

OSME NEWS

Keith Betton

OSME Council changes

A number of Council members are retiring by rotation this year and we thank them for their support. These are John Bartley, Pat Bartley, Andrew Grieve, Chris Harbard and David Murdoch. John has been our Secretary since 2003 and is succeeded in that role by Ian Harrison. Pat has managed the Conservation and Research Fund and this will now be taken on by Geoff Welch. Chris manages our website and will continue to do so although not on Council. Finally, due to work commitments Dominic Mitchell has decided to stand down this year. We are very pleased that Mike Blair, the former editor of *Sandgrouse*, joins Council as an elected member.

New OSME Vice Presidents

We are delighted to announce that two notable ornithologists from the region have agreed to become OSME Vice Presidents for a period of ten years. They are Ali Adhami Mirhosseini from Iran and Sergei Sklyarenko from Kazakhstan.

New OSME Corporate Member

NHBS Environment Bookstore has signed up to OSME's Corporate Membership scheme. The company is a leading supplier of environmental books on almost every subject. They also stock wildlife equipment. They provide a high quality specialist service with customers in over 150 countries. NHBS staff are specialists in their field—with a broad mix of science, library, software, purchasing and dispatch experience. NHBS undertakes a number of activities for conservation including releasing excess stock to bona fide wildlife organisations at cost price or below. We thank them for their support and encourage you to investigate their website: www.nhbs.com

OSME Summer Meeting

In July over 60 members and guests attended the 2008 OSME Summer Meeting at the BTO Headquarters in Thetford, Norfolk. The meeting started with brief updates by Richard Porter on conservation work in Socotra and

Iraq. We were particularly pleased that Mudhafar Salim and Koresh Arrarat from Nature Iraq were able to travel to the UK to attend the meeting. Ian Fisher then gave an update on the Birdlife Worldbirds project which aims to focus birders worldwide on recording in a systematic way. Looking at one of Syria's success stories, Jeremy Lindsell reported on the current status of the Northern Bald Ibis, including recent news on their migration to Ethiopia. Incoming Sandgrouse Editor, Peter Cowan, outlined his ideas for the journal, including the inclusion of significantly more colour pages. During the lunch break a new film, *Birds of Dhofar*, Oman, was screened for the first time in the UK. After the Society's AGM, Rob Sheldon explained the recent discoveries about Sociable Lapwing migration. Two talks on Cyprus saw Colin Richardson give an overview of the local avifauna, while Vicky Jones focused in on just one species—the Cyprus Warbler. Finally, James Parry gave us an insight into the world of Richard Meinertzhagen, who travelled extensively in the Middle East, and whose life and discoveries have subsequently been surrounded by controversy.

More OSME funds to help projects in the region

Using its Conservation and Research Fund, OSME has supported a number of projects in the last six months.

- £750 towards the cost of an expedition to Oman for a Winter Waterbird Count in January 2008
- £500 towards the cost of an expedition along the western coast of the Caspian Sea in Dagestan from May to July 2008
- £400 towards a proposed raptor migration survey in Batumi, Georgia from August to October 2008
- £2000 towards the Slender-billed Curlew expedition to Uzbekistan in May 2008 (funded by the British Birdwatching Fair and Catalonia Tourist Board through OSME)

- £1320 for work on Sociable Lapwing breeding ecology in Kazakhstan (funded by Avifauna through OSME)
- £1000 towards a distribution survey of Imperial Eagles in Azerbaijan in July 2008
- £250 towards the setting up of the Palmyra Society Website, which will focus on local wildlife issues

Thank you

In addition to the departures from Council reported above, writing this report has been one of my last duties as OSME's Chairman. I want to thank the many people who have offered guidance and advice during my six

years in the chair. Together we have achieved a lot—increasing our financial contribution to active fieldwork in the region, increasing the size of *Sandgrouse*, and I hope increasing our engagement with active ornithologists and conservationists in the region. I had hoped to welcome Guy Kirwan as my successor, but sadly he has been prevented from taking the role this year due to illness. Geoff Welch has kindly stepped forward to take the chair for a year, and I thank him for that. I came into the role with high hopes for OSME and I leave it with even higher hopes. There is much still to be done and I thank all the members for their continued support.

NEWS & INFORMATION

Dawn Balmer (compiler)

IRAQ

Children's book on the birds of Iraq

With support from the Italian Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea and



Plate 1. Children's Bird Guide of Iraq.



Plate 2. Children's play at launch of *Children's Bird Guide of Iraq*.

the Kurdish Ministry of Environment, Nature Iraq in partnership with the Iraqi Ministry of Environment and BirdLife International has released a new book on birds for the children of Iraq. It is written in Iraq's two main languages, Arabic and Kurdish. Released approximately one year after the first field guide on birds, *Birds of Iraq*, was published; this book is based on a version that was developed several years before on the birds of Jordan by the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature RSCN in Jordan.

Using illustrations from the original RSCN book, as well as bird images from the Helm Field Guide, *Birds of the Middle East* by RF Porter, S Christensen & P Schiermacker-Hansen, the *Children's Bird Guide of Iraq* (Plate 1) attempts to introduce Iraq's new generation (Plate 2) to the beauty of birds, an important part of the natural world that surrounds them.

KAZAKHSTAN

Pallid Harrier satellite tracking in Kazakhstan

Since 2006, Natural Research (www.natural-research.org) has conducted conservation-focused research on the breeding ecology of Pallid *Circus macrourus* and Montagu's