



*Spotted thick-knee at Raysut.*

# **OMAN**

**20 February 2018 to 03 March 2018**

*Trip report by Bassel Abi Jummaa*

Oman has always been high on my must visit countries for what it holds from good bird diversity to a wide variety of habitats and biomes different to some extent from the desert biome dominating the Arabian peninsula, and it wasn't until February 2018 when intention turned into reality. From a birder's perspective, the main reason behind this visit was catching up with some new lifers and afro-tropical bird species resident in the Arabian Peninsula, even though I have seen all of those in Ethiopia when I was working there back then. I took advantage of my short February vacation and extended several days to accommodate the trip within the intended duration though this didn't allow me time to visit wadi Al-Shuwaymiyah and barr Al-hikman and ended up losing the great knot and crab plover. On the negative side, the trip timing meant that it will be unlikely to catch up with many palearctic passage migrants as it was bit early for northbound migration, but a good selection of wintering species specifically waders and waterfowl, plus the afro-tropical residents kept me far from regret. My main targets were the maritime species in addition to some range restricted ones such as Hume's wheatear and the Arabian endemics. A total of 196 bird species was recorded, however dipped some specials notably Verreaux's eagle, crowned sandgrouse, Dunn's lark and Hume's leaf warbler. The recently defined Omani owl was also one of the top target birds but I couldn't get myself to anyone who knows the owl's site and even didn't try digging into that for what is known of discretion when it comes to disclosing it, so I preferred not to lose time and search in vain. All the recorded species were submitted on ebird mobile phone application on the spot, and this proved very easy and quick way in storing data in the field.

In the first stages of planning the trip and due to the short duration of my vacation, I decided to limit my birding only to Dhofar in the south and spare just two days to visit Qatbit and surroundings near the empty quarters with an excursion to Mudday. However, giving it another thought, I decided to ask for a four-day extension and include northern Oman and this went pretty well ending up in a full twelve days' vacation. In order to save time, I had chosen to take a domestic flight from Salalah in the south to Muscat rather than losing a full day travelling by car. This option proved much cheaper also since dropping the vehicle back in Muscat incurs extra 150 OMR charge by the hire company for a different drop off location. Both international flights and the domestic flight were booked online as both SUV Mitsubishi outlanders at Muscat and Salalah. The SUVs were booked through the site [www.rentalcars.com](http://www.rentalcars.com) at the rate of 390 USD for the four days in the north and 520 USD for the seven days at Dhofar in the south. It is worth to mention that although the road network is very good and most of the roads are paved, it is necessary to have a four-wheel drive vehicle with acceptable ground clearance in order to access many important sites notably the wadis and some other sites in the empty quarters. I navigated all the way using Google maps phone application and never encountered any issues.

Being told by two of my friends that birding in Oman is easy and safe, I decided not to go deep in many birding reports and just gave it a slight look at some of them notably the below listed ones. However I had a thorough look at the site [www.birdsoman.com](http://www.birdsoman.com) and specifically at the section "Updates to Birdwatching guide to Oman, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition", and the information proved very helpful. On the other hand, It might have been foolish not to get the famous "Birdwatching guide to Oman, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition" by Dave Sargeant and Hanne & Jens Eriksen, but surprisingly this was the case. It took me some time to realize the mistake of not getting the book handy, but that was too late. Consequently, I decided to download the birding hotspots' locations from ebird site and plug them to Google maps and this alternative worked pretty well.

The below are some excellent reports I had a look at:

- [https://www.cloudbirders.com/tripreport/repository/LEHMBERG\\_Oman\\_0203\\_2017.pdf](https://www.cloudbirders.com/tripreport/repository/LEHMBERG_Oman_0203_2017.pdf)
- [https://www.cloudbirders.com/tripreport/repository/COOK\\_Oman\\_01\\_2014.pdf](https://www.cloudbirders.com/tripreport/repository/COOK_Oman_01_2014.pdf)
- [https://www.cloudbirders.com/tripreport/repository/OLLE\\_Oman\\_12\\_2016.pdf](https://www.cloudbirders.com/tripreport/repository/OLLE_Oman_12_2016.pdf)

I opted to go with cheap accommodation as most of the time was spent outside where I usually returned to hotels just for overnight. Below are the hotel names which I stayed in during the trip.

- **Al Nile Hotel** ( Salalah ) : Clean rooms and bathrooms with a small kitchen . Hot water and good wifi although connection was slow sometimes. At 11 OMR/night, this hotel serves as a cheap and very good option for visiting birders. The drawback is that it doesn't have its own restaurant but there are many restaurants nearby and across the street.
- **Qatbit motel** ( Qatbit ) : Basic accommodation but simply the only option in the area in case one will not camp. Rooms and toilets were clean. The clerk at the reception demanded 25 OMR which was pretty a high price for such accommodation, but once I complained he did drop the price to only 15 OMR. There is a nearby restaurant which serves mostly Indian food.
- **Savoy grand hotel apartments** ( Muscat ) : I did sleep in this hotel the first night I reached Muscat . They charged 25 OMR which looked little expensive compared to the room standards. I don't recommend this hotel for long stays.
- **Shoumoukh tourist hotel** ( Al Rustaq town in Al Hajar mountains area ) : Simply the worst hotel I had been to but was the only one that I could find in the area after asking several people. Very expensive at 35 OMR per night and on top of that the bathroom was dirty and the room itself wasn't properly arranged. There was no Wifi connection, and the room door never locked properly. Obviously, the owner took advantage of the unavailability of other accommodation nearby and set up this ridiculous pricing.
- **Al-Ain house hotel** ( Jabal Al Akhdar and Sayq plateau area ) : A very basic and cheap hotel in Sayq town which is acceptable just for short period stays . It does not have a restaurant. Not much comfortable and fair on cleanliness.

**Day 1: 20-02-2018 ( Raysut Lagoon – Ayn Jarziz )**

A very frustrating delay at Kuwait international airport due to a breakdown in the baggage handling system ended up losing the connecting flight to Doha, and so had to wait another four hours for another Doha-Salalah flight . That wasn't a good start and meant losing a complete morning birding session. However, arriving at Salalah by midday, I easily got the visa stamped, purchased a mobile phone card then picked up the rental SUV. All that went easy and without delays where the airport crew was very polite and helpful. In a hurry dropped the bags at the hotel and directly headed to Raysut where I stopped at Raysut lagoon. I was greeted with overhead **Caspian terns** followed by **gull-billed terns** and noisy **house crows**. A first scan to the sky produced a **Steppe eagle** and a 2<sup>nd</sup> CY **Greater spotted eagle**. Soon more three **Greater spotted eagles** were soaring higher and an **osprey** made a quick fly over the lagoon. A handful of **grey herons** with several **great cormorants** and two **squacco herons** were occupying two small trees in the middle of the water and several **common mynas** were perched on electric wires. Heading to the northern edge of lagoon and adjacent to the reeds, the first **yellow wagtails** showed followed by a **citrine wagtail** and a **white wagtail**. A party of **Ruppell's weavers** started delivering their calls from a nearby dwarf tree and two fast flying **Green sandpipers** passed by calling. I stopped and made a scan at the water's edge to see an assortment of waders consisting of two **common redshanks**, three **common greenshanks**, several **Temminck's stints**, a **marsh sandpiper**, one **black-tailed godwit** and many **black-winged stilts**. Proceeding further, more **yellow wagtails** and three more **citrine wagtails** made an appearance while a **common snipe** was flushed. The only **little stint** was feeding among some more **Temmincks stints**, and some **common sandpipers** along with **wood sandpipers** were recorded further. Setting the scope on a higher point along the ridge adjacent to the lagoon, I scanned the northern edge where two **pheasant-tailed jacanas** showed followed by several **Eurasian coots**, **common moorhens** and a small party of **little grebes**. Waterfowl were in the form of **Garganeys**, **northern shovelers** and two **mallards**. An approaching eagle at a relatively low height turned out to be an **eastern imperial** and a **Eurasian marsh harrier** was flying low over. A flock of **pale crag martins** circled above the ridges and a **black kite**. Spending some time scanning the lagoon didn't produce much except for a sole **Indian pond heron** and a flying **purple heron**. On my way back picked up a small party of **African silverbills** that dropped into a small bush.



