

# Oman

16th–30th November 2017

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## Introduction

Oman has become a very popular birding destination for many reasons. First, because it's an easy-to-travel country to enjoy most Arabian specialties but, maybe most importantly, because it's placed in a corner of the world, something in between Europe, Asia and Africa. Indeed, this is the essence of the Middle East and Oman is pure Middle East at its best. The diversity and quantity of birds is mesmerizing and, since they are mainly concentrated around oasis areas, most species are easy to locate.

We wanted to see some of the most sought-after Arabian specialties, but we mainly wanted to gather experience with potential WP vagrants, not rushing to see widespread species such as Verreaux's Eagle and spending a good time with, for instance, Sand Plovers' side-by-side comparisons. In the end we managed a good mix although there's that much to see that we all want to come back. Soon.

Text by Marcel Gil Velasco. Photos as credits.

Front cover: Small Pratincole *Glareola lactea*, Wadi Darbat, November 23rd.

## Sources of information

One of us (Stephen) had already been in Oman, so he already knew most of the places. However, we also followed these references:

### Books

*Birds of the Middle East*, by Richard Porter & Simon Aspinall. Despite some of the illustrations are not the best, this classic guide it's still the only compilation that includes all the species occurring in the area.

*Collins Bird Guide*, by Killian Mullarney, Lars Svensson and Dan Zetterstrom. Most of the species are covered in our beloved Collins Bird Guide, which is probably the best seal of quality.

*Birdwatching Guide to Oman*. Second edition, by Dave Sargeant and Hanne & Jens Eriksen. This book is basically essential for visiting the country. The GPS coordinates for some of the locations are extremely useful, since it's usually quite hard to find the staple dirty track that gets you to the best observation spots.

### Trip reports

There are loads of trip reports available, mainly on CloudBirders. However, we mainly followed one by our friend Àlex Ollé, with detailed data on the most remarkable species they saw during their successful trip last winter.

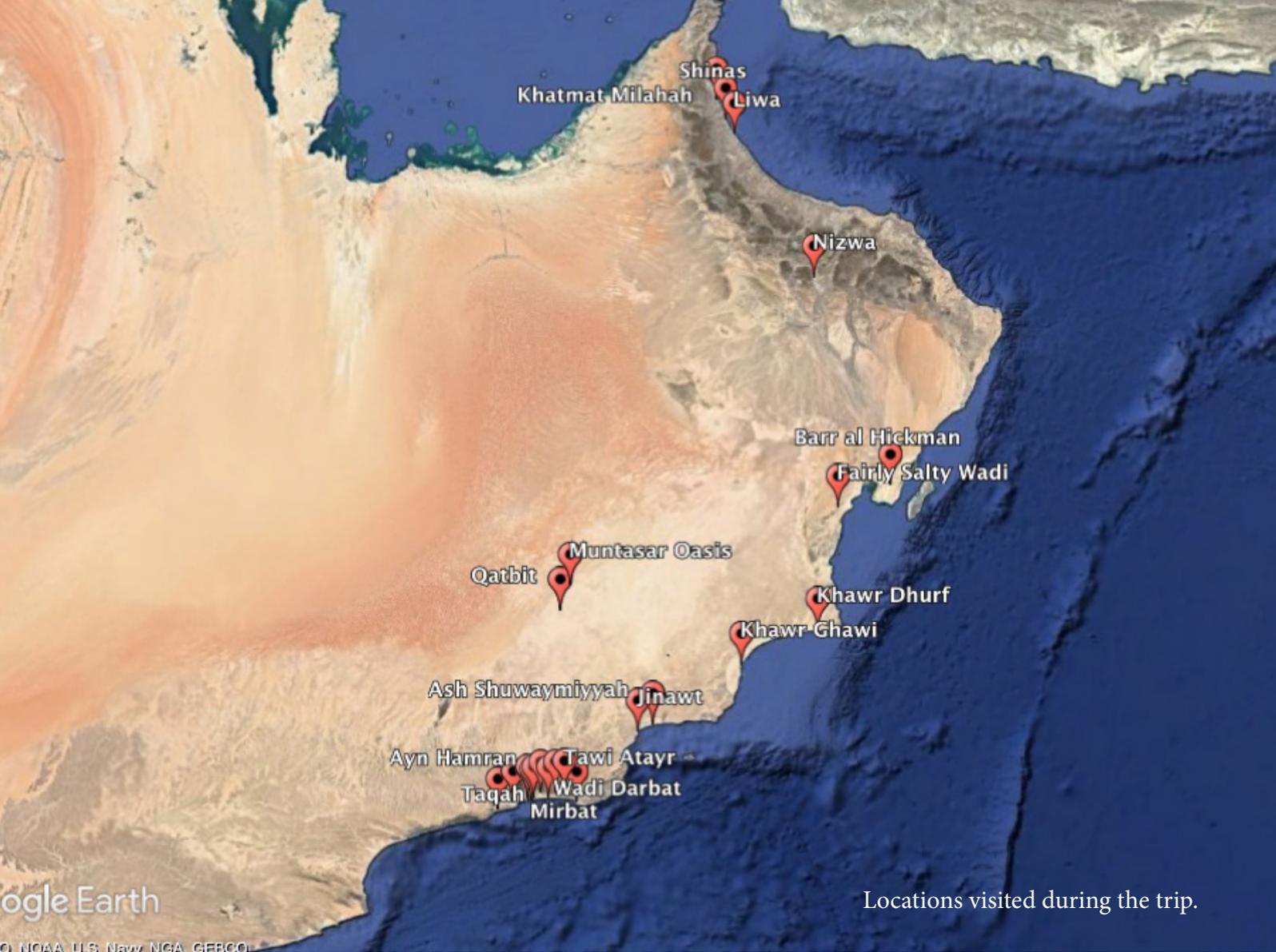
### Sounds

All sounds were downloaded from xeno-canto.org. If you want to use our library (proved very useful with most species) feel free to email us asking for it.

## Itinerary

We followed the classical circuit clockwise, which included the following locations:

Wadi near Nizwa – November 16th and 17th  
En route to Barr al Hickman – November 17th  
Shannah (Barr Al Hickman) – November 17th-18th  
Filim – November 19th  
“Fairly Salty Wadi” – November 19th  
Khawr Dhurf – November 19th  
Khawr Ghawi – November 20th  
Ash Shuwaymiyyah Wadi – November 20th-21st  
Jinawt – November 21st  
Seawatching – November 21st  
Wadi Darbat – November 22nd  
Ayn Hamran – November 22nd  
Ayn Razat – November 22nd  
Taqah – November 22nd  
Pelagic off Mirbat – November 23rd  
Tawi Atayr – November 23rd  
Wadi Darbat – November 23rd  
East Khawr – Shanawt Farms–East Khawr – November 24th  
Al Baleed Archaeological Park – November 24th  
Al Mughsayl – November 24th-25th  
Raysut Waste Disposal – November 25th  
Shanawt and Jarziz Farms – November 25th  
Qatbit – November 26th  
Muntasar – November 26th - 27th  
Wadi near Nizwa – November 27th  
Al Hajar Mountains – November 28th  
Shinas – November 28th  
Khatmat Milahah – November 28th-29th  
Liwa – November 29th



# Diary

## Wadi near Nizwa – November 16th and 17th

Our first hours of birding in Oman were spent looking for some of the commonest species in the north, around an area good for Omani Owl. We soon had seen Mountain Leaf Warbler, Indian Roller, Indian Silverbill, Purple Sunbird, Persian Wheatear, Eastern Black Redstart, Long-billed Pipits and loads of Lesser Whitethroats, all giving *halimodendri* calls. A Hummer's Wheatear was also spotted by an electric tower, together with a Blue Rock Thrush. Interestingly, an Arabian Warbler was also present, further north than expected. Already at night, we tried different spots within the same wadi for Omani Owl, to no avail.

The morning after didn't add up anything new, so we decided it was about time to drive to Barr al Hickman.

## En route to Barr al Hickman – November 17th

However, we decided to stop in a random acacia area south of Izki (22.8452°N, 57.7533°E), where we enjoyed our first Asian Desert Warblers, Eastern Orphean Warblers, Little Green Bee-eaters and Desert Wheatears.

Later on, around a gas station (21°05'11.2"N 58°15'57.6"E), we got excellent views of some Black-crowned Sparrow-larks, more Desert Wheatears (already becoming too mainstream at that point) and an intriguing Short-toed Lark. A few kilometres after, a Lesser Kestrel was sat on an electric tower.

## Shannah (Barr Al Hickman) – November 17th–18th

There are no words to describe the first impression you get of this place. When we first arrived, almost at dusk, the fishermen were downloading the boats with the help of some 4x4 cars to drag them out of the water. Hundreds of Sooty Gulls were congregating around, together with Steppe and Heuglin's. We walked a bit south and immediately became aware of the international importance of this place as a winter spot for waders. Hundreds of thousands of them were feeding on the immense mudflats and, among them, a flock of one of our targets, Crab Plovers. Both Lesser and Greater Sandpipers, Terek Sandpipers, our first Swift Terns... There's that much stuff that it's hard to be focused. Already under poor light conditions, we saw our first Isabelline Shrike of the trip. It was already dark, and we all went to bed quite nervous about the day after.

**Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark** *Eremopterix nigriceps*. En route to Barr al Hickman, November 17th. Martí Franch.





Top left: **Saunders's Tern** *Sternula saundersi*. Shannah, Barr al Hickman, November 18th. Marcel Gil Velasco. Top right: **Asian Desert Warbler** *Sylvia nana*. Shannah, Barr al Hickman, November 18th. Marcel Gil Velasco. Middle left: **Indian Pond Heron** *Ardeola grayi*. Filim, November 18th. Marcel Gil Velasco. Middle right: **Lesser Sand Plover** *Charadrius mongolous*. Shannah, Barr al Hickman, November 18th. Marcel Gil Velasco. Bottom left: **Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii*. Shannah, Barr al Hickman, November 18th. Marcel Gil Velasco. Bottom right: **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Calidris falcinellus*. Shannah, Barr al Hickman, November 18th. Marcel Gil Velasco.

We wanted to take a deep look at the sand plovers, so we spent the whole day watching them and taking some photos. It took us a while to become self-confident with all the individuals and the amount of variation, especially in face pattern, was huge.

By doing so, we also spotted more Crab Plovers, some Broad-billed Sandpipers, a Saunder's Tern, our first Citrine Wagtail, some Asian Desert Warblers, several Clamorous Reed Warblers and 2 Ospreys. However, rather than the species list, what will always remain in our minds is the amount of waders in such an amazing habitat.

### Filim – November 19th

The feeling was similar to that at Shannah: an endless mudflat with endless waders to be checked. Our main target was the Great Knot and we didn't see it, but to be honest, we didn't care much. It's impossible to check all the waders, since there are tens of thousands too far away, and the tide plays an important role. We didn't manage to work out the timing of the tides; the transition seemed to be very quick, to then stay at either low or high tide for very long periods. Thankfully, Crab Plovers are identifiable from a huge distance and they were numbered in hundreds.

The small mangrove behind the electric station also held some nice stuff: the first 3 Indian Pond Herons of the trip, the first Striated Heron, several Clamorous Reed Warblers, Siberian-type Chiffchaffs. It indeed looked like a good place to find a vagrant, but there was nothing but [interesting] common birds.

### Fairly Salty Wadi (20°19'41.4"N 57°47'28.6"E) – November 19th

Our next stop was a wadi meant to be good for sandgrouse. This spot has water year round and hence it attracts some good birds. However, we didn't see much but a dead Shoveler, some Plain Leaf Warblers, Clamorous Reed Warblers and another Eastern Black Redstart. Despite hunting being forbidden in Oman, we found a hut by the water stream with evidences of being used by hunters.

### Khawr Dhurf – November 19th

This is a small place compared to what we were coming from and the amount of birds around isn't impressive, but the truth is that we saw some very nice things here. As soon as we arrived, our first Turkestan Shrike of the trip was obliging from the top of a branch and soon later we flushed at least 3 Pin-tailed Snipes that quite unexpectedly remained the only of

the trip. Also a Jack Snipe foraging on the shore. Several Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters were also present, intermittently landing on the ground and on the dead trees by the lagoon. The amazing beach that serves as some sort of river mouth is made out of endless white sand and you feel like there's nobody around in hundreds of miles. There was, of course, a flock of terns resting on the sand, including at least 3 White-cheeked, 4 Lesser Crested and several Swift. Our first Masked Boobies were fishing quite close to the shore and some Desert Wheatears and White Wagtails were playing around the dunes, including a strange looking darkish-faced 1stW that could well come from the Iranian *alba-personata* intergrade area.

On our way back, around the innermost end of the lagoon, there were 2 Turkestan Shrikes, at least one Red-breasted Flycatcher, a 2CY female Pallid Harrier and our first sandgrouse of the trip in the shape of a flock of Chestnut-bellied flying over.

### Khawr Ghawi – November 20th

An unexpectedly good location, with very good numbers of waders, especially Broad-billed Sandpipers. For whatever reason, this species seems to like this place and we counted a minimum of 670 individuals, far more than at Barr al Hickman. Both Greater and Lesser Sand Plovers were also present, together with Terek Sandpipers, Pacific Golden Plovers and huge numbers of other commoner stuff. We strongly recommend visiting this place. There has been Great Knots reported at this location in previous winters, so it could be the icing on the cake of a wonderful sight with that many Broad-bills. At least during our visit, the lagoon was better checked from the southern end of the outer sand-bar (see map), an area reachable by intuitively following sandy but crossable tracks.



### **Ash Shuwaymiyyah Wadi – November 20th – 21st**

Our main target here was the Liechtenstein's Sandgrouse, since the small pool by the hanging garden is one of the few places in Oman where they are known to come to drink at dusk. This wadi is amongst the most beautiful landscapes of the entire country and the evening views from the hanging garden are a must regardless of the birds present. Indeed, there weren't many birds around that afternoon and even worse: a canal has been built to channel the water and it divides the sandgrouse drinking point into two. There is also a shelter on which people used to sit and enjoy the sandgrouse, but now you can't see the whole pool from there. Sadly, at least that day, the birds came to drink behind the canal, so we only saw them coming in and then flying away, with very poor light conditions. Very frustrating.

The morning after we explored deeper into the wadi, with good results. There were several Ménétries's Warblers, a Red-breasted Flycatcher, 2 Great Reed Warblers, a Common Rock Thrush, at least 2 Turkestan Shrikes and our firsts Arabian Wheatears and Shining Sunbirds of the trip, among other commoner passerines. The area around 17°54'37.3"N 55°27'16.5"E seemed particularly bird-rich.

We then drove towards the coast, stopping at 17°54'39.0"N 55°27'57.1"E on the basis of it looking good for Sand Partridge. We soon flushed a party of three birds, only managing poor flyaway views. However, an African Collared Dove was singing from a nearby acacia. Latest sightings seem to suggest this species breeds in Oman in small numbers.

Our last stop here was the lagoon by the shore (17°52'55.0"N 55°36'07.1"E), that held our firsts Pheasant-tailed Jacanas (2), an Indian Pond Heron, a Citrine Wagtail among some Yellow (both Black-headed and Grey-headed types were noted) and yet another Turkestan Shrike. There was also some wildfowl around (2 Common Pochards, 4 Garganeys, a Pintail and several Shovelers) but not that many waders (just a Pacific Golden Plover, a Black-tailed Godwit and some Common Sandpipers). 3 Whiskered Terns suddenly came in.

### **Jinawt – November 21st**

On our way south, around lunchtime, we stopped at Jinawt to enjoy the large amounts of Socotra Cormorants both foraging offshore and sat on the beach. We counted a minimum of 120 birds, although the sea was quite rough and some flocks on the sea were quite hard to estimate.

### **Seawatching – November 21st**

A stop at 17°22'53.6"N 55°17'56.4"E anticipated what later became a memorable seawatching session. Within 10 minutes, we saw 2 Jouanin's Petrels and 7 Persian Shearwaters, two of the most soughtafter species in Oman. Our first flock of Red-necked phalaropes (roughly estimated to be around 50 birds) was also seen far offshore. We checked Google Maps to see what was the closest headland and were glad to see it was pretty close.

After a quick stop 5 minutes south of there, because of a pod of Indopacific Bottlenose Dolphins feeding very close to the shore, fifteen minutes later, we had settled ourselves at 17°14'30.8"N 55°15'46.4"E and started counting. Within an hour of seawatching, we counted 660 Jouanin's Petrels, 12 Persian Shearwaters and 1,300 Masked Boobies, all moving north. There was also a large strung-out flock of Red-necked Phalaropes offshore that we estimated in 500 birds. There's not much information about global population estimates of Jouanin's Petrel, although the population in Yemen archipelagos has now been estimated to be around 3,000 pairs.

Our next stop was the mythical Wadi Darbat, where we had planned to spend the night. However, we had to stop for one of the most unexpected highlights of the trip: a flock of 8 Liechtenstein's Sandgrouse crossed the road, already at dark, to land and start drinking in a leaking pipe. For our delight, we managed to torch the birds and enjoyed amazing views of this beautiful mainly African species. For those interested in visiting this place, we strongly recommend to reach the area during daytime, since people living nearby seemed very alarmed by getting 4 weird guys armed with cameras stopping by their houses at night. It's probably better to arrive earlier to speak to them. The leaking pipe is at 17°10'31.6"N 55°10'02.7"E.

### **Wadi Darbat, 1st round – November 22nd**

We reached the place at night, on the 21st, and immediately heard loads of Arabian Scops Owl; soon later, we were enjoying really nice views of an individual. A singing male Arabian Spotted Owl was also heard, but we didn't manage to connect with it. Bed time.

