1850 still present 3 Mar; these counts are by far the highest from Syria. Single figures at Mheimideh on several dates included a



**Plate 10.** Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla*, 11 April 2010, Arak dam, Syria. © Bernhard Herren



**Plate 11.** Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens*, April 2010, Syria. © Bernhard Herren

female with 6 young 18 Apr. A **Slavonian Grebe** *Podiceps auritus* was at Sabkhat al Jabbul 20 Jan. Very little is known about Syria's coastal birds. Two **Cory's Shearwaters** *Calonectris diomedea* were off Lattakia 27 Apr. A flock of over 520 **White Pelicans** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* flying north 2 km off the coast at Lattakia 27 Apr is possibly the largest count from Syria. A **European Griffon Vulture** *Gyps fulvus* was near Slunfe 18 Apr but sadly the colony at Douara, Palmyra, was deserted this year; this is (or was) the last known colony in Syria. Possible reasons include disturbance (unlikely), shooting (unlikely that all have been shot) or, of course, poisoning by diclofenac or similar veterinary agents (quite possible). On the more positive side, a huge roost of **Lesser Kestrels** *Falco naumanni* round the communications tower immediately west of Palmyra held at least 1000 birds 11 Apr and 13 Apr; are these Syrian birds pairing off or migrants staging? Visitors to Palmyra next April are asked to check the site out in the late dusk (after sunset). A **Saker** *Falco cherrug* was near the Damascus–Palmyra road 31 Mar. A **Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis* above Palmyra 5 Apr was exceptional in the desert; a male was in Jebel Abdul Aziz 7 Apr. Large flocks of **Common Cranes** *Grus grus* were over Sabkhat al-Jabbul on several dates in early March (maximum of over 3600 3 Mar); Jabbul may be a regular migration stopover. A **Demoiselle Crane** *Anthropoides virgo* was resting at a desert wetland between Raqaa and Hama 5 Apr; another found injured at lower Khabur reservoir 9 Apr was taken into care but was thought unlikely to survive. Six **Great Bustards** *Otis tarda* were in a regular site in the Jazirah 5 Mar; local guards saw up to 17 during the winter. A **Macqueen's Bustard** *Chlamydotis macqueenii* was seen in March. Two **Baillon's Crakes** *Porzana pusilla* were at Arak dam 11–12 Apr (Plate 10). There were at least ten reports of **Little Crakes** *Porzana parva* but only one of **Spotted Crane** *Porzana porzana*, at the suspension bridge, Deir ez-Zor, 9 Apr. A **Water Rail** *Rallus aquaticus* was in suitable breeding habitat at Mheimideh in June; this species may well breed in low numbers in the Euphrates valley. A pair with young of **Great Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii* were at the entrance to Talila, a known breeding site, 13 Apr. A **Grey Plover** *Pluvialis squatarola*

was at Jabbul 19 Feb. Searches for the RDB Critically Endangered **Sociable Lapwing** *Vanellus gregarius* turned up a total of 431 birds at many sites 19 Feb–9 Mar. A flock of 15 **Black-winged Pratincoles** *Glareola nordmanni* were at lower Khabur reservoir 9 Apr and two at Jabbul 16 Apr. There were five records of up to 14 **Black-bellied Sandgrouse** *Pterocles orientalis*, a scarce winter visitor (six records in the last ten years), but only two of **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse** *Pterocles alchata*, formerly a very common resident; gross overhunting is probably the main cause for their decline. Sadly, all owls are persecuted in Syria as harbingers of bad luck, so most species are scarcer than they should be. Interesting records included **Long-eared Owls** *Asio otus* at Deir ez-Zor in Mar and Jun, with one at Bloudan 14 Apr, three calling **Scops Owls** *Otus scops* and four calling **Tawny Owls** *Strix aluco* near Kassab 24–25 Apr. A young Tawny Owl at Foroulloq forest 24 Apr was the first confirmed breeding record for Syria. There are less than ten records of all three species though the last two are probably widespread in the wooded coastal mountains. Long-eared Owl has not yet been proven to breed in Syria but the conifers at Deir seem a good place to look. Single **White-breasted Kingfishers** *Halcyon smyrnensis* were at Sabkhat al-Jabbul 18 Jan and on the Euphrates at Abu Kemal on the Iraq border 16 Apr with a pair near Lattakia in Jun; there are few records from the Euphrates valley or the coast.