*Arabian scops owl on a very first attempt, Ayn Jarziz.*



Returning to car I decided to park across the other side of road and spend some time on the lagoon at the downstream and up to the shore. While still in car a female **pied wheatear** made a brief appearance followed by an **Isabelline wheatear** and a **yellow wagtail**. I parked and made my way towards the shore when from nowhere a **spotted thick-knee** was standing just in front of me! A very good bird and one of my targets nailed early. Proceeding and scanning the waters on both sides I added a **dunlin**, **curlew sandpiper**, **marsh sandpiper** and **common ringed plover** to my wader list. The first **western reef heron** showed and several **black-winged stilts** plus a **glossy ibis** further down. The sky was occupied by big flocks of gulls and a bigger flock of **white storks** in addition to a **greater spotted eagle**. Reaching near the shore, a very small lagoon held a nice flock of **greater flamingos** and several gulls with **common black-headed** and **sooty** being the dominant species. Others were mostly **steppe gulls** with some **Heuglin's** and **slender-billed** and among them was a single adult male **Pallas's gull**. On the lagoon's left corner, a flock of **pied avocets** with several **whimbrels** and **ruddy shelducks** put an end to the first birding day.

On my way back to hotel at dusk, I just thought of trying the Arabian scops owl at any location on the wooded hills and valleys around Salalah. Reaching one roundabout, I saw a sign of what is called Ayn Jarziz and so decided to have a look. Reaching Ayn Jarziz, I parked the car near a mosque and waited a little to hear the first **Arabian scops owl** calling from far. Soon, another individual started to call but this time from close vicinity. Carefully I made my way towards the sound and played the call to hear the owl responding directly from the branch above! The first owl recorded without much effort.

## Day 2: 21-02-2018 ( Ayn Hamran – Jabal Samhan – Tawi Atyr )

This morning saw me at Ayn Hamran where the scenes and wooded hills are that of typical Afro-tropical acacia woodlands. The calls of **Abyssinian white-eyes** filled the air and the first **African paradise flycatcher** was very active in the canopy of trees adjacent to the road. In one nearby tree, several **Palestine sunbirds** were busy feeding amongst more **Abyssinian white-eyes** when a pair of **shining sunbirds** joined the party, while two **Bruce's green pigeons** were perched on the lower branches. Another male **African paradise flycatcher** made an appearance, and a calling **lesser whitethroat** was retiring in a nearby acacia. On a small, vegetated stream which looked promising, only a **green sandpiper** with a **white wagtail** and a skulking **clamorous reed warbler** were recorded. Soon a large flock of very noisy **Tristram's starlings** landed above and several **Ruppell's weavers** were also active in the same tree. I started making my way west into the open area at the bottom of the wooded hills and was quickly greeted by a pair of **desert wheatears** and **Eurasian hoopoes** followed by two **Eurasian kestrels** above. Here **cinnamon breasted buntings** were common and nine **Arabian partridges** split in two groups made their way up the wooded rocky slopes. While walking back to the areas dominated by acacias, I had five **blackstarts** and a pair of **Arabian warblers** that were on constant move between low thorny bushes. In the same area, two shy **black-crowned tchagras** eventually put themselves out into view as another **Arabian warbler**.



Arabian golden-winged grosbeak, Ayn Hamran.



Arabian warbler at Tawi Atyr.

**Shining** and **Palestine sunbirds** were common as **Abyssinian white-eyes** and **Tristram's starlings**. Reaching back to the wooded area, more **African paradise flycatchers**, **blackstarts** and **tchagras** were recorded in addition to three **Eurasian wrynecks**. Shortly I noticed a movement low on the ground in the shade when another bird dropped down. Stepping forward and putting my binos, I was looking at three **Arabian golden-winged grosbeaks** feeding!! Great sight and another sought after species dropped from my target list. I was starting to feel little anxious facing difficulties seeing this species, but this unpleasant state didn't last for long. Soon the grosbeaks flew and landed in a fruiting tree where they started feeding unobtrusively. Spending some time here, I then decided it was time to leave, and on my way back to car saw a single first winter **tawny pipit**, a **long-billed pipit**, two **Bruce's green pigeons**, a party of four **chiffchaffs** and an **eastern olivaceous warbler** which briefly delivered a song. Very near the car I again caught up with three more **Arabian golden-winged grosbeaks** that moved into nearby acacia and could hear their fluty song for a brief time.

I made my way to Taqqa on the coast where I had a snack and then headed towards Jabal Samhan hoping to catch up with Verreaux's eagle. On my way, an **eastern imperial eagle** made me stop where I had also a **long-billed pipit**, **fan-tailed raven**, **cinnamon-breasted bunting** and an **Isabelline wheatear**. Driving several kilometers further, a stop at a random location amongst the stony grassland produced Cinnamon-breasted buntings, two **long-billed pipits** and a **tawny pipit**. Later, a bird was flushed and quickly dropped into cover made me somehow certain of a **singing bush lark** and it wasn't too long until I was sure when the bird put itself into good views. On the other side of the road, a tree held a good flock of **Bruce's green pigeons**, one **Abyssinian white-eye** and **laughing doves** before a male **Arabian wheatear** dropped into the scene. Little later, a pair of **Arabian wheatears** showed chasing one another. I reached Jabal Samhan viewpoint to find the place covered with fog and waiting some half an hour for better visibility didn't yield to the hoped for situation. An unidentified falcon and a **Eurasian sparrowhawk** were the only brief sightings.

I made my way back and stopped at Tawi Atyr sinkhole where I thought of trying for the Yemen serin but wasn't planning to stay long since it was almost midday and bird activity was on its minimal. However little bird activity was there with **cinnamon-breasted buntings** and **African silverbills** at the car park. **Tristram's starlings'** calls echoed from the sinkhole itself and the surrounding acacias held both **shining** and **Palestine sunbirds** in addition to more **cinnamon-breasted buntings** and one **Abyssinian white-eye**. **Pale crag martins** were circling over as well as an **eastern imperial eagle**. While at the car park, a **steppe eagle** was overhead.



*Cinnamon-breasted bunting at Ayn Hamran. One of many encountered during the trip.*

Back in Salalah, I took lunch and directly made my way to east khawr where I was greeted with **desert** and **Isabelline wheatears**. Scanning the waters on the southern edge yielded seven **greater flamingos**, two **western reef herons**, three **Indian pond herons** and a single **Eurasian moorhen**. At the beach, I observed two **masked boobies** in addition to several **steppe** and **sooty gulls**. Terns were in the form of one **gull-billed**, one **Caspian** and three **great crested**. Back to the lagoon and at one spot I had a **little stint**, three Temminck's stints, a **citrine wagtail**, six **common greenshanks**, four **common sandpipers** and two **common redshanks**. Leaving the place I passed very close to a **greater spotted eagle** perched on ground.