As everybody says, waking up at Wadi Darbat is like waking up in an entirely new continent, this is, Africa. The species set changes rather quickly and the Palearctic stuff seen so far makes way to the African Paradise Flycatchers, Cinnamon-breasted Buntings, African Silverbills, Abyssinian White-eyes & Bruce's Green Pigeons. Most species are very common and easy to spot, although we were too late for monsoon stuff such



Top left: **Bruce's Green Pigeon** *Treron waalia*. Wadi Darbat, November 22nd. Marcel Gil Velasco. Top right: **African Paradise Flycatcher** *Terpsiphone viridis*. Wadi Darbat, November 22nd. Marcel Gil Velasco. Middle left: **Chestnut-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza tahapisi*. Wadi Darbat, November 22nd. Marcel Gil Velasco. Bottom left: **Shining Sunbird** *Cynniris habessinicus*. Wadi Darbat, November 22nd. Marcel Gil Velasco. Bottom right: **Arabian Scops Owl** *Otus pamela*. Wadi Darbat, November 22nd. Marcel Gil Velasco.

as Diderik Cuckoo. All the species listed above were readily seen, together with loads of Rüppell's Weavers and some very approachable Tristram's Grackles and Shining Sunbirds. We also had good numbers of raptors: at least 5 Greater Spotted (including an intermediate not-quite-*fulvescens* bird), 3 Eastern Imperial, 2 Short-toed and a Bonelli's Eagle. However, the most interesting was a honey buzzard showing apparently mixed features between Oriental and European. It was a juvenile with 6 primary fingers, but 3 bars on secondaries and rather narrow-winged overall. Three of the always-funny Fan-tailed Ravens were also flying around.

#### **Ayn Hamran – November 22nd**

This is also a very classical hotspot, mainly to see the Verreaux's Eagle and the Arabian Golden-winged Grosbeak. Although it didn't add up much birdwise, we enjoyed macro distances of 2 stunning Arabian Chameleons. The trees around the park site seem to be a reliable place to find this amazing reptile, since it appears in several reports. Birdwise, we only managed to add Eastern Olivaceous Warbler for the trip list. It's worth saying that the place probably deserves more time and even a whole morning, especially if you are keen in seeing the grosbeak. The small canal that goes down is a good spot, since some birds apparently come to drink there, allowing good views when first stopping in the nearby tall trees. However, the species is very scarce and you should be armed with patience and have a bit of luck too.

#### **Ayn Razat – November 22nd**

Just a quick stop to check the small park. Nothing remarkable, except for good views of an Arabian Warbler, large numbers of Tristram's Grackles and a big colony of Rüppell's Weavers, always exotic to see.

#### **Taqah – November 22nd**

Although it looks just like another small Khawr, this place holds some sought-after specialties and should be therefore visited. The most remarkable is the Small Pratincole, but for some bizarre reasons, Taqah also seems to be the only reliable place to see Yellow-billed Kite in Oman. We did see both, one of each, together with other interesting stuff such as yet another Indian Pond Heron, a flock of White-winged Black Terns, 2 Saunder's Terns, 2 Isabelline Shrikes, 4 Temminck's Stints, a Steppe Grey Shrike and the only Masked Wagtail of the trip. The canals to the west of the lagoon and the steppe land area in between are worth exploring, since it hosted good numbers of birds. Yellow Bittern is possible there, although it might be difficult to detect due to the dense vegetation filling the canals.

#### **Pelagic off Mirbat – November 23rd**

When we reached the cafe at Mirbat harbour, Hatem was already waiting for us with a nice breakfast on the table. After having spoken a bit about our targets and the increasing popularity of his pelagic excursions, we finally left the harbour at around 8.30 AM. We soon came across big flocks of Red-necked Phalaropes, which were just a small part of the ring of phalaropes that surrounds Oman in winter. Just some minutes





Top left: **Persian Shearwater** *Puffinus persicus*. Off Mirbat, November 23rd. Marcel Gil Velasco. Top right: **Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus*. Off Mirbat, November 23rd. Marcel Gil Velasco. Middle left: **Masked Booby** *Sula dactylatra*. Off Mirbat, November 23rd. Marcel Gil Velasco. Middle right: **Bridled Tern** *Onychoprion anaethetus*. Off Mirbat, November 23rd. Marcel Gil Velasco. Bottom left: **Jouanin's Petrel** *Bulweria fallax*. Off Mirbat, November 23rd. Marcel Gil Velasco. Bottom right: **Persian Shearwater** *Puffinus persicus*. Off Mirbat, November 23rd. Marcel Gil Velasco.

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**Yemen Serin** *Crithagra menachensis*. Tawi Atayr, November 23rd. Marcel Gil Velasco

later and still on the continental shelf, the first Persian Shearwaters of the day flew by, all of them flying straight north. The sea was still in very good condition, so we decided to go more offshore trying to get closer views of the other main target, Jouanin's Petrel. The Sooty Gulls that had been with us since we had left the harbour came along, increasing our chances of something more exciting joining the flock. On our way out, we passed by some adult Loggerhead Turtles and more endless flocks of Red-necked Phalaropes, together with scattered flying-by Persian Shearwaters. Once we were out of the continental shelf, the sea became rougher but the Jouanin's Petrels were finally giving good views. Although they didn't actually come to feed on Hatem's self-made chum (dried out fish), the exhibition of mastery shown by these birds using the wind to effortlessly fly at a dizzying speed was amazing. Despite being *Bulweria* petrels, their bigger size and blunter structure make them slightly more *Pterodroma*-like, which is always a synonym of a great show. A 1stW Pomarine Skua came to visit the flock of Sooty Gulls and a pod of False Killer Whales also turned up. Several Bridled Terns were flying north, together with small numbers of Masked Boobies, some of them passing right over us.

We then decided to come closer the shore and actually enjoy some Persian Shearwaters. Hatem knows his

birds and he always stroke us as knowing what to do to see everybody's targets. We first tried a spot relatively close to the harbour, where we finally got some Persian Shearwaters feeding on the chum, just 10m away from the boat. However, Hatem was very insisting in moving a bit north, closer to Ras Mirbat. He was right, there seemed to be a constant flux of Shearwaters going north close to the shore. No wonder why Ras Mirbat is a seawatching hotspot. The views of the shearwaters we got were unforgettable and surely one of the highlights of the entire trip. The final figures of the pelagic were 25 Persian Shearwaters, 25 Jouanin's Petrels, 15 Bridled Terns, 15 Masked Boobies, 2 Pomarine and 1 Arctic Skuas and uncountable Red-necked Phalaropes.

Time to come back to the harbour, enjoy a very nice Skipjack Tuna at the harbour's restaurant while reliving some good memories from the morning and promise Hatem to definitely come back.

We strongly recommend contacting Hatem for a pelagic trip. Although the views you get of the two main targets are already amazing, they could be easily improved by using better chum, especially in the case of Jouanin's Petrel. We spoke to Hatem about it and he said he sometimes manages to get the fish to do proper chum himself but seemingly it's not an easy job in this part of the country. Hence, we recommend brin-



Top left: **Spotted Thick-knee** *Burhinus capensis*. Al Baleed Archaeological Park, November 24th. Marcel Gil Velasco. Top right: **Long-toed Stint** *Calidris subminuta*. East Khawr, November 24th. Marcel Gil Velasco. Middle left: **Tristam's Grackle** *Onychognathus tristamii*. Tawi Atayr, November 23rd. Marcel Gil Velasco. Middle right: **Bonelli's Eagle** *Aquila fasciata*. Tawi Atayr, November 23rd. Marcel Gil Velasco. Bottom left: **Arabian Spotted Eagle-Owl** *Bubo milesi*. Wadi Darbat, November 23rd. Stephen Menzie. Bottom right: **Palestine Sunbird** *Cynniris ossea*. Tawi Atayr, November 23rd. Martí Franch.

ging a small bottle of commercial fishing oil, very easy to get in Europe and of great use in Oman.

### **Tawi Atayr – November 23rd**

This is the only well-known spot in Oman for Yemen Serin, although regular tourists visit the area mainly to see the impressive sinkhole. Even though the serin isn't a very attractive species, we decided to visit the area nonetheless partly because it's one of the Omani most famous sights and partly in the hope we could see something else. A short stop in our way up there, at a random location that looked "good" produced an adult Eastern Imperial Eagle, at least 3 Singing Bush Larks, a European Roller and very good views of an obliging Long-billed Pipit.

Once at the sinkhole, it took us a while to connect with the Yemen Serins, but finally found them feeding on the grass behind the abandoned restaurant. However, what made our visit worth it were the views we got of an adult Bonelli's Eagle flying across the walls of the sinkhole, surrounded by a big flock of stressed Tristram's Grackles. The sound produced by that many Grackles, increased by the sinkhole's resonance was

truly magic.

Several Fan-tailed Ravens, a close-by 1st CY Eastern Imperial Eagle, a bright male Palestine Sunbird and some Arabian Partridges heard singing from the other side of the hole filled up the list. A male Pallid Harrier was seen in our way to Wadi Darbat.

### **Wadi Darbat, 2nd Round – November 23rd**

We wanted to give another try to Arabian Spotted Eagle-owl so we decided to spend an extra night at Wadi Darbat. We arrived there with light enough to scan a lower area along the water stream. It turned out to be very productive, while Stephen and Marcel tried to work out what the swifts were, Martí found a Baillon's crake feeding on the shore, but the best was still to come: a lovely and tame Small Pratincole was resting on the shore, allowing amazing views of such an emblematic species. Later at dusk, an Arabian Wolf was heard howling from the top of a cliff and soon later several Arabian Scops Owl started singing, to be joined by 2 Arabian Spotted Eagle Owls. This was our target for that night so we started playing its call. This time, at least one of the birds seemed to be tape-responsive

**Small Pratincole** *Glareola lactea*. Wadi Darbat, November 23rd. Marcel Gil Velasco



and we finally got very nice scope views of this local specialty.