Single **Steppe Grey Shrikes** *Lanius pallidirostris* were at Shaddia 24 Feb and Talila reserve, Palmyra, in March, the 3rd and 4th records. This year's winter rains were exceptional and the desert south of the Euphrates was green. Several observers noted 'fields full of larks', including thousands of **Bimaculated Larks** *Melanocorypha bimaculata* in at least four areas in Mar, and in Apr an abundance of **Lesser Short-toed Larks** *Calandrella rufescens* (Plate 11) and **Bar-tailed Larks** *Ammomanes cinctura* (but, to my knowledge, no **Dunn's Eremalauda dunni**). In contrast, the Jazira (north of the Euphrates) was dry and almost lark-less. Two **Zitting Cisticolas** *Cisticola juncidis* were singing at Apamea 4 Apr; there are few recent records and its Syrian distribution is little known.

An adult male **Rufous-tailed** ('Kurdish') **Wheatear** *Oenanthe (xanthoprymna) xanthoprymna* was at Ruweira 6 Mar; this is probably a scarce and overlooked migrant, mainly in Mar. A fall at Palmyra 13–14 Mar included 30+ **Cyprus Wheatears** *Oenanthe cypriaca*, **Rüppell's Warbler** *Sylvia rueppelli* and both subspecies of **Ménétries's Warbler** *Sylvia mystacea* (the nominate subspecies is rarely reported from Syria).

Single **Rüppell's Warblers** were at Nashme 10 Mar (early) and singing on Jebel Abu Rigmin 12 Apr. Large numbers of territorial Rüppell's Warblers were found in coastal maquis west of Kassab and at Umm al-Tuyyur headland to the south in late Apr, increasing the known breeding population from low single figures to tens (if not hundreds) of pairs. Further, several birds were singing near Slenfe 18 Apr and a singing bird was seen for a second year at high altitude in Abu Qubeis reserve (coastal mountains), indicating that a population may breed well inland; these exciting observations need to be followed up. Territorial **Ménétries's Warblers** were found in the Palmyra palmerie (common, even next to the temple of Baal), several sites in the Euphrates valley (in spite of the intensive agricultural regime), at 400 m up the Jebel Shuah and at Ain Dara northwest of Aleppo; these sightings confirm that this species is widespread and common in the Syrian interior, though often elusive. A female **Semi-collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula semitorquata* was at Der ez-Zor in March and a male in Hasakah city 12 Apr; a **Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva* was in Hasakah 1 Apr. **Fieldfare** *Turdus pilaris* is a scarce winter visitor; singles were at Deir ez-Zor 26 Feb and Nashme 10 Mar. **White-cheeked Bulbuls** *Pycnonotus leucotis* were seen at seven widely distributed sites from Mheimideh downstream to Abu Kemal; this species is clearly widespread throughout the lower Syrian Euphrates. A **Radde's Accentor** *Prunella ocularis* was near the summit ridge of Jebel Abdul Aziz 3 Apr and another on the summit ridge of Abu Qubeis 24 Apr; these are the first records for over 25 years. The only **Pale Rockfinches** *Carpospiza brachydactyla* were singles below the Citadel, Palmyra, 8 and 12 Apr; numbers of this elusive species appear to fluctuate dramatically. At least 20 **Trumpeter Finches** *Bucanetes githagineus* were

feeding fledged young round the Citadel, Palmyra, in mid-April; there were several observations from Jebel Abdul Aziz. A pair of the eastern race of **Cinereous Bunting** *Emberiza cineracea semenowi* was in suitable breeding habitat in Jebel Abdul Aziz 5 Apr with a female there 10 Apr; could this RDB Vulnerable species be breeding in this little-watched area?

## TAJIKISTAN

Eight **Large-billed Reed Warblers** *Acrocephalus orinus* were caught at three sites in the western and southern Pamirs in July 2009. Breeding was suspected at all sites and proven at one, the first definite breeding record of the species.

## TURKEY

There were three records of **Red-breasted Geese** *Branta ruficollis* during the winter with singles at Filyos, Zonguldak, 26 Jan and the Gediz delta 17 Feb, and five at Sarıkum lake, Sinop, 16 Feb. Turkey's second **Lesser Flamingo** *Phoeniconaias minor* was at the Gediz delta 24 Jan. Three **Little Bustards** *Tetrax tetrax* were seen at the start of the year with singles at Filyos 26 Jan, the Göksu delta 7 Feb and the Kızılırmak delta 2 Feb. A flock of 55 **Sociable Lapwings** *Vanellus gregarius* at Urfa Bozkırları 11 Mar continued the annual run of records and highlighted the importance of this region of Turkey for this globally threatened species. A report of a **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* in the Kızılırmak delta 1 Oct 2009 is the 2nd for Turkey. A **Caspian Plover** *Charadrius asiaticus* near Kaldırım, Çukurova, 19 Apr was