*Barbary falcon passed overhead at Jabal Samhan.*



*A steppe eagle at Tawi Atyr.*

With some little time left before dusk I thought of visiting west khawr, and reaching there I quickly parked and walked adjacent to the mangroves and up to the southern edge. The khawr held commonly encountered waders with nothing unusual but several **greater Flamingos**. A **glossy ibis** took off and a **Eurasian marsh harrier** was flying over. Proceeding into the other side of the mangroves, several **chiffchaffs**, a **graceful prinia**, **clamorous reed warbler** and two **African silverbills** were recorded. Among the reeds, **western yellow wagtails** of different subspecies were abundant and five **citrine wagtails** made a good appearance in addition to a **bluethroat**. Walking back through the flat area adjacent to the reeds, I got two **isabelline shrikes**, a **desert wheatear** and three **crested larks**. That's the second day coming to an end.

### **Day 3: 22-02-2018 ( Tawi Atyr – Jabal Samhan – Khawr Rawri – Wadi Darbat )**

Departing early morning from the Hotel, I reached Tawi Atyr in hope to catch up quickly with the wanted Yemen serins. Two **Arabian partridges** welcomed me at the junction leading to the sinkhole parking area and so many **cinnamon-breasted buntings** and **Ruppell's weavers**. A calling **white wagtail** flew by and a **desert wheatear** plus two **blackstarts** were just meters away. On this visit, I decided to concentrate my birding at the track among the wooded slopes that leads down to the sinkhole, and spending sometime here I spotted two **Arabian warblers**, five **Palestine sunbirds**, one **African paradise flycatcher**, two **Abyssinian white-eyes**, an **African silverbill** and more **cinnamon breasted buntings** but no Yemens serins. The sky above held the very active **pale crag martins** and later a **steppe eagle** and three **eastern imperial eagles**. **Fan-tailed ravens** were common and a **Eurasian kestrel** also showed very well. At this point I started to feel worried for not finding the Yemen serins especially when temperatures start rising making birds more retiring and difficult to locate. This situation took me some years back and reminded me of the Ankober serins in the Ethiopian highlands and the effort made to locate them a first time. However things changed when I later noticed two small passerines which flew across the sinkhole and dropped into the rocky cliffs to my right. I then knew where to look and concentrated my search on the cliff face when finally I spotted and from a far distance three **Yemen serins** feeding. Nice little birds that proved more difficult to nail than expected. However getting only record shots was far much less than desired, and so I opted to go further down the very steep rocky track to be closer. Reaching the bottom of the cliff, I finally found myself among a group of seven **Yemen serins** where I was rewarded with very good shots. Ascending back to the car park, I came across two male **Arabian wheatears**.



*Yemen serin, an individual among a group which I tracked down at Tawi Atyr cave.*

Leaving Tawi Atyr for khawr rawri, I decided to give it another try for Verreaux's eagle and so drove further to Jabal Samhan. Almost reaching there, I could see the clouds and knew that the situation wasn't better than yesterday's and so decided not to try even. A **Barbary falcon** which flew past the car was the only bird recorded. On my way to khawr rawri, I noticed three very large soaring birds that turned out to be **Eurasian griffon vultures**.

Reaching khawr rawri by midday, I paid the two Omani riyal entrance fee then took the track before turning right into a dirt track leading to the lagoon. Here I came to know the necessity of having a high clearance vehicle as a normal one would have hardly made it. Once at the lagoon, the very first bird to spot was a **red-knobbed coot** and a nice one to start with. In the same vicinity was a **pheasant-tailed jacana**, several **black-tailed godwits**, three **ruffs**, **common greenshanks** and **redshanks**. Three **pale crag martins** were active above and a nearby **clamorous reed warbler** was very vocal. **Caspian terns** were flying back and forth while **whiskered terns** preferred keeping low and close to water. Scanning the other edge of the lagoon, a mix of waterfowl came in the form of several **garganeys** and **Eurasian teals**, many **northern shovelers**, ten **Eurasian wigeons**, a **cotton pygmy goose**, several **northern pintails** and six **ferruginous ducks**. Proceeding further along the water edge I flushed three **common snipes** and got a **citrine wagtail**, **western yellow wagtails**, two **common sandpipers**, two **Temminck's stints** and several **black-winged stilts**. Two **tufted ducks** and four **little grebes** were far alone at the northern edge. I drove towards the seaside and adjacent to the water where along the way recorded **great and little egrets**, another **citrine wagtail**, **green sandpiper**, **grey herons**, **great cormorants** and many **greater flamingos** in addition to more **pheasant-tailed jacanas** and three **Indian pond herons**. The southern edge of the khawr held many waders and waterfowl that were not different from those seen earlier except for several **mallards**, a **little stint**, a **marsh sandpiper**, **Kentish plover** and one **curlew sandpiper**. The water channel held one **western reef heron** and four **glossy ibises**. While driving back to the gate a **blackstart** and one **isabelline wheatear** dropped very close. I gave a call to the guy named Hateem who is supposed to operate the Pelagic trip and booked. He was so welcoming and I do recommend him to anybody looking for a pelagic trip off Mirbat. He can be reached via his phone ( +96899088815 ) or via whatsapp on the same number.

Leaving khawr rawri, it was mid afternoon and I opted to visit Wadi Darbat rather than going back to Salalah. The main intension was trying for the Arabian spotted eagle owl, but reaching the wadi very tired from nonstop birding day left me very Lazy sitting at a small shop at the end of the paved road. Here and while I was waiting dusk time, I took a snack and chatted with one Omani guy who was interested in wildlife. A while later dusk set and this made me drive the paved road to a random location not very far from the shop. I slowly made my



way towards the wooded slopes left of the road and spending sometime at the bottom spotlighting resulted in no views. However, standing still and listening thoroughly proved to be a better method where after little time I heard the **Arabian spotted eagle owl's** mournful calls but failed to get any glimpse despite ascending the slope very slowly. On the other hand, **Arbian scops owls'** calls came out from every direction in the wadi. They were numerous.



*Arabian wheatear on the way to Jabal Samhan. The female was also closeby.*



*A first winter eastern imperial eagle at Tawi Atyr.*



**Day 4: 23-02-2018 ( Al Mughsayl area – Raysut settling pools )**

As usual, I started early and found my way down towards Al Mughsayl area as I had a plan to spend a full day birding the lagoon and the wadi. The wadi itself is a reliable place for the highly sought-after desert tawny owl, but me neither having any literature nor a specific location meant that finding the owl is somehow a matter of luck. I started by parking the car on the main highway and watching for birds in a small lagoon just left of the road. The place held one **Flamingo**, three **Indian pond herons**, four **Eurasian teals**, two **common snipes**, a single **little ringed plover**, two **common redshanks** and an **isabelline shrike**. A **long-billed pipit** showed very well on the rocks adjacent to the lagoon and a **Heuglin's gull** flew past.

Heading inside at the gravel track leading to the wadi I was welcomed by **desert wheatear**, **isabelline shrike** and two **tawny pipits** before stopping at the very near lagoon. Here there wasn't any unusual sightings, and some waders were feeding at the edges. The lagoon itself produced five **cotton pygmy geese**, four **Eurasian teals**, four **northern pintails** in addition to **Eurasian coots** and **moorhens**. **Citrine and white wagtails** were present and **clamorous reed warblers** were numerous and singing. The adjacent rocky cliff held singing **cinnamon-breasted bunting**, seven **Tristram's starlings**, a **blackstart** and a **blue rock thrush** while the sky above revealed a soaring **greater spotted eagle**.