### **East Khawr/Shanawt Farms/East Khawr – November 24th**

There wasn't much left for us at Wadi Darbat, so we decided to spend the first hours of the following day at East Khawr. It's a very small spot, quick and easy to check, but there seems to be a constant turnover of birds. Hence, if you have the chance, it's worth visiting the place at least twice. We didn't see much during our first visit. Apart from an always-exotic Pheasant-tailed Jacana, the bunch of waders feeding around the coastal end of the lagoon didn't include anything exciting and so we soon left to Sahnawt Farms. On our way, exactly over the same roundabout as in Stephen's first trip to Oman, an adult Oriental Honey Buzzard was soaring to our delight.

We were unable to gain access to Sahnawt Farm and hence we had to check the extensive grassland from the fence. Admittedly, we did see some good birds from there, but the views we got were not good. Marc managed to find a distant flock of 5 White-tailed Plovers that, due to the tall grass, were just visible during their short flights. A male Pallid Harrier was patrolling the area, flushing some of the birds hidden among the grass and helping us spot and identify some of them. A Steppe Grey Shrike had settled its territory by the fence and a flock of Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters were sat lined up nearby. All of a sudden, a light falcon flew over and stopped on an electric tower. After a short walk to get better photos of the bird, we concluded it was a Barbary Falcon. Together with the light flight impression, the kestrelish jizz and the fine streaks underneath (with completely plain undertail area) finally helped us clinch the id.

A Long-toed Stint had been sighted at East Khawr on previous days and, since it was on the top of Mart's wish list, we decided to pay another visit to the place. There were some new birds in the pool, some of them as obvious as a big flock of Glossy Ibises. Indeed the Long-toed Stint was now part of the group of waders. We spent quite a lot of time looking at it, enjoying every detail of its plumage and wondering when (if ever) are we going to find one back home.

### **Al Baleed Archaeological Park – November 24th**

Our main target in our next stop, Al Baleed Archaeological Park, was the Spotted Thick-knee. Even though it's meant to be common around Salalah, this place seems to be the quickest way to find one and enjoy great views of the species. We saw no less than 5 birds

and then focused on the pools. This is a good place for Yellow Bittern and Cotton Pygmy Goose, but it felt like it was too late for the first and too early for the latter. Nonetheless, there was a big flock of Pacific Golden Plovers (around 400 birds) and an interesting flock of winter-plumaged White-winged Terns. In the bushes around the park building, there was a good number of Shining Sunbirds feeding in a blooming tree and our second Eastern Olivaceous Warbler of the trip.

### **Al Mughsayl – November 24th–25th**

The wadi is meant to be one of the best spots for Desert Tawny Owl. We arrived at an apparently good spot when it was already dark night. After having played the call for 20 minutes, to no avail, we finally heard a bird calling from a nearby cliff. However, when we went slightly closer to try to locate the exact origin of the sound in the dark, we heard a female calling for just a second and the male then stopped singing. We were all hungry, so decided to have dinner a bit deeper into the wadi, to later come back to the owl spot. Good decision. When we came back, the owl was very active and much tape responsive. We almost immediately had brief views of it sat on the cliff, but it quickly took off. We followed him with a torch and it drew a circle in the air to pass flying right over us, singing, to finally land on a nearby tree. Goose-bump inducing! We enjoyed much better views of it than we could have imagined and the whole atmosphere, with a Desert Tawny Owl singing in a solitary wadi, under a very clear sky will always survive in our minds.

The morning after started with more good birds. We checked the first pool from the car and, since there was a Baillon's crane, we decided to take a proper look. While getting close to the pool, Stephen located a Brahminy Starling that seemed to be part of a flock of Tristram's Grackles and Marcel saw a White-breasted Waterhen just by the end of the pool. The flock of grackles moved towards a fruiting tree packed with birds, some of them being Arabian Partridges. The whole slope was full of them.

There were actually 3 Baillon's Crakes, so we decided to sit still by the pool and see what else would pop up. It was an Intermediate Egret, which came flying presumably from the other pools down the wadi. After getting very good views of both the egret and the crakes, we moved down to the next pool, where we saw a Yellow/Little Bittern. There's not much literature about this species identification in non-breeding plumage and we find it hard to make a solid judgement based on the information we've been able to gather. Comments are more than welcome!



Top left: **Baillon's Crake** *Zapornia pusilla*. Al Mughsayl, November 25th. Marcel Gil Velasco. Top right: **Intermediate Egret** *Ardea intermedia*. Al Mughsayl, November 25th. Marcel Gil Velasco. Middle left: **Abdim's Stork** *Ciconia abdimii*. Al Mughsayl, November 25th. Marcel Gil Velasco. Middle right: **Desert Tawny Owl** *Strix hadorami*. Al Mughsayl, November 24th. Marcel Gil Velasco. Bottom left: **Malachite Kingfisher** *Corythornis cristatus*. Al Mughsayl, November 25th. Stephen Menzie. Bottom right: **Cotton Pygmy Goose** *Nettapus coromandelianus*. Al Mughsayl, November 25th. Stephen Menzie.

There was indeed another one in the last pool (the closest to the sea), which in our opinion looked more Yellow Bittern-like. That pool was extremely productive and it all happened very quickly. Before setting our scopes to actually scan through, Marcel had already seen a female-type Cotton Pygmy Goose, Martí spotted a gorgeous Malachite Kingfisher and a Little Crake and Marc located a Brown Booby and an unidentified Noddy sat on the offshore buoys. Some fishermen were working around these buoys and all the birds in the area seemed very active. We got distracted by a very nice pod of Indopacific Humpbacked Dolphins that was following the boats around and then by a flock of 26 Abdim's Storks that came in active migration, landed by the pool for a while and resumed north. When we came close to the buoys, there was no sign of the noddy but we all had got a good bunch of lifers within the last half an hour!

#### **Raysut Waste Disposal – November 25th**

Of course we had to pay a visit to one of the most famous waste disposal plants in the world. As expected, hundreds of eagles were present, with over 400 Steppe Eagles, around 15 Eastern Imperial and at least 2 Greater-Spotted. 1 Black Kite was also present, although it didn't show much of a striking Eastern appearance. It's

not that we've just discovered it, but the place offers an almost unparalleled opportunity to study plumage variation in these Eagle species.

The adjacent water treatment plant didn't add anything new.

#### **Sahnawt and Jarziz Farms – November 25th**

It's impossible not to feel mixed feelings when visiting these farms. Whereas Sahnawt definitely has more birding potential, the fact that you can't get in makes it a frustrating place for birding, although some good birds, such as the White-tailed Plovers we had seen in our first visit, are still possible. In the other hand, Jarziz (or Jarzeez) is much smaller but you are welcome to go in and explore it for however long you like – despite being owned by the same cattle-feed company. During this second visit, Sahnawt wasn't too productive, but our first time in Jarziz did deliver some good birds. Some non-harvested grassland held several Singing Bush Larks and Bluethroats, whereas the crops produced a flock of 3 Richard's Pipits, a female Siberian Stonechat, a good collection of Yellow Wagtails of several types, Isabelline Wheatears, Isabelline Shrikes and a small party of Rose-coloured Starlings. It's worth mentioning too the presence of some Eastern-like Cattle Egrets within a flock of around 300

**Egyptian Nightjar** *Caprimulgus aegyptius*. Muntasar Oasis, November 26th. Marcel Gil Velasco



Western. Although they were in entire white plumage, the structure of these birds was quite striking.

### **Qatbit – November 26th**

We reached Qatbit on November 25th, already at night, and immediately felt the excitement of being in such a place. The list of rarities found in this green spot in the middle of the desert is amazing but, most importantly, the bushes around the motel have hosted some wintering Hypocolius during the last years. We saw none of these. Indeed, there weren't many birds in the garden. Just some eastern-type Lesser White-throats, Eastern Black Redstarts, a Blackcap, a Blue-throat, several Siberian-type Chiffchaffs, some Song Thrushes... nothing actually exciting. We eventually connected with a pair Nile Valley Sunbirds, but even these were in eclipse plumage, contributing to the feeling of disappointment.

We left and took the direction to Muntasar, but in our way spotted a big green area that turned out to be a pumpkin farm in the middle of nowhere. No fences, no nothing, just a small hut and a pumpkin farm surrounded by miles and miles of sandy desert. It was obviously worth checking and it indeed produced some very good birds: a Short-eared Owl (the 2nd of the trip!), a Bimaculated Lark and, most importantly, an Oriental Skylark, all seen well among dozens of Tawny, Red-throated and *coutelli* Water Pipits.

### **Muntasar – November 26th - 27th**

We then finally reached Muntasar, the well-known oasis where Hypocolius is also regularly seen in wintertime. As soon as we arrived, a Golden Eagle that was drinking in the pool flew away. There's something strange about these Golden Eagles. Muntasar is apparently the only place in Oman to see them and dozens gather together here to drink during the hot season. Where do they breed?

