

PHOTOSPOT

Desert birds in Kuwait

Kuwait ornithology has progressed considerably in recent years being reinvigorated by the publication of *The Birds of the State of Kuwait* by George Gregory (2005) and by digital photography (Plate 1). Annual bird reports are produced, rarity reports are assessed and an annotated checklist is kept up-to-date (<http://birdsofkuwait.com>). AbdulRahman Al-Sirhan's website on Kuwait wildlife (www.alsirhan.com) has a major section on Kuwait birds, with excellent photography in a photo blog and links to other Kuwait sites whilst Mike Pope produces a much-admired photo blog at www.hawar-islands.com/blog/home_stub.php.

I have had an interest in Kuwait's desert birds (species that primarily occur in deserts and that presumably have evolved in deserts *ie* are adapted for life in deserts) for many years (Cowan & Pilcher 2003). Gary Brown's paper presenting observations on apparent cooling behaviour of four desert lark species in Kuwait (Dunn's *Eremalauda dunni*, Bar-tailed Desert *Ammomanes cinctura*, Temminck's Horned *Eremophila bilopha* and Black-crowned Finch Larks *Eremopterix nigriceps*) was well illustrated by photographs. The paper describing Kuwait's first breeding record of Thick-billed Lark



Plate 1. A Kuwaiti digital photographer in action, Sabah Al-Ahmed natural reserve (SAANR), Kuwait, October 2006. © Elaine Cowan



Plate 2. Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor*, Jahra East outfall, Kuwait, June 2007. © Mike Pope



Plate 3. Two juvenile Cream-coloured Coursers *Cursorius cursor*, Sulaibikhat, Kuwait, June 2009. © Mike Pope

Ramphocoris clotbey had nest photos (scanned from transparencies though and not published in colour) of both male and female (Spencer *et al* 2007). When the opportunity arose to feature some of Mike Pope's photos of desert birds in Kuwait in a *Sandgrouse* photospot, I jumped at it.

The two Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor* photos were taken at coastal localities. Plate 2 shows a side-on 'field guide' posture but Plate 3 is of juveniles in the shade.

In the past, Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius* was clearly under-recorded in Kuwait and considered a vagrant but it has now been recorded year round and it may well be discovered breeding. Plate 4 shows a bird head-on whilst Plate 5 is the 'field guide' posture.

Plate 6 shows a young Black-crowned Finch Lark whilst Plate 7 a Hoopoe Lark *Alaemon alaudipes*. Mike has yet to capture a Hoopoe Lark song-flight sequence that he is happy with.

Plate 8 is a rather fine photo of a Bar-tailed Desert Lark but perhaps Plates 9–11 of apparently cooling birds have more academic interest. Plate 10 shows a Bar-tailed Desert Lark sat in an apparently damp/cool depression near water (*cf* Brown 2009) but has the bird made the depression itself? Plate 11 shows a Bar-tailed Desert Lark lying flat on similar ground near water.



Plate 4. Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius*, Jahra East outfall, Kuwait, August 2007. © Mike Pope



Plate 5. Egyptian Nightjar *Caprimulgus aegyptius*, Al Abraaq, Kuwait, September 2010. © Mike Pope



Plate 6. Black-crowned Finch Lark *Eremopterix nigriceps*, KISR Kabd, Kuwait, August 2007. © Mike Pope



Plate 7. Hoopoe Lark *Alaemon alaudipes*, SAANR, Kuwait, December 2007. © Mike Pope



Plate 8. Bar-tailed Desert Lark *Ammomanes cinctura*, SAANR, Kuwait, July 2007. © Mike Pope



Plate 9. Bar-tailed Desert Lark *Ammomanes cinctura*, SAANR, Kuwait, September 2010. © Mike Pope



Plate 10. Bar-tailed Desert Lark *Ammomanes cinctura*, SAANR, Kuwait, September 2010. © Mike Pope



Plate 11. Bar-tailed Desert Lark *Ammomanes cinctura*, SAANR, Kuwait, September 2010. © Mike Pope



Plate 12. Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*, Sulaibikhat, Kuwait, October 2009. © Mike Pope



Plate 13. Hume's Wheatear *Oenanthe albonigra*, SAANR, Kuwait, December 2009. © Mike Pope

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* (Plate 12) is a very common passage migrant and common winter visitor to Kuwait whilst the photo of Hume's Wheatear *O. albonigra* (Plate 13) is of the 7th Kuwait record and Plates 14 & 15 show the 15th White-crowned Black Wheatear *O. leucopyga* for Kuwait.

REFERENCES

- Brown, G. 2009. Observations on the cooling behaviour, and associated habitat, of four desert lark species (Alaudidae) in two areas of Kuwait. *Sandgrouse* 31: 6–14.
- Cowan, PJ & CWT Pilcher. 2003. The status of desert birds in Kuwait. *Sandgrouse* 25: 122–125.
- Gregory, G. 2005. *The Birds of the State of Kuwait*. George Gregory, Skegness, UK.
- Spencer ST, CWT Pilcher & PJ Cowan. 2007. The first breeding record of Thick-billed Lark *Ramphocoris clotbey* in Kuwait and concomitant behavioural observations. *Sandgrouse* 29: 205–208.

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Plate 14. White-crowned Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga*, SAANR, Kuwait, October 2010. © Mike Pope



Plate 15. White-crowned Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga*, SAANR, Kuwait, October 2010. © Mike Pope