Leaving the place, I continued on the rough track leading to the inside of the wadi and then stopped at a small pond. Again, no unusual sightings but the common waders and waterfowl, however four **striolated buntings** resting at the rocky slopes above added one species to my life list. A walk further along the scrubby slopes produced an **Arabian wheatear**, **blackstart**, two **cinnamon-breasted buntings** and another **blue rock thrush**. Several **Arabian partridges** ran slowly into cover before they took off revealing a good flock of about twenty birds. Continuing further on the track, I stopped at another small water pond and got another four **striolated buntings** and three **desert larks** drinking. A **steppe eagle** was soaring above as one very distant **Bonelli's eagle**. By midday the temperatures rose, and bird activity was at its lowest the thing that forced me to retreat into the shade of a tree where I had my tuna for lunch. Two **green bee-eaters** landed in the tree above but then took off quickly. With not much more expected in the wadi I decided to visit the blow holes rather than staying and so quickly returned. Once there and while setting my scope, to my good luck a pair of **brown boobies** were at close distance to the blowholes where I enjoyed very nice views. Minutes later the pair was joined by a single **masked booby** before they all headed into the sea. A single **western reef heron** perched on the rocks put an end to my blowholes visit where I decided to leave to Raysut.

It was nearly 1:00 pm and still plenty of time ahead before dusk to return to the wadi and try for the desert tawny owl. So I spent that afternoon birding the main locations at Raysut area. I first paid a quick visit to Raysut lighthouse to check on the **red-billed tropicbirds**, when minutes later two birds came into view just below the lighthouse leaving me not disappointed. They stayed some time before again setting westwards and out of view. **House crows** were plenty and a **sooty gull** among other unidentified gulls flew past.



*One of the several striolated buntings at Wadi Al-Mughsayl. And a long-billed pipit.*

My second afternoon stop was at Raysut sewage treatment plant where things were quiet and the site was somehow disappointing with only a flock of **whiskered terns** and some waders at the pools. A single **marsh harrier** was recorded in addition to one **eastern imperial eagle**, three **greater spotted eagles** and four **steppe eagles**.

Leaving disappointed I continued my way towards Raysut dump and the settling pools. The eagle activity could be easily noticed several kilometers before the dump itself and soon after I could witness the staggering number of eagles circling in the skies above. Simply hundreds of them in different ages and plumages with steppe eagle being the dominant. I gave it a quick scan at the place but couldn't find the wanted Abdim's storks and decided to proceed to the settling pools.

Minutes later I reached the settling pools at around 3:00 pm where the guard informed me that the gate will be closed at 4:00 pm. Once out of the car, a **lesser whitethroat** and **Abyssinian white-eye** were in the tree above. In a hurry to make the most of the only hour I had, I grabbed my gear and headed towards the pool to realize how good the place was. Waders were all around and the pools held a flock of thirty-six **greater flamingos** in addition to many waterfowl such as **garganeys**, **mallards**, **Eurasian teals** and **northern pintails**. **Black-headed gulls** and **black-winged stilts** were plenty as were the **cattle egrets**, and the **common mynas** stayed active all around. The three wagtail species were common, and a single **white-tailed lapwing** stood at the edge of the farthest pool. Behind the pools a small wooded patch with understory interspersed with wet fields looked promising, and with just very little time left I decided to have a quick look there. One **red-wattled lapwing** and two **spur-winged lapwings** were in one field and seven **namaqua doves** showed in the nearby trees. Further into the wooded area is a small flooded patch that held more wagtails and waders. A small patch of reeds surrounded by lush vegetation held **Ruppell's weavers** and a **clamorous reed warbler**. All in all, the place was teeming with birds and worth a visit.

At dusk, I headed towards Al Mughsayl and again into the wadi which is called also Wadi Al Shawq hoping for the sought after Hume's owl. Driving alone into the wadi wasn't much of a good idea and just after completing six kilometers inside, I decided to return. I made several stops and played the call where finally the owl responded at one location. However even with my torch I couldn't get views as the owl was slightly far and it was completely dark.

#### **Day 5: 24-02-2018 ( Sahnawt farm – Jarziz farm – Mirbatt – Wadi Darbat )**

Today's plan included a pelagic trip off Mirbat in the afternoon and morning visits to Sahnawt and Jarziz farms. I decided to start by Sahnawt farms but wasn't aware it would take a hell of negotiations in order to be granted an access. Eventually I was allowed in for one and a half hour only where I quickly started scanning the fields. A small flock of **greater short-toed larks** was feeding and a single **red-throated pipit** was in the very same vicinity. Further back a **cream-colored courser** with a **Eurasian hoopoe** made an appearance and several **white wagtails** were busy feeding in the fields. **Crested larks** were numerous and a single **singing bushlark** made in a quick appearance before disappearing. A **rose-ringed parakeet** flew past followed by several **common mynas**. Owing to the vastness of the fields and the limited time I had, I decided to roam around by car although this was never my favorite birding technique. I started adjacent to the fence on the road side and made my way slowly recording five **tree pipits**, a single **scaly-breasted munia**, **graceful prinia**, many **Ruppell's weavers** and more **white wagtails**. Turning back and driving the other direction along the fence didn't yield much except for one **isabelline wheatear**, four **desert wheatears** in addition to a mixed flock of **African silverbills** and **scaly-breasted munias**. With no time left, I decided to leave and head directly to my next stop which will be the Jarziz farms.

It didn't take long before I found myself at Jarziz farms that were easily accessed from an open side at the southern corner. The area is vast and again I was forced to take the unfavorable option and bird by car. I first came through a small flock of **greater short-toed larks** then through a flock of **black-crowned sparrow larks** that gave excellent views. Several **crested larks** and **tawny pipits** were recorded in the same area in addition to **desert and isabelline wheatears**. While proceeding slowly, a good flock of **chestnut-bellied sandgrouse** took off from the dry field on the right and made their way further north. Luckily I was able to catch up with those later with good views. I proceeded to the northern edge of the farms but thought not to stay long there as it was close to the airport runway and any use of cameras and scopes might be noticed. There were no signs prohibiting use of cameras but I just preferred to be on the safe side. Nothing unusual was recorded but just two **steppe grey shrikes** and a handful of **African silverbills**.

I left Jarziz with little time left before meeting Hateem for the Pelagic and so decided to pass by Ayn hamran to check for anything new. Reaching there, I met with two Dutch birders where we spent couple of minutes exchanging information. I did inform them about the spotted eagle owl and decided to meet at Wadi Darbat to give it a try together.

I made my way to Mirbatt but couldn't easily locate the harbor. I messaged Hateem and received a prompt reply with pin location and within several minutes I was at the place. Hateem was ready and waiting and shortly the other two Dutch photographers joined to mark the trip ready. Soon we all were aboard and ready to go. At the concrete blocks in the harbor **sooty** and **steppe gulls** were numerous and among them were **two black-crowned night herons**, **two western reef herons** and a pair of **grey herons**.