**Plate 12.** Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*, 6 February 2010, Kızılırmak delta, Turkey. © Nizamettin Yavuz



a notable record, as was a **Long-tailed Skua** *Stercorarius longicaudatus* in Mersin harbour 22 Dec 2009. Two **Pin-tailed Sandgrouse** *Pterocles alchata* at Urfa Bozkırları 11 Mar is an early date. A **Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* was seen in Rize 9 Jan and one was ringed at the Kızılırmak delta 21 Mar. The second Turkish breeding locality for **Spectacled Warbler** *Sylvia conspicillata* was found 1 May near Kırıkhan, Hatay, with at least six birds present. A **Cyprus Warbler** *Sylvia melanothorax* was seen at the Göksu delta 19 Apr. Turkey's second **Buff-bellied Pipit** *Anthus (rubescens) japonicus* was at Milleyha, Hatay, 14 Feb. The first record was at the same location 22 Nov 2008. Another 2nd record was a **Lapland Longspur** *Calcarius lapponicus* at İğneada 12 Feb. A **Snow Bunting** *Plectrophenax nivalis* was in the Kızılırmak delta 6 Feb (Plate 12).

## UZBEKISTAN

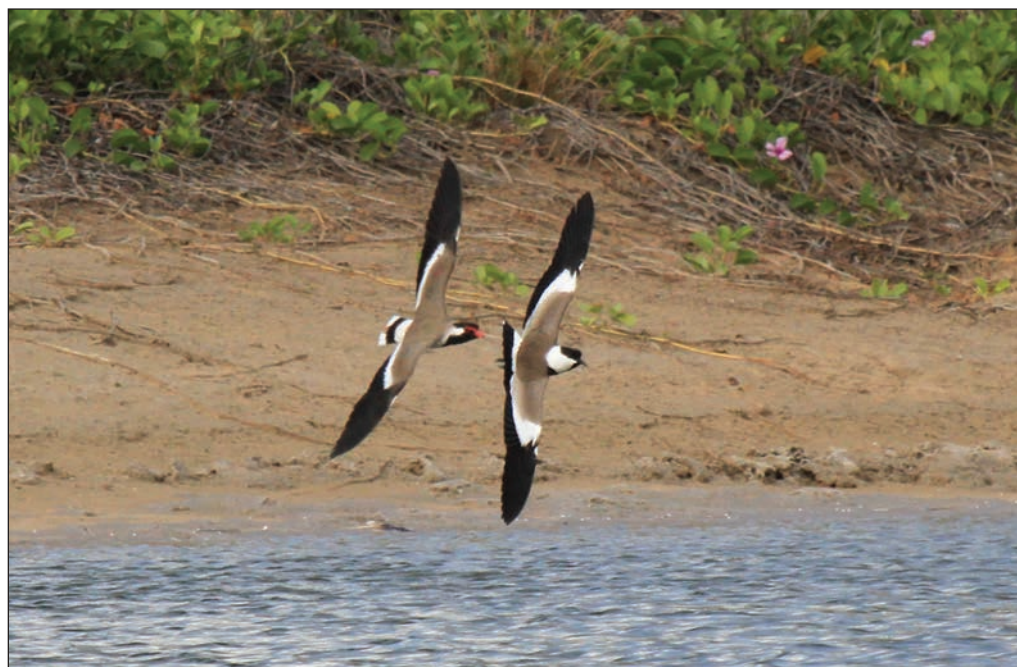
Three significant records have recently come to light. Two **Red-wattled Lapwings** *Vanellus indicus* were seen near Zhylytyrbas lake, southern Priaralye, 3 Jun 2009. This species is a rare vagrant with the last record from this

area being in 1933. A **Heuglin's Gull** *Larus heuglini* on the southern part of Kuyumazar reservoir 15 Nov 2009 was also notable. The only other record of the species in the Bukara region was one at Ecocenter Jeyran Dec 1991. Most exciting was the first record of **Long-tailed Tit** *Aegithalos caudatus* for Uzbekistan, with several small groups totaling at least 15 birds seen in Baday-Tugay nature reserve on the right bank of the Amudarya river, 70 km southeast of Nukus, 31 Oct 2008.

## UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

There were three 'firsts' for the UAE: two **Shikras** *Accipiter badius* on Sila'a peninsula 26 Dec 2009 are presumed wild (the Shikras breeding in the Dubai area are suspected of being escapes). 2010 started with a **Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor* at Al Wathba lake 3–11 Jan. A **Basra Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus griseldis* was singing in Mushrif palace garden 26–27 Apr.