Apart from the Golden Eagle, there weren't many birds around there either. A Steppe Grey Shrike, more Eastern Black Redstarts, Bluethroats, Chiffchaffs... Fortunately, we had scheduled a night there, encouraged by the record of a Sykes's Nightjar the previous winter by Àlex Ollé & co. and keeping in mind hundreds of Sandgrouse are meant to congregate to drink in this oasis during the mornings. Although we didn't find any rare Nightjar during the night, we got unbeatable views of an Egyptian Nightjar sat on the ground only 2m from us. The sandgrouse, however, didn't show up in the morning. Stephen pointed out the strangely small numbers of sandgrouse we were seeing and to see none in a sandgrouse Meca such as Muntasar

means they had probably moved somewhere else. Time to drive north.

### **Wadi near Nizwa - November 27th**

We arrived to the place at dusk. It felt like we had been there years before, despite it was just 10 days ago. This time, however, we got to see the Omani Owl. It was calling from a cave in the beginning, but eventually went out and there it was, sat on a rock in the middle of the cliff, a rather classical sight of this recently described sought-after species.

### **Al Hajar Mountains – November 28th**

We still had quite a lot of species to see in the north, both in the mountains and along the coast, so we thought it was a good idea to cross the mountains to Sohar and then start checking most of the selected areas in the coast from north to south. The mountains behave well and while taking a coffee at Al Arid (23°26'45.4"N 56°38'25.3"E), Marc located a flock of vultures that turned out to be 3 Lapped-faced and an Egyptian.

A bit later on, flying over Yanqul, a nice Crested Honey-buzzard was soaring over the road and higher up the road, in an area with an amazing landscape (23°57'52.3"N 56°28'40.3"E), we got very nice views of a pair Hume's Wheatear. The birds seemed to be associated to an electric tower. Although they aren't meant to show sexual dimorphism, when compared side-by-side, the male was glossier.

### **Shinas – November 28th**

After several trips to Eastern Europe and the Middle East, most of us still hadn't seen Pallas's Gull and it was finally at Shinas when we first managed to connect with the species. Indeed, this is meant to be a hotspot for them in winter, apart from a good area to look for both Sykes's Warbler and Collared Kingfisher. None of them showed up, but we enjoyed the constant passage of terns, mainly Lesser Crested, the huge numbers of Red-necked Phalaropes and the umpteenth gull-watching opportunity.

### **Khatmat Milahah – November 28th – 29th**

We wanted to give a try to the Pallid Scops Owl and hence we decided to spend a night at Khatmat Milahah. We don't know if it's because most birders see it in Turkey or Israel, but there's not much information about the species in trip reports. Despite, according to the Sargeant's & Eriksens' book, it's meant to be common in some areas, such as this one, it felt like it wasn't



Top left: **Hume's Wheatear** *Oenanthe albonigra*. Al Hajar Mountains, November 28th. Marcel Gil Velasco. Top right: **Indian Roller** *Coracias benghalensis*. Sohar State Park, November 29th. Marcel Gil Velasco. Middle left: **Variable Wheatear** *Oenanthe picata*. Khatmat Milahah, November 29th. Marcel Gil Velasco. Middle right: **Plain Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus neglectus*. Khatmat Milahah, November 29th. Marcel Gil Velasco. Bottom left: **Green Bee-eater** *Merops orientalis*. Khatmat Milahah, November 29th. Marcel Gil Velasco. Bottom right: **Pallas's Gull** *Ichthyaetus ichthyaetus*. Liwa, November 29th. Marcel Gil Velasco.



**Pallid Scops Owl** *Otus brucei*. Khatmat Milahah, November 26th. Marcel Gil Velasco

the right season to hear them calling and for whatever reason we thought it was going to be hard to see it. Nothing further from the truth, as soon as we stopped the car and played the call, two birds responded almost immediately from nearby acacias. Soon we were enjoying cracking eye-level views of one of the birds singing in front of us. There were at least three birds calling within a 50m radius, so the density is probably very high here.

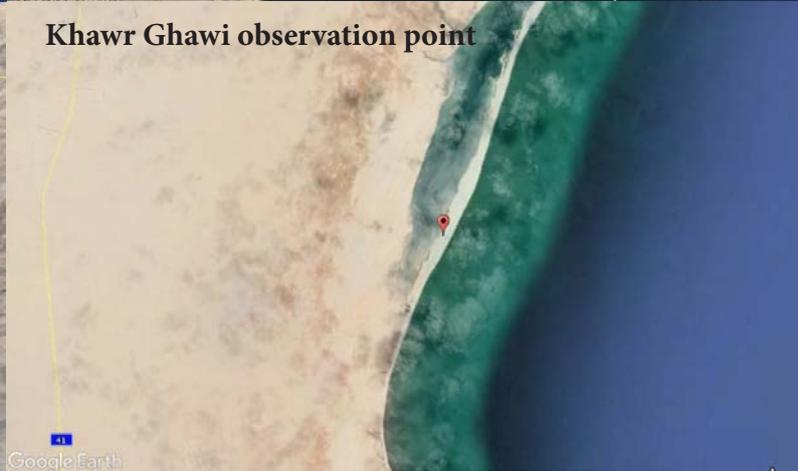
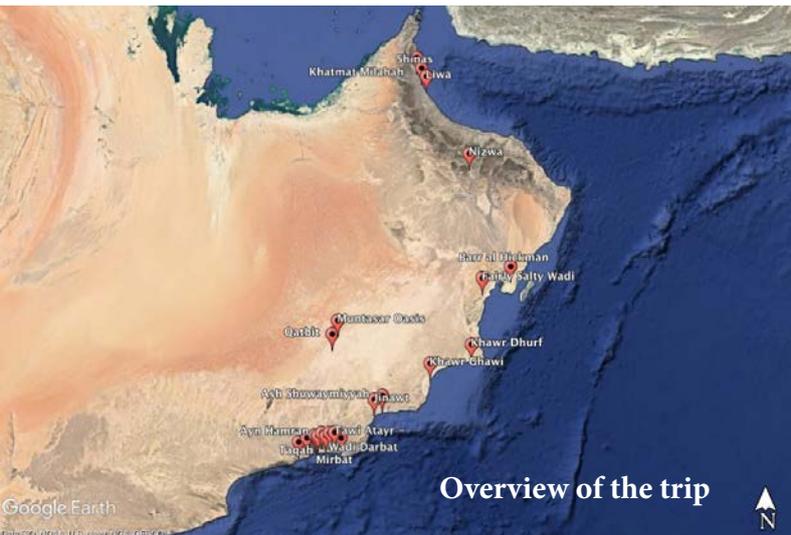
The morning after was also spent birding the sparse acacia trees and the small farms at this location. It was very nice to see some northern species again, such as Mountain Leaf Warbler and Purple Sunbird, but our main target was the Variable Wheatear. After having checked several field guides, we found it hard to tell it apart from Hume's Wheatear but, once we saw a Variable, it became obvious it was this species. We all had spread out and we all had flushed small flocks of Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse, quite unexpectedly foraging under the acacia trees. Other interesting species seen in the area included some parties of Arabian Babblers, more Isabelline Shrikes and our first Red-wattled Lapwings of the trip.

#### **Liwa – November 29th**

There wasn't much in the mangroves, but the beach was, as usual, full of gulls. This time, to our delight, we had a very close-by 1stW Pallas's Gull among the Steppe and Heuglin's Gulls. While looking at the gull, we hadn't realised there were some good waders even closer. It was especially nice to see a very close Terek's Sandpiper, a species that didn't seem approachable at all at Barr al Hickman. In the disturbed farmland area around, we got some Isabelline Shrikes, several Indian Rollers and finally good views of a small flock of Grey Francolins.

We had lunch at Majis beach, from where we had some more Pallas's Gulls of all ages flying by and spent the last ours of the trip at the State Park in Sohar, tiding up the car while keeping an eye on the flock of Greater Sand Plovers, with 2 birds in nice summer plumage.

# Some useful maps



# Annotated Trip List

## Birds

All the species seen or heard during the trip are listed below following IOC taxonomy. All the records have been uploaded to eBird.