*A black-crowned sparrow lark among a flock encountered at Jarziz farms.*



*Wintering red-necked phalaropes were very approachable and offered exceptional views during the pelagic off Mirbat.*



We headed into the sea and shortly after leaving the first **Persian shearwater** showed at a very close range resting on water and giving great photographing opportunities. Proceeding further and shortly after the first sighting, another **Persian shearwater** put an appearance giving again great views. Further into the sea Hateem spotted the first **Jouanin's petrel** but was slightly far and eventually came out of sight. Soon he located another bird but this time was a closer individual which eventually flew more close and gave very good views. We continued our way in the sea where we had covered a good distance and soon we met a very nice flock of wintering **red-necked phalaropes** which constantly flew and dropped back keeping us entertained. Several **Jouanin's petrels** showed briefly after but without giving prolonged views and by the time we decided to make our way back I had counted seventeen of the petrels. Returning back we never came through anything unusual but only eight **masked boobies** including one which passed handful of meters above us.

Having told the Dutch birders about the very good chances of getting the Arabian scops owl at Wadi Darbat, we all decided to pass by the wadi to give it a try. Reaching there early evening, scops owls were calling constantly across the wadi and we hadn't waited for long before one started to call nearby where we all enjoyed great views.



*Persian shearwater during the Pelagic.*



*And several range restricted Jouanin's petrels.*

#### **Day 6: 25-02-2018 ( Mudday – Shisr fields and Dawkah farm - Qatbit )**

Today marked the earliest start of the trip where I hit the road at roughly 4:00 am in darkness hoping to reach Mudday by dawn and make use of the early morning hours before temperatures rise. On the way, I stopped at an army checkpoint where they checked the passport and were very polite to quickly let me go. Reaching Mudday in the early morning, I parked just near the Camel farm which is well described in the birds of Oman site. I started walking near the farm and adjacent to the rocky ridge searching for the sand partridges but all what I could get were a pair of **Eurasian crag martins** and four **laughing doves**. Soon I heard a **sand partridge** call in the direction of the farm and after some concentration located it just near the car besides a pile of old tires. Little later and while I was pursuing the partridge, a **striolated bunting** showed very well followed by a **desert lark** which stood close. Another **sand partridge** was calling from the top of the ridge and minutes later a bird flew from the farm and landed on the facing scree slope. With the partridge in the bag I decided to direct my concentration on the African collared doves and this proved not very easy as the farm held also many **Eurasian collared doves** also. At last I could identify six **African collared doves** among the Eurasian collared doves with their clean white belly and undertail coverts diagnostic. Another **desert lark**, a **steppe grey shrike** and a **desert wheatear** where the only species recorded at the farm before I decided to proceed to Mudday oasis.

The near oasis was the reliable spot at which most birdwatchers catch up with the grey hypocolius, but I couldn't locate any and just got only a single **lesser whitethroat** and a pair of **Nile valley sunbirds**. Unexpectedly the place was quiet and I myself never tried hard for the Hypocolius as I have seen the bird several times in Kuwait where it is much easier and guaranteed. Again by pure coincidence, I met with the two Dutch birders and exchanged talks about the target species where they showed me the nearby place at which they saw a hooded wheatear. I did also inform about the sand partridges present at and around the camel farm. Shortly they left and I headed directly to the **hooded wheatear** spot where after little search located the bird on the top of the highest boulders.





*Hooded wheatear at Mudday.*

Getting back in car I suddenly saw a pair of **sand partridges** at the edge of a very small planted wet field behind a small house. The partridges gave excellent close views and I thought they do frequently turn up in fields and water spots for drinking in this arid environment. In the same vicinity a **blackstart** was perched on the wires and the first **Asian desert warbler** of the trip just made a brief appearance. Before leaving, I thought to check a small farm in the village and several minutes there produced one **African collared dove**, three **Nile valley sunbirds** and a **blackstart**. A **chiffchaff** in the same farm was thought to be a Siberian but upon me messaging the Dutch birders for their opinion they did believe it was a “*Brevirostris*”.

Reaching Thumrayt in an hour time, I refueled and continued the long drive towards Qatbit motel and Muntasar at the edge of the empty quarters. My afternoon plan included an excursion to Shisr fields and Dawkah farms. The desert farms and oasis usually serve as a magnet for birds migrating through and have a very good potential for wintering rarities. However, I was expecting low activity with my visit taking place in late winter especially at midday and my expectations proved true with both locations producing very few early migrants and classic desert species such as **greater hoopoe larks** and **black-crowned sparrow larks**. It could have been also that mild winter witnessed in temperate regions didn't push rarities and northern species further south.

Reaching Qatbit in late afternoon, I decided to continue towards Muntasar oasis and check for anything new at the end of this tiresome day. The network connection was very poor to none past Qatbit motel and not being able to navigate took me some time to locate the beginning of the rough track leading to the oasis. A **Eurasian moorhen**, a female **desert wheatear**, one **lesser short-toed lark** and a **greater short-toed lark** were the only birds recorded and leaving the place with the last rays of light, I was planning to visit again the next morning.

**Day 7: 26-02-2018 ( Muntasar oasis – Qatbit motel – Raysut )**

An early start saw me heading again towards Muntasar and reaching there I was greeted by yesterday's **moorhen** and a **Eurasian coot**. **Common chiffchaffs** were active in the trees and a **common redstart** made an appearance. A skulking warbler in nearby bushes turned out to be a female **Menetries's warbler** and a **tawny pipit** was just very near. Walking adjacent to the water I came across a **lesser whitethroat** and a **black redstart** that kept flying between the bushes. A group of five **water pipits** were always active and flighty and a single **greater short-toed lark** was noted near in addition to three **Asian desert warblers**. A single **little ringed plover** stood further near water and a **brown-necked raven** flew past. Spending more time didn't yield any new but around 9:30 am calls of a flock of **spotted sandgrouse** erupted from nowhere and seconds later they were just landing at the oasis. Alerted to my presence, they very quickly took off and headed east before returning exactly one hour later.

Returning to the Motel by noon, I checked the motel garden which from previous reports had been always very good for rarities but apparently not this time. It was hot by noon and the garden was disappointing and unproductive.

I decided it was time to leave this remote edge of the empty quarters hoping to catch up with a final birding session at Raysut in search for the long-toed stint. Once at Raysut, I started birding at the lagoon and it was full of birds but couldn't spot the target bird. I added an **African sacred ibis**, ten **Eurasian spoonbills** and three nice **spotted redshanks** to my list.



*Cracking views of Bonelli's eagle on the very last visit to Tawi Atyr.*

**Day 8: 27-02-2018 ( Raysut – Tawi Atyr )**

This day marked my last day in Dhofar where again I headed to Raysut settling pools to check for any new. As expected I was greeted by the same array of waders seen previously. Waterfowl were presented by northern **pintails**, **garganeys** and **little grebes** while a single **steppe eagle** was observed and two **spur-winged lapwings**. Apart from that, no any new sightings before I left to Albaleed archeological sight. Reaching the archeological site nearly at 10:30 am, it started to heat up but the bird activity was acceptable. Three tame greater white fronted geese showed up on the grass between the walkways and a **shining sunbird** was feeding in a nearby tree. I approached the small lagoon nearby and it held two **greater white-fronted geese** which I believed were of wild origin. A **graceful prinia** and a **clamorous reed warbler** heard and a calling **rose-ringed parakeet** flew past. Later a flock of calling **pacific golden plovers** flew past heading west and eventually came out of sight. It took some time to again locate the flock at the extreme west corner of the site with a rough count of seventy five birds! Other birds noted were two **desert wheatears**, a **common greenshank** and two **Ruppel's weavers**.