A **Flesh-footed Shearwater** *Puffinus carneipes* off Khor Kalba harbour 11–12 Jun was the 2nd for UAE. Up to two **Sooty Shearwaters** *Puffinus griseus* were seen off Fujairah and Kalba 17 Apr–29 May. An **Eastern Cattle Egret**



**Plate 13.** Red-wattled *Vanellus indicus* and Spur-winged Lapwings *V. spinosus*, 2 March 2010, Al Ain water treatment plant, United Arab Emirates. © Tommy Pedersen



**Plate 14.** Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*, April 2010, Dubai Pivot Fields, United Arab Emirates. © Mike Barth/ [www.pbbase.com/barty63](http://www.pbbase.com/barty63)

*Bubulcus ibis coromandus* (the 1st UAE record, first seen Aug 2009) appears to have wintered at Wamm farms. This taxon and **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus i. ibis* are almost inseparable in non-breeding plumage, so when it became white in Sep 2009 it was undetected or absent until it developed its orange plumage again and was then seen 26 Mar–17 Apr. One **Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster* (15th record) on the east coast 28 May was joined by two more at Khor Kalba the next day. Two **Masked Boobies** *Sula dactylatra* were at Khor Kalba 29 May (12th record). An **Amur Falcon** *Falco amurensis* at Al Qua'a fodder field 29 Dec was the 11th record. Two **Spur-winged Lapwings** *Vanellus spinosus* were at Al Ain water treatment plant 13–14 Feb with a single bird until 6 Mar (Plate 13). One at Al Quoz stables 28 Feb–7 Jun was the 3rd record. Interesting records of larids (all of singles) included: **Brown Noddy** *Anous stolidus* at Jebel Dhanna 4 May (the first off the west coast) with another off Fujairah 25 May; **Black-legged Kittiwake** *Rissa tridactyla* on Fujairah port beach 11–12 Feb (4th record); **Little Gull** *Hydrocoloeus minutus* in Khor Kalba harbour 11–20 Mar (14th record); **Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea* on Fujairah port beach 7 May (2nd record); **Roseate Tern** *Sterna dougallii* off Ra's Dibba 11 Jun (3rd record) and immature **Sooty Tern** *Onychoprion fuscata* off Khor Kalba harbour 9 Jun (7th record). A **Pied Kingfisher** *Ceryle rudis* was in Dubai city 6 Jan–1 Feb with another in Ruwais 5 Mar.

The male **Brown Shrike** *Lanius cristatus* wintered at Dubai Pivot Fields until 21 Apr for its second year (Plate 14). **Bay-backed Shrike** *Lanius vittatus* had a good spring, with



**Plates 15–17.** Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus*, 3 March 2010, Safa park, United Arab Emirates. © Tommy Pedersen

singles Wamm farms and Ra's al-Khaimah mountains 19–20 Mar and Wamm farms 3 Apr (14–16th records), and the first breeding record, an adult with two juveniles in Masafi wadi 7–12 Jun. **Hypocoliuses** *Hypocolius ampelinus* were on Lulu island and in the Western Region on Dalma island, Jebel Dhanna and Sila'a peninsula until 13 Apr with a maximum count of 30 birds. An **Ashy Drongo** *Dicrurus leucophaeus* at Safa park 14–15 Jan and 2–17 Mar (3rd record, Plates



**Plates 18 & 19.** Pale Martin *Riparia diluta*, February 2010, Al Ain WTP, United Arab Emirates. © Mike Barth



**Plate 20.** Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii*, February 2010, Al Ain WTP, United Arab Emirates. © Dave Clark

**Plate 21.** Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii*, February 2010, Al Ain WTP, United Arab Emirates. © Huw Roberts

15–17) was probably the bird from Al Warsan 21 Dec. An unidentified **Drongo** *Dicrurus* sp was seen briefly in Abu Dhabi 11 Apr. Up to 33 **Pale Martins** *Riparia diluta* were at Al Ain WTP until 12 Apr (Plates 18 & 19). Other interesting passerines included singles of **Wire-tailed Swallow** *Hirundo smithii* at Al Ain WTP 6–12 Feb (9th record, Plates 20 & 21); **River Warbler** *Locustella fluviatilis* in Mushrif palace garden (11th record); **Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina* in Al Mamzar park 4 Apr (14th record); **Redwing** *Turdus iliacus* on Sila’a peninsula 8 Jan (8th record) and **Eurasian Siskin** *Carduelis spinus* on Sila’a peninsula 19 Mar (the first since 2005).

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