Species	Comment
Cotton Pygmy-Goose <i>Nettapus coromandelianus</i>	1 at Al Mughsayl
Garganey <i>Spatula querquedula</i>	Several in different wetlands
Northern Shoveler <i>Spatula clypeata</i>	Several in different wetlands
Gadwall <i>Mareca strepera</i>	Several in different wetlands
Eurasian Wigeon <i>Mareca penelope</i>	Several in different wetlands
Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Seen at Al Mughsayl and Al Baleed Archaeological Park
Northern Pintail <i>Anas acuta</i>	Several in different wetlands
Eurasian Teal <i>Anas crecca</i>	Several in different wetlands
Common Pochard <i>Aythya ferina</i>	2 at Ash Shuwaymiyyah Lagoon
Tufted Duck <i>Aythya fuligula</i>	1 at Khawr Dhurf
Sand Partridge <i>Ammoperdix heyi</i>	3 at Ash Shuwaymiyyah Wadi
Arabian Partridge <i>Alectoris melanocephala</i>	A minimum of 15 at Al Mughsayl, also heard at Tawi Atayr
Grey Francolin <i>Francolinus pondicerianus</i>	1 heard at a wadi near Nizwa, 2 near Shinas
Little Grebe <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	4 at Al Baleed Archeological Park
Black-necked Grebe <i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	3 at Khawr Dhurf
Greater Flamingo <i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>	Several in all wetland sites, some in unexpected habitats
Jouanin's Petrel <i>Bulweria fallax</i>	25 off Mirbat, 660 estimated flying N within 1h of seawatching from 17.2419/55.2629
Persian Shearwater <i>Puffinus persicus</i>	12 estimated flying north within 1h of seawatching from 17.2419/55.2629, 25 off Mirbat
Abdim's Stork <i>Ciconia abdimii</i>	23 landed for a while at Al Mughsayl
White Stork <i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	5 at Jarziz Farm
Masked Booby <i>Sula dactylatra</i>	Impressive numbers (1300 estimated) seen flying N within 1h of seawatching from 17.2419/55.2629, 15 off Mirbat, 30 off Khawr Dhurf, 5 off Al Mughsayl
Brown Booby <i>Sula leucogaster</i>	3 off Al Mughsayl
Great Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Scattered records of small numbers at some coastal wetland sites (maximum of 20 at Barr al Hickman)
Socotra Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax nigrogularis</i>	2 at 18.1876/56.5468, 130 at Jinawt
Yellow Bittern <i>Ixobrychus sinensis</i>	Presumably 1 at Al Mughsayl
Little Bittern <i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	Presumably 1 at Al Mughsayl (pending further analysis to rule out Yellow Bittern)
Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Some in different spots around the coast
Purple Heron <i>Ardea purpurea</i>	Only 1 at East Khawr
Great White Egret <i>Ardea alba</i>	1 at East Khawr, 1 at Liwa
Intermediate Egret <i>Ardea intermedia</i>	1 at Al Mughsayl
Little Egret <i>Egretta garzetta</i>	1 at Taqah, 1 at Al Mughsayl, 1 at Filim
Western Reef-Heron <i>Egretta gularis</i>	Several along the coast
Cattle Egret <i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	2 at Qatbit, 1 at Muntasar Oasis, hundreds at Jarziz Farm, including at least 2 very interesting individuals with somewhat <i>coromandus</i> structure
Squacco Heron <i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	3 at Filim, 4 at Taqah, 4 at East Khawr, 1 at Al Baleed Archaeological Park

Species	Comment
Indian Pond Heron <i>Ardeola grayii</i>	1 at Filim, 1 at Khawr Taqah, 1 at Al Baleed Archaeological Park and 1 at Ash Shuwaymiyyah Lagoon
Striated Heron <i>Butorides striata</i>	1 at Filim, 1 at Liwa
Black-crowned Night-Heron <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	2 at Ayn Razat, 5 at Mirbat, 3 at Al Baleed Archaeological Park
Glossy Ibis <i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	27 at East Khawr
Eurasian Spoonbill <i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	12 at Barr al Hickman, 3 at Fiim, 1 at Khawr Dhurf, 12 at Khawr Ghawi
Osprey <i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	2 at Filim, 9 roosting on electric towers en route at 18.9409/57.2386
Egyptian Vulture <i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	1 together with 3 Lapped-faced Vultures at Al Hajar Mountains
Crested Honey-buzzard <i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>	1 over Yanqul, 1 over Salalah and a bird showing mixed features with <i>apivorus</i> at Wadi Darbat
Lappet-faced Vulture <i>Torgos tracheliotos</i>	3 at Al Hajar Mountains
Short-toed Eagle <i>Circaetus gallicus</i>	2 at Wadi Darbat
Greater Spotted Eagle <i>Clanga clanga</i>	Scattered records in different locations in the south, with a maximum of 5 at Wadi Darbat
Booted Eagle <i>Hieraetus pennatus</i>	1 at Wadi Darbat
Steppe Eagle <i>Aquila nipalensis</i>	Hundreds at Raysut Dump, scattered records elsewhere in the south
Imperial Eagle <i>Aquila heliaca</i>	3 at Wadi Darbat, around 10 at Raysut Dump, a near-adult at Tawi Atayr and 1 at Jarziz Farm
Golden Eagle <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	1 at Muntasar Oasis
Bonelli's Eagle <i>Aquila fasciata</i>	1 at Wadi Darbat, 1 at Tawi Atayr, 1 at Al Mughsayl and 1 at the oasis near Nizwa
Western Marsh Harrier <i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	Scattered records in different wetlands. A maximum of 12 roosting at Taqah
Pallid Harrier <i>Circus macrourus</i>	1 at Barr al Hickman, 3 at Khawr Dhurf, 1 near Tawi Atayr, 1 at Sahnawt Farm
Eurasian Sparrowhawk <i>Accipiter nisus</i>	1 at Filim, 1 at Ayn Razat, 1 at Wadi Darbat
Black Kite <i>Milvus migrans</i>	1 at Raysut Dump, didn't show any obvious eastern influence
Yellow-billed Kite <i>Milvus [migrans] aegyptius</i>	1 at Taqah, 1 at East Khawr
Long-legged Buzzard <i>Buteo rufinus</i>	1 at Al Mughsayl, 1 at Sahnawt Farm
White-breasted Waterhen <i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>	1 at Al Mughsayl
Little Crake <i>Zapornia parva</i>	1 at Al Mughsayl
Baillon's Crake <i>Zapornia pusilla</i>	1 at Wadi Darbat, 3 at Al Mughsayl
Common Moorhen <i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Common in freshwater wetlands
Eurasian Coot <i>Fulica atra</i>	2 at Khawr Dhurf
Common Crane <i>Grus grus</i>	3 at Wadi Darbat
Spotted Thick-knee <i>Burhinus capensis</i>	At least 5 at Al Baleed Archeological Park
Black-winged Stilt <i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	5 at Filim, 5 at Khawr Taqah, 10 at East Khawr and 12 at Sohar State Park
Eurasian Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	Several along the coast, with a maximum of 20 at Barr al Hickman. A good sample of the variability within eastern forms.
Grey Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	Several along the coast
Pacific Golden Plover <i>Pluvialis fulva</i>	2 at Khawr Ghawi, 1 at Ash Shuwaymiyyah Lagoon, 40 at Taqah and 400 (including a nice summer-plumaged individual) at Al Baleed Archaeological Park
Red-wattled Lapwing <i>Vanellus indicus</i>	Common at least in all coastal farmland and wetland areas in the north, not seen in the south.
White-tailed Lapwing <i>Vanellus leucurus</i>	5 at Sahnawt Farm
Lesser Sand Plover <i>Charadrius mongolus</i>	Thousands at Barr al Hickman, several in other wetland sites
Greater Sand Plover <i>Charadrius leschenaultii</i>	Hundreds at Barr al Hickman, several in other wetland sites
Kentish Plover <i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	Thousands at Barr al Hickman, several in other wetland sites
Common Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	1 at Khawr Dhurf, 40 at Al Baleed Archaeological Park

Species	Comment
Little Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius dubius</i>	6 at Taqah, some at East Khawr
Pheasant-tailed Jacana <i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i>	2 at Ash Shuwaymiyyah Lagoon, 1 at East Khawr
Whimbrel <i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	Scattered records along the coast
Eurasian Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>	Hundreds at Barr al Hickman, Filim and Khawr Ghawi. Several records elsewhere along the coast
Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i>	Hundreds at Barr al Hickman and Filim. Some records elsewhere along the coast
Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa</i>	1 at Khawr Dhurf, 1 at Ash Shuwaymiyyah Lagoon
Ruddy Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>	Hundreds at Barr al Hickman area, 1 at Al Baleed Archaeological Park
Ruff <i>Calidris pugnax</i>	A flock of 200 at Sahnawt Farm, 1 at East Khawr
Broad-billed Sandpiper <i>Calidris falcinellus</i>	Only 2 at Barr al Hickman, a minimum of 670 at Khawr Ghawi
Curlew Sandpiper <i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	1 at Khawr Dhurf, small numbers at Barr al Hickman
Temminck's Stint <i>Calidris temminckii</i>	4 at Khawr Taqah, 3 at East Khawr, 2 at Al Mughsayl
Long-toed Stint <i>Calidris subminuta</i>	1 at East Khawr
Sanderling <i>Calidris alba</i>	5 at Barr al Hickman, 5 at Liwa
Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i>	Thousands at Barr al Hickman, Filim and Khawr Ghawi. Several elsewhere along the coast.
Little Stint <i>Calidris minuta</i>	Thousands at Barr al Hickman, Filim and Khawr Ghawi. Small numbers in other coastal wetlands
Jack Snipe <i>Lymnocyptes minimus</i>	1 at Khawr Dhurf
Common Snipe <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Small numbers at several coastal wetland sites
Pin-tailed Snipe <i>Gallinago stenura</i>	3 at Khawr Dhurf remained the only seen during the trip
Terek Sandpiper <i>Xenus cinereus</i>	Around 30 at Barr al Hickman, 80 at Filim, scattered records in other coastal sites.
Red-necked Phalarope <i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>	Hundreds everytime we seawatched, also in the pelagic off Mirbat
Common Sandpiper <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Several along the coast, remarkably over 100 at Al Baleed Archaeological Park
Spotted Redshank <i>Tringa erythropus</i>	2 at Khawr Ghawi
Common Greenshank <i>Tringa nebularia</i>	Thousands at Barr al Hickman, Filim and Khawr Ghawi. Several elsewhere along the coast.
Marsh Sandpiper <i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	1 at Barr al Hickman, 1 at Filim
Wood Sandpiper <i>Tringa glareola</i>	1 at Wadi Darbat, 4 at East Khawr, 1 flying over the hanging gardens at Ash Shuwaymiyyah
Common Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>	Thousands at Barr al Hickman, several in other wetland sites
Crab-Plover <i>Dromas ardeola</i>	150 estimated at Barr al Hickman and the same amount at Filim, always distant
Cream-coloured Courser <i>Cursorius cursor</i>	1 en route at 19.1180/57.6327
Small Pratincole <i>Glareola lactea</i>	1 at Taqah, 1 at Wadi Darbat and 1 at Sahnawt Farm
Pomarine Skua <i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>	2 off Mirbat
Arctic Skua <i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	1 off Mirbat
Slender-billed Gull <i>Chroicocephalus genei</i>	Common along the coast
Black-headed Gull <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	1 at Khawr Dhurf
Sooty Gull <i>Ichthyaetus hemprichii</i>	Common along the coast
Pallas's Gull <i>Ichthyaetus ichthyaeus</i>	A total of 7 individuals of all ages between Shinas and Liwa areas. Didn't seem abundant by this time of the year
Caspian Gull <i>Larus cachinnans</i>	Although a deeper analysis is required, some birds with a perfect combination of <i>cachinnans</i> features were seen, especially in the north.
Steppe Gull <i>Larus [cachinnans] barabensis</i>	Common along the coast
Lesser Black-backed Gull <i>Larus fuscus</i>	1 nominate <i>fuscus</i> at Khawr Dhurf
Heuglin's Gull <i>Larus [fuscus] heuglini</i>	Common along the coast
Bridled Tern <i>Onychoprion anaethetus</i>	15 off Mirbat