Leaving the site I headed for a final visit to Tawi Atyr hoping for good views of Bonelli's eagle. In fact, upon reaching it was midday and the first bird to spot was a perched **Bonelli's eagle** !! Eventually I was rewarded by excellent views. On my way back to Raysut, I came across a dark morph booted eagle, imperial eagle and Eurasian griffon.

The last afternoon in Dhofar saw me at Raysut lagoon again where I added a single **broad-billed sandpiper** and two **intermediate egrets** to my list.

**Day 9: 28-02-2018 ( Al Qurm park – Al Ansab lagoons – Ras Al Sawadi )**

Landing in Muscat at nearly 6:00 am, it didn't take long before I could get my hired vehicle and hit the road towards Al Qurm natural park. Parked on the southern side, the walk from the car to near the football court yielded **red-vented**, **white-spectacled** and **white-eared bulbuls** in addition to a pair of **alexandrine parakeets** and five **rose-ringed parakeets**. Very soon at the edge of the mangroves several **purple sunbirds** showed up and three **grey francolins** made a brief sighting. **Chiffchaffs** were active in the mangroves including one **Siberian** and a single **clamorous reed warbler**. A **plain leaf warbler** also showed in the very same vicinity. The first **Indian roller** was perched on the football court fence and later two more flew past. **Red-wattled lapwings** were inside and around the football yard and **graceful prinia's** calls were constantly heard. In the bushes adjacent to the court two **Indian silverbills** busy feeding and two more **grey francolins** showed up in addition to four **little green bee-eaters**. I then walked adjacent to the water channel and mangroves leading to the beach when I quickly saw a **striated heron** that soon disappeared. At the edge of the lagoon there were **two common sandpipers**, **little ringed plover** and a **common greenshank** with two **gadwalls** nearby. Birding at the beach produced two more **common sandpipers**, **curlew sandpiper** and a **whimbrel**.



*Ras Alsawadi offered a nice array of gulls. Here a Baltic gull ( left ) and a Steppe gull ( right ).*

Leaving Al Qurm natural park I had a quick lunch then directly made my way to Al Ansab lagoons. The site is to be accessed via a permit that should be obtained in advance through online application form. Luckily I knew this information at the end of my second visit but this time during my first visit the guards allowed access without requesting any permit. Birding at the lagoon produced a **northern shoveler**, **Indian pond heron**, three **Eurasian teals**, two **little grebes** and not less than twenty five **common pochards** in addition to a flock of **great cormorants** perched at the edge of the lagoon. The sky held one female **crested honey buzzard**, three **greater spotted eagle** and two **Eurasian griffons**. The reeds held several singing **graceful prinias**, a **bluethroat**, **citrine wagtail** in addition to **common and wood sandpipers**.

Leaving the lagoons at nearly 2:00 pm, I decided to make my way to Ras Alsawadi for what it is known as a good site to encounter many gull and tern species. It didn't take much long before reaching there where I was welcomed with an array of adult **Pallas's gulls** in breeding plumage, plenty of **steppe** and some **Heuglin's gulls** and for sure many **sooty gulls**. A single Baltic gull was noted also. **Common black headed gulls** and **slender billed gulls** were also numerous. Luckily the tide was getting higher which allowed good photographing opportunities. Among the gulls were **greater and lesser crested terns** together with several **sandwich terns** and a **single common tern**. **Lesser and greater sand plovers** together with **Kentish plovers** were active on the shore and further three **Eurasian oystercatchers** were seen. A drive along the shore produced three **bar-tailed godwits** and some more **crested terns**. Leaving Ras Al Sawadi late afternoon, I got back to hotel for a rest to be ready for an early start next morning towards AlHajar mountains.



*A highlight in Ras Alsawadi is encountering Pallas's gulls in their breeding plumage. Heuglin's gulls were common also.*

#### **Day 10: 01-03-2018 ( AlHajar mountains )**

I started early this day hoping to reach the mountains in the morning but unfortunately missing the exit from the highway resulted in a minimum of thirty minute delay. However once on the right track again, I made my way up to the scenic mountains making a handful of stops to enjoy some views. I did reach the scenic Ghubrah bowl by mid morning and made a stop at a random dry river bed where I got a small party of shy **Arabian babblers** that showed up finally, a **purple sunbird** and a *phylloscopus* warbler that showed very briefly but never gave up its ID. While checking the place I flushed twice two **Lichtenstein's sandgrouses** and two **sand partridges**.

Leaving Al Ghubrah bowl on my way back after visiting the village of Wakan, I decided to stop at Al Ghubrah village itself and check the surrounding arid rocky hills. A **tawny pipit** was flushed and landed nearby and two **purple sunbirds** passed by calling. Birding activity was low by midday, however a **desert lark** and **blue rock thrush** showed while ascending the adjacent hills. Not much to see I made my way back where a call of what looked like a **plain leaf warbler** in a lone acacia tree caught my attention and it was indeed the first for the trip. While taking photos of the bird a small boy showed up from nowhere and handed to me a bottle of water and some dates reflecting the hospitality and kindness of the Omani people. I left Al Ghubrah where I spent the rest of the day discovering the wilderness and beauty of AlHajar mountains. By evening, I couldn't locate any accommodation in the area and ended up in Al Rustaq town where I slept in one of the worst hotels I have ever been to.





*A plain leaf warbler in the acacia at AlGhubra village.*

**Day 11: 02-03-2018 ( AlHajar mountains - Al Ghubrah bowl - Jabal Al Akhdar )**

This morning I decided to discover the surrounding area with no any specific location in mind. The very first stop at a location looking good for **Hume's wheatear** didn't disappoint where a singing individual showed up followed quickly by a second one. Spending a little time here produced another target in the form of a **Persian wheatear** and two passing by **purple sunbirds**. A good start for the day with two targets in hand.

I returned back to Al Ghubrah bowl and made another two short stops and the outcome was three **Lichtenstein's sangrouse**, a shy **lesser whitethroat**, one **black redstart**, **Arabian babblers** and **striolated buntigs**.

It was time to proceed up to the high altitude Sayq plateau in the Jabal Al Akhdar area. There is a checkpoint at the beginning where passports are checked and things went smoothly. Two short stops at random locations along the way produced in total three **plain leaf warblers**, a **chiffchaff**, two **lesser whitethroats** and a **black redstart**. The full afternoon was occupied driving on the plateau and enjoying beautiful scenery. I checked for a cheap place to stay for the night and my chance fell on the Al Ain house hotel in Sayq village where the accommodation kept much to be desired.

**Day 12: 03-03-2018 ( Jabal Al Akdar – Sayq Plateau – Qurm park )**

The targets for this day where the scrub warbler and the wood pigeons but again with no any specific location I started exploring the plateau and had a handful of stops that were unfruitful. I was searching on the plateau dominated by alpine shrubs and no junipers but was convinced that I wasn't in the proper habitat. It took me a while to locate the area dominated by junipers which would be turning from the main road and ascending further up to the right. Here another two stops where unfruitful and a third stop near a small water pond didn't

produce the wanted species but only a **green sandpiper**, a small party of **Arabian babblers**, **brown-necked raven** and **white spectacled bulbuls**. Desperate for the scrub warblers, it did come to my mind to use e-bird for determining possible locations where the birds have been seen. This idea proved successful and little while later I was on the location and didn't take long before a **scrub warbler** advertised itself singing from top of a juniper. Very nice bird! I spent some time in the area and caught up with two other warblers that showed well but kept active not allowing good photographic opportunities. Their weird drumming sound kept going on for a while. In the very same location a **Eurasian sparrowhawk** passed by and after a small hike up the hill two **Hume's wheatears** and two **black redstarts** showed very well. I searched thoroughly through the place and literally every single juniper but failed to locate any woodpigeons of the breeding population and ended up with a disappointment. An **Egyptian vulture** was soaring at great height and gave brief views.

Giving up I proceeded forward before stopping in a near spot where I again located another two **scrub warblers** and spent some time snatching photos. It was midday and deciding to start the way back to Muscat and before starting to descend from the plateau a **lappet faced vulture** appeared incidentally and gave good satisfactory views.



*It took quite a while to catch up with a family of scrub warblers not far from Sayq plateau at Jabal Al-Akhdar area.*

Reaching Muscat early afternoon I again made my way directly to Qurm natural park. I started Birding at the beach where I was greeted with several **dunlins**, **lesser and greater sand plovers** and some **common ringed plovers** along with a single **curlew sandpiper**. **Greater crested** terns were active and the gulls where in the form of **slender-billed**, **steppe** and **sooty** with a single **Heuglin's gull** resting at the shore. Further along the beach three **whimbrels** were added and two **Eurasian curlews** were at the same spot. Another curlew was noted further which looked extremely long billed and kept me alerted for a probable far eastern curlew, but unfortunately when I flushed the bird the white rump was conspicuous leaving the bird of a possible "Orientalis" subspecies. Heading inside the park there were not much additions from the previous visit but a **blue-cheeked bee-eater** and a **Terek sandpiper**. **Striated heron** gave very good views unlike the first visit ad an immature **Bonelli's eagle** passed by at moderate height. One **Indian pond heron** was a good addition and one **Indian roller** showed briefly at a close range. The Birding was good with birds everywhere.

**Day 13: 04-03-2018 ( AlAnsab lagoon )**

The last day of the trip was spent again at Al Ansab lagoons. Again there were not much of new additions except for a **red-breasted flycatcher** located first on call and a female **streaked weaver** that showed up briefly. Other birds noted were the normal waterfowl and waders seen on the previous visit. It was time to leave to Muscat where I enjoyed a great late afternoon lunch before heading to the airport.



*A tame Hume's wheatear at Jabal Akhdar area.*

### Systematic list of birds seen during the trip

- Greater White-fronted Goose - *Anser albifrons*** Five at Albaleed archeological site on 27-02-2018.
- Ruddy Shelduck - *Tadorna ferruginea*** Eight at Raysut lagoon on 20-02-2018.
- Cotton Pygmy-Goose - *Nettapus coromandelianus*** Two at khawr Rawri on 22-02-2018 and five at khawr AlMughsayl on 23-02-2018.
- Garganey - *Spatula querquedula*** Recorded at several sites in Dhofar and common in lagoons and wetlands.
- Northern Shoveler - *Spatula clypeata*** Several recordings in Dhofar and twice at Ansab lagoons .
- Gadwall - *Mareca strepera*** Two at AlQurm natural park on 28-02-2018.
- Eurasian Wigeon - *Mareca Penelope*** Twelve at khawr Rawri on 22-02-2018.
- Mallard - *Anas platyrhynchos*** Several sightings in Dhofar and two at Ansab lagoons on 04-03-2018.
- Northern Pintail - *Anas acuta*** Recorded several times in Dhofar.
- Green-winged Teal - *Anas crecca*** Sighted several times at Dhofar, Ansab lagoons and Qurm natural park.
- Common Pochard - *Aythya ferina*** Recorded only at Ansab lagoons with 25 birds on 28-02-2018 and 14 birds on 04-03-2018.
- Ferruginous Duck - *Aythya nyroca*** Six at khawr Rawri on 22-02-2018.
- Tufted Duck - *Aythya fuligula*** Two at khawr Rawri on 22-02-2018.
- Sand Partridge - *Ammoperdix heyi*** Five recorded in Mudday on 25-02-2018 and two in al Ghubrah bowl on 01-03-2018.
- Arabian Partridge - *Alectoris melanocephala*** Nine at Ayn Hamran on 21-02-2018, two at Tawi Atyr on 22-02-2018 and 20 at wadi AlMughsayl on 23-02-2018.
- Gray Francolin - *Francolinus pondicerianus*** Seven in total at Qurm natural park on 28-02-2018 and 03-03-2018 and four at Ansab lagoons on 04-03-2018.
- Greater Flamingo - *Phoenicopterus roseus*** Flocks recorded several times at Dhofar region.
- Little Grebe - *Tachybaptus ruficollis*** Several sightings at Dhofar region.
- Rock Pigeon - *Columba livia*** Several sightings in Dhofar.
- Eurasian Collared-Dove - *Streptopelia decaocto*** Recorded several times in Dhofar and several sightings at Mudday on 25-02-2018.
- African Collared-Dove - *Streptopelia roseogrisea*** Seven recorded at Mudday on 25-02-2018.
- Laughing Dove - *Streptopelia senegalensis*** Common throughout with many sightings.
- Namaqua Dove - *Oena capensis*** Seven at Raysut settling pools on 23-02-2018.
- Bruce's Green-Pigeon - *Treron waalia*** A total of fifteen at Ayn Hamran on 21-02-2018.
- Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse - *Pterocles exustus*** A flock of nearly fifty birds recorded at Jarziz farm on 24-02-2018.
- Spotted Sandgrouse - *Pterocles senegallus*** A flock of eighteen at Muntasar oasis on 26-02-2018.
- Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse - *Pterocles lichtensteinii*** A total of five birds at AlGhubrah bowl on 02-02-2018 and 03-02-2018.
- Common Swift - *Apus apus*** A handful of birds recorded at Qurm natural park on 03-03-2018.
- Eurasian Moorhen - *Gallinula chloropus*** Common at all wetlands throughout Oman.
- Eurasian Coot - *Fulica atra*** Recorded several times in Dhofar.
- Red-knobbed Coot - *Fulica cristata*** A single bird at Khawr Rawri on 22-02-2018.
- Spotted Thick-knee - *Burhinus capensis*** A single at Raysut lagoon on 20-02-2018.
- Black-winged Stilt - *Himantopus himantopus*** Recorded almost daily in Dhofar.
- Pied Avocet - *Recurvirostra avosetta*** Probably the same flock recorded at Raysut lagoon on three different dates.
- Eurasian Oystercatcher - *Haematopus ostralegus*** Three birds at ras alsawadi on 28-02-2018.
- Pacific Golden-Plover - *Pluvialis fulva*** A flock of about seventy five birds recorded at Albaleed archeological site on 27-02-2018.
- Spur-winged Lapwing - *Vanellus spinosus*** Two individuals at Raysut settling pools on 23/02/2018 and probably the same two recorded later on 27-02-2018.
- Red-wattled Lapwing - *Vanellus indicus*** A single bird at Raysut settling pools on 23-02-2018 and recorded always at Qurm NP and Ansab lagoons in northern Oman.
- White-tailed Lapwing - *Vanellus leucurus*** A single bird recorded at Raysut settling pools on 23-02-2018.
- Lesser Sand-Plover - *Charadrius mongolus*** Small numbers recorded at Ras AlSawadi on 28-02-2018 and nineteen recorded at Qurm NP on 03-03-2018.
- Greater Sand-Plover - *Charadrius leschenaultia*** Small numbers at Ras AlSawadi on 28/02/2018 and ten recorded at Qurm NP beach on 03-03-2018.
- Kentish Plover - *Charadrius alexandrinus*** A single at khawr Rawri on 22-02-2018 , small numbers at Ras AlSawadi on 28-02-2018 and 12 at Qurm park beach on 03-03-2018 .
- Common Ringed Plover - *Charadrius hiaticula*** Recorded only at Raysut lagoon and Qurm natural park.