Species	Comment
Little Tern <i>Sternula albifrons</i>	2 off Mirbat
Saunders's Tern <i>Sternula saundersi</i>	1 at Barr al Hickman, 2 at Taqah
Gull-billed Tern <i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i>	Several in different coastal wetlands
Caspian Tern <i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	2 at Barr al Hickman, 2 at Filim, 84 at Khawr Ghawi, 1 at East Khawr
White-winged Black Tern <i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>	Several at East Khawr (15), Jarziz Farm (11), Taqah (5), Sahnawt Farm (5) and Al Baleed Archaeological Park (15)
Whiskered Tern <i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>	3 at Ash Shuwaymiyyah Lagoon, 5 at Al Baleed Archaeological Park
Common Tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>	20 at Khawr Dhurf, 2 off Mirbat
White-cheeked Tern <i>Sterna repressa</i>	3 at Khawr Dhurf
Great Crested Tern <i>Thalasseus bergii</i>	Common along the coast
Sandwich Tern <i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>	6 at Khawr Dhurf and 1 at Shinas
Lesser Crested Tern <i>Thalasseus bengalensis</i>	Common along the coast. Very abundant at Liwa area
Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse <i>Pterocles exustus</i>	25 at Khawr Dhurf, heard at Al Mughsayl, some small flocks flushed at Khatmat Milahah
Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse <i>Pterocles lichtensteinii</i>	At least 6 at Ash Shuwaymiyyah Wadi, 8 by the road at 17.1755/55.1674
Rock Dove <i>Columba livia</i>	Common in all human settlements. Some birds with pure <i>palestinae</i> features were also seen in pretty remote areas.
Collared Dove <i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Common in all human settlements.
African Collared Dove <i>Streptopelia roseogrisea</i>	1 at Ash Shuwaymiyyah Wadi
Laughing Dove <i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>	Common everywhere
Namaqua Dove <i>Oena capensis</i>	5 birds at Sahnawt Farm
Bruce's Green-Pigeon <i>Treron waalia</i>	Common at Wadi Darbat
Arabian Scops Owl <i>Otus pamela</i>	At least 15 heard at Wadi Darbat, 1 seen well
Pallid Scops Owl <i>Otus brucei</i>	Some heard at Khatmat Milahah, 2 seen well
Spotted Eagle Owl <i>Bubo africanus</i>	<i>milesi</i> . 2 heard at Wadi Darbat, 1 seen well
Pharaoh Eagle Owl <i>Bubo ascalaphus</i>	1 recorded at a wadi near Nizwa
Little Owl <i>Athene noctua</i>	1 heard at Wadi Darbat
Desert Owl <i>Strix hadorami</i>	2 at Al Mughsayl, great views of one
Omani Owl <i>Strix butleri</i>	2 heard at a wadi near Nizwa, 1 seen well
Short-eared Owl <i>Asio flammeus</i>	1 off Barr al Hickman, 1 at a pumpkin farm near Qatbit
Eurasian Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	1 at Wadi Darbat, at least 2 at Muntasar oasis
Egyptian Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus aegyptius</i>	1 at Muntasar oasis
Common Swift <i>Apus apus</i>	Several at Wadi Darbat
Pallid Swift <i>Apus pallidus</i>	Several at Wadi Darbat. Some intriguing individuals could had well been the so-called 'Dofar swift', now meant to be Forbes-Watson's swift. Vocalizations not heard.
Eurasian Hoopoe <i>Upupa epops</i>	Many seen at random spots. Seems to like the grassy roundabouts
Common Kingfisher <i>Alcedo atthis</i>	Scattered records in coastal wetlands
Malachite Kingfisher <i>Corythornis cristatus</i>	1 at Al Mughsayl
Green Bee-eater <i>Merops orientalis</i>	Common in several locations, especially in the coast
Blue-cheeked Bee-eater <i>Merops persicus</i>	4 at Khawr Dhurf, at least 6 at Sahnawt Farm
European Roller <i>Coracias garrulus</i>	1 on the way to Tawi Atayr
Indian Roller <i>Coracias benghalensis</i>	Common in all forested areas in the north
Lesser Kestrel <i>Falco naumanni</i>	1 en route at 21.0586/58.2575
Common Kestrel <i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	A handful of records, mainly in the south
Eurasian Hobby <i>Falco subbuteo</i>	1 at Taqah
Peregrine Falcon <i>Falco peregrinus</i>	1 at Barr al Hickman
Barbary Falcon <i>Falco pelegrinoides</i>	1 at Sahnawt Farm
Ring-necked Parakeet <i>Psittacula krameri</i>	Some around human settlements in the south
Black-crowned Tchagra <i>Tchagra senegalus</i>	At least 2 at Al Mughsayl

Species	Comment
Red-tailed Shrike <i>Lanius phoenicuroides</i>	2 at Khawr Dhurf, 2 at Ash Shuwaymiyyah Wadi, 1 at Ash Shuwaymiyyah Lagoon and 2 at a small village north of Lakabi
Isabelline Shrike <i>Lanius isabellinus</i>	1 at Barr al Hickman, 2 at Taqah, 1 at Al Mughsayl, 1 at Jarziz Farm and 2 at Liwa
Southern Grey Shrike <i>Lanius meridionalis</i>	Race <i>aucheri</i> . Singles at several locations with a suitable habitat
Steppe Grey Shrike <i>Lanius [meridionalis] pallidirostris</i>	1 at Taqah, 1 at Muntasar Oasis, 1 at Sahnawt, 1 at Jarziz
African Paradise-Flycatcher <i>Terpsiphone viridis</i>	Some at Wadi Darbat. Also seen at Tawi Atayr and Ayn Hamran
House Crow <i>Corvus splendens</i>	Several around different human settlements. Two races seem to be involved, with birds in the north showing a paler nape than birds in the south
Brown-necked Raven <i>Corvus ruficollis</i>	Some en route across the desert
Fan-tailed Raven <i>Corvus rhipidurus</i>	Some in southern wadis
Greater Hoopoe-Lark <i>Alaemon alaudipes</i>	1 near Muntasar, 1 en route across the desert
Desert Lark <i>Ammomanes deserti</i>	4 at Ash Shuwaymiyyah Wadi, 1 en route
Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark <i>Eremopterix nigriceps</i>	10 at a petrol station south of Izki, 2 in a village north of Lakabi
Singing Bushlark <i>Mirafra cantillans</i>	3 on the way to Tawi Atayr. Common at Jarziz Farm
Eurasian Skylark <i>Alauda arvensis</i>	At least 2 birds heard over Liwa area
Oriental Skylark <i>Alauda gulgula</i>	1 at a pumpkin farm near Qatbit
Greater Short-toed Lark <i>Calandrella brachydactyla</i>	1 at a petrol station south of Izki, 1 Khawr Dhurf, 2 Al Mughsayl
Bimaculated Lark <i>Melanocorypha bimaculata</i>	1 at a pumpkin farm near Qatbit
Crested Lark <i>Galerida cristata</i>	Common in a variety of open habitats
Sand Martin <i>Riparia riparia</i>	Seen at some locations. Several at Taqah
Rock Martin <i>Ptyonoprogne fuligula</i>	Common in different habitats
Barn Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Seen at several locations. Especially abundant at the southern farms
White-spectacled Bulbul <i>Pycnonotus xanthopygos</i>	Very common in different habitats
White-eared Bulbul <i>Pycnonotus leucotis</i>	2 at Liwa, 1 at a wadi near Nizwa
Common Chiffchaff <i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	Several in migration hotspots such as Filim and Qatbit. All giving <i>tristis</i> calls but most showing mixed plumage features.
Plain Leaf Warbler <i>Phylloscopus neglectus</i>	Very common in all bushland areas in the north
Great Reed Warbler <i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i>	Scattered records in some coastal wetlands, summing up a total of 7 birds
Clamorous Reed Warbler <i>Acrocephalus stentoreus</i>	Scattered records in coastal wetlands
Graceful Prinia <i>Prinia gracilis</i>	Seemed commoner in the north. Very conspicuous in reedbeds and grassland areas
Eurasian Blackcap <i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	1 at Qatbit
Asian Desert Warbler <i>Sylvia nana</i>	6 individuals in a low acacia plateau south of Izki, at least 3 at Barr al Hickman, 2 at Muntasar
Lesser Whitethroat <i>Sylvia curruca</i>	Very common and conspicuous. Most of the individuals showed a complete set of eastern features and gave halimodendri calls
Arabian Warbler <i>Sylvia leucomelaena</i>	1 at Wadi Al Muaydin, 1 at Ayn Razat
Eastern Orphean Warbler <i>Sylvia crassirostris</i>	5 at a low acacia plateau south of Izki
Menetries's Warbler <i>Sylvia mystacea</i>	6 at Ash Shuwaymiyyah Wadi, 1 at Qatbit
White-breasted White-eye <i>Zosterops abyssinicus</i>	Very common in all mountainous areas in the south
Arabian Babbler <i>Turdoides squamiceps</i>	Some parties at Khatmat Milahah
Bluethroat <i>Luscinia svecica</i>	Surprisingly common in different locations, remarkably at least 5 at Muntasar Oasis
Red-breasted Flycatcher <i>Ficedula parva</i>	Singles at Khawr Dhurf, Khawr Ghawi, Ash Shuwaymiyyah Wadi and Al Mughsayl
Black Redstart <i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	Several in most migration hotspots, remarkably 4 at Qatbit and 4 at Khatmat Milahah, all fitting <i>semirufus</i> -type.
Common Rock Thrush <i>Monticola saxatilis</i>	1 at Ash Shuwaymiyyah Wadi
Blue Rock Thrush <i>Monticola solitarius</i>	1 at an oasis near Nizwa, 1 at Al Mughsayl

Species	Comment
Siberian Stonechat <i>Saxicola maurus</i>	1 at Jarziz Farm
Blackstart <i>Cercomela melanura</i>	Scattered records in southern wadis
Hume's Wheatear <i>Oenanthe albonigra</i>	1 at an oasis near Nizwa, 2 (presumably a pair) at Al Hajar mountains
Northern Wheatear <i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	1 at Qatbit
Arabian Wheatear <i>Oenanthe lugentoides</i>	Pretty common in southern wadis
Variable Wheatear <i>Oenanthe picata</i>	1 at Khatmat Milahah
Red-tailed Wheatear <i>Oenanthe chrysopygia</i>	Singles at an oasis near Nizwa, Khatmat Milahah and Liwa football pitch
Desert Wheatear <i>Oenanthe deserti</i>	Very common in a variety of desert habitats
Isabelline Wheatear <i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>	Seen both at Jarziz and Sahnawt farms, plus others scattered around
Song Thrush <i>Turdus philomelos</i>	1 at Al Mughsayl, at least 6 at Qatbit
Rose-coloured Starling <i>Pastor roseus</i>	At least 5 at Jarziz Farm
Brahminy Starling <i>Sturnia pagodarum</i>	1 at Al Mughsayl
Common Myna <i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	Very common around human settlements
Tristram's Starling <i>Onychognathus tristramii</i>	Very common in the south. Especially numerous at Tawi Atayr and Al Mughsayl
Nile Valley Sunbird <i>Hedydipna metallica</i>	At least 3 at Qatbit
Shining Sunbird <i>Cinnyris habessinicus</i>	Very common in all bushland areas in the south
Purple Sunbird <i>Cinnyris asiaticus</i>	Very common in all bushland areas in the north
Palestine Sunbird <i>Cinnyris ossea</i>	1 at Tawi Atayr, also seen at Ayn Razat
Western Yellow Wagtail <i>Motacilla flava</i>	<i>feldegg</i> , <i>thunbergi</i> , <i>flava</i> and <i>beema</i> types were noted, with all the caution required when assessing birds in winter plumage. Especially abundant in the farms.
Citrine Wagtail <i>Motacilla citreola</i>	Seen at several wetlands, remarkably 5 at East Khawr
Grey Wagtail <i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	Some in both northern and southern wadis
Pied Wagtail/White Wagtail <i>Motacilla alba</i>	Several seen in different spots, remarkably 84 together just before dusk at Taqah
'Masked' wagtail' <i>Motacilla [alba] personata</i>	1 at Taqah
Richard's Pipit <i>Anthus richardi</i>	3 at Jarziz Farm
Long-billed Pipit <i>Anthus similis</i>	A handful of records in dry wadis and rocky slopes such as Tawi Atayr
Tawny Pipit <i>Anthus campestris</i>	Very common in most migration hotspots
Tree Pipit <i>Anthus trivialis</i>	Several in Barr al Hickman and Filim, 1 at Jarziz Farm
Red-throated Pipit <i>Anthus cervinus</i>	1 at East Khawr, some at Sahnawt Farm, 1 at Liwa football pitch and over 20 at a pumpkin farm near Qatbit
Water Pipit <i>Anthus spinoletta</i>	Common in football pitches in the north. Abundant in a pumpkin farm near Qatbit too.
Cinnamon-breasted Bunting <i>Emberiza tahapisi</i>	Very common in all bushland areas in the south
Yemen Serin <i>Crithagra menachensis</i>	A flock of 15 behind the abandoned restaurant at Tawi Atayr
House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>	Both <i>indicus</i> and <i>hufufae</i> types were noted. Common around human settlements and farmland areas
Rüppell's Weaver <i>Ploceus galbula</i>	Very common in the south
Indian Silverbill <i>Euodice malabarica</i>	Small flocks in farmland areas in the north
African Silverbill <i>Euodice cantans</i>	Very common in the south



## Mammals

Species	Comment
Golden Jackal <i>Canis aureus</i>	2 seen at night at Ash Shuwaymiyyah Wadi
Arabian Wolf <i>Canis lupus</i>	1 heard howling at dusk at Wadi Darbat
Arabian Red Fox <i>Vulpes vulpes arabicus</i>	Several seen in a variety of habitats
Egyptian Rousette <i>Rousettus aegyptiacus</i>	Some seen flying over the streets in Salalah
False Killer Whale <i>Pseudorca crassidens</i>	A pod of no less than 5 individuals off Mirbat
Indopacific Bottlenose Dolphin <i>Tursiops aduncus</i>	A pod swimming extremely close to the shore a bit north of the seawatching point
Indian Humpback Dolphin <i>Sousa [chinensis] plumbea</i>	Some individuals feeding around the buoys off Al Mughsayl

## Reptiles and Amphibians

Species	Comment
Arabian Chameleon <i>Chamaeleo arabicus</i>	2 individuals in the trees at Ayn Hamran park site
Bosc's Fringe-toed Lizard <i>Acanthodactylus boskianus</i>	Seen south of Izki
Bloodsucker <i>Calotes versicolor</i>	One at Ayn Razat
Hawksbill Turtle <i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i>	At least 2 found dead at Barr al Hickman
Loggerhead Turtle <i>Caretta caretta</i>	Some seen off Mirbat.
Arabian Toad <i>Bufo arabicus</i>	Several at a wadi near Nizwa. A big one by Izki

## Dragonflies

Species	Comment
<i>Ceriagrion glabrum</i>	Al Mughsayl
<i>Rhyothemis semihyalina</i>	Al Mughsayl
<i>Lindenia tetraphylla</i>	Wadi Darbat
<i>Trithemis annulata</i>	Wadi Darbat
<i>Paragomphus sinaiticus</i>	Ayn Hamran
<i>Anax ephippiger</i>	Fairly Salty Wady
<i>Orthetrum sabina</i>	Fairly Salty Wady
<i>Diplacodes lefebvrii</i>	Al Mughasyl
<i>Trithemis arteriosa</i>	Al Mughasyl
<i>Crocothemis erythraea</i>	Al Mughasyl



## Butterflies

Species	Comment
African Lime Butterfly <i>Papilio demodocus</i>	Ayn Hamran and Ayn Razat
Caper White <i>Anaphaeis aurota</i>	Nizwa area
Zebra White <i>Pinacopteryx eripha</i>	Ayn Hamran
Desert Orange Tip <i>Colotis liagore</i>	Nizwa area
Plain Tiger <i>Danaus chrysippus</i>	Ayn Hamran and Ayn Razat
Cream-bordered Charaxes <i>Charaxes hansali</i>	At least in Ayn Hamran
Blue Pansy <i>Precis orithya</i>	Ayn Hamran
Yellow Pansy <i>Precis hierta</i>	Birkat Al Mouz
Common Three-Ring <i>Ypthima asterope</i>	Nizwa area
Pea Blue <i>Lampides boeticus</i>	
Balkan Pierrot <i>Taurucus cf. balkanicus</i>	Both in north and in Ayn Hamran and Ayn Razat
Large Skipper <i>Coeliades anchises</i>	Common near Birkat Al Mouz
Skipper sp. <i>Gegenes sp.</i>	Nizwa area

*Papilio demodocus* and *Taurucus cf. balkanicus*. Ayn Razat, November 22nd. Marti Franck

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