**Little Ringed Plover - *Charadrius dubius*** Singles at khawr AlMughsayl, west khawr and Muntasar oasis and small numbers at Raysut settling pools on two different dates.

**Pheasant-tailed Jacana - *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*** Three at Raysut lagoon on 20-02-2018 and eleven at khawr Rawri on 22-02-2018.

**Whimbrel - *Numenius phaeopus*** Five at Raysut lagoon on 20-02-2018, one at Qurum NP on 28-02-2018 and another three there on 03-03-2018.

**Eurasian Curlew - *Numenius arquata*** Three at Qurum NP on 03-03-2018.

**Bar-tailed Godwit - *Limosa lapponica*** Three at Ras AlSawadi beach on 28-02-2018.

**Black-tailed Godwit - *Limosa limosa*** Recorded at Raysut lagoon khawr Rawri and Raysut settling pools on different dates.

**Ruff - *Calidris pugnax*** Several records at khawr Rawri , raysut lagoon and Raysut settling pools and on different dates.

**Broad-billed Sandpiper - *Calidris falcinellus*** Two recorded at Raysut lagoon on 26-02-2018 and another one recorded the day after.

**Curlew Sandpiper - *Calidris ferruginea*** Recorded at Raysut lagoon on three dates , once at khawr Rawri and twice at Qurum NP.

**Temminck's Stint - *Calidris temminckii*** Recorded almost daily and I small numbers in Dhofar and once at Ansab lagoons with six individuals.

**Sanderling - *Calidris alba*** Five at Raysut lagoon on 26-02-2018.

**Dunlin - *Calidris alpina*** Small numbers seen at Raysut lagoon , east khawr and Qurum NP.

**Little Stint - *Calidris minuta*** Recorded almost daily in Dhofar and once at Ansab lagoons on 04-03-2018.

**Common Snipe - *Gallinago gallinago*** Small numbers recorded daily in Dhofar and also recorded from Ansab lagoon and Qurum NP in northern oman

**Terek Sandpiper - *Xenus cinereus*** One at Qurum NP on 03-03-2018 was the only record.

**Red-necked Phalarope - *Phalaropus lobatus*** A flock recorded at the pelagic off Mirbat on 24-02-2018.

**Common Sandpiper - *Actitis hypoleucos*** Recorded at almost all sites and lagoons in Dhofar region.

**Green Sandpiper - *Tringa ochropus*** Recorded several times in Dhofar region in small numbers.

**Spotted Redshank - *Tringa erythropus*** Three at Raysut lagoon on 26-02-2018 and another four on 28-02-2018 . Three recorded also at settling pools on 27-02-2018.

**Common Greenshank - *Tringa nebularia*** Almost recorded daily at Dhofar with two records of seven birds in the north.

**Marsh Sandpiper - *Tringa stagnatilis*** Small numbers recorded at Raysut lagoons and settling pools and a single at Khawr Rawri on 22-02-2018.

**Wood Sandpiper - *Tringa glareola*** Small groups seen at various sites at Dhofar and singles recorded at Ansab lagoons on the two visits.

**Common Redshank - *Tringa tetanus*** Seen at various sites in Dhofar and nine recorded at Qurum NP on 03-03-2018.

**Cream-colored Courser - *Cursorius cursor*** A single bird at Sahnawt farm on 24-02-2018 was the only sighting .

**Slender-billed Gull - *Chroicocephalus genei*** Six at Raysut lagoon on 20-02-2018 and several at Ras AlSawadi on 28-02-2018 . Nineteen were recorded at Qurum NP beach on 03-03-2018.

**Black-headed Gull - *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*** Recorded at Raysut lagoons and settling pools in good numbers . Several seen at Ras AlSawadi on 28-02-2018 .

**Sooty Gull - *Ichthyaelus hemprichii*** The commonest encountered gull at beaches and offshore especially at Dhofar.

**Pallas's Gull - *Ichthyaelus ichthyaelus*** Singles at Raysut lagoon on 20-02-2018 and 26-02-2018 . Ten individuals seen at close proximity at Ras AlSawadi on 28-02-2018.

**Caspian Gull - *Larus cachinnans*** A pair near Raysut lagoon on 26-02-2018 and another two at Ras AlSawadi on 28-02-2018.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull (Steppe) - *Larus fuscus ( Barabensis )*** Very common along the shores at Dhofar region where recorded daily. Several recorded at Ansab lagoons and Qurum NP.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull ( Baltic ) - *Larus fuscus ( Fuscus )*** A single bird at Ras AlSawadi on 28-02-2018.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull ( Heuglin's ) - *Larus fuscus ( Heuglini )*** Several birds at Raysut in Dhofar and Ras AlSawadi in the north.

**Gull-billed Tern - *Gelochelidon nilotica*** Several were at Raysut lagoons on 20-02-2018 and one individual at east khawr on 21-02-2018. A pair also at Ras AlSawadi on 28-02-2018.

**Caspian Tern - *Hydroprogne caspia*** Small numbers seen at lagoons at wetlands in Dhofar region.

**Whiskered Tern - *Chlidonias hybrid*** Six at Khawr Rawrin on 22-02-2018 and a flock of 29 at Raysut sewage treatment plant on 23-02-2018.

**Common Tern - *Sterna hirundo*** Four at Ras AlSawadi on 28-02-2018 were the only ones seen.

**Great Crested Tern - *Thalasseus bergii*** Three at east khawr on 21-02-2018 and several recorded at AlSawadi beach on 28-02-2018. Eleven at Qurum NP on 03-03-2018.

**Sandwich Tern - *Thalasseus sandvicensis*** Ten at Ras AlSawadi on 28-02-2018.

**Lesser Crested Tern - *Thalasseus bengalensis*** Several recorded at Mughsayl beach on 23-02-2018 and Ras AlSawadi on 28-02-2018.

**Red-billed Tropicbird - *Phaethon aethereus*** A pair off Raysut lighthouse on 23-02-2018.

**Jouanin's Petrel - *Bulweria fallax*** A total of seventeen seen on Mirbat pelagic on 24-02-2018.

**Persian Shearwater - *Puffinus persicus*** Only two individuals recorded during Mirbat pelagic on 24-02-2018.

**White Stork - *Ciconia ciconia*** Large flocks recorded at Raysut lagoon on three different dates.

**Masked Booby - *Sula dactylatra*** Two seen from the shore at east khawr on 21-02-2018 and a single off Mughsayl blow holes on 23-02-2018. Another eight recorded during Mirbat pelagic on 24-02-2018.

**Brown Booby - *Sula leucogaster*** Two off Mughsayl blow holes on 23-02-2018.

**Great Cormorant - *Phalacrocorax carbo*** Common in suitable habitat.

**Little Bittern - *Ixobrychus minatus*** A single bird flew by at Ansab lagoons on 04-03-2018.

**Gray Heron - *Ardea cinerea*** Small numbers recorded always at suitable habitat.

**Purple Heron - *Ardea purpurea*** A single bird at Raysut lagoon on 20-02-2018.

**Great Egret - *Ardea alba*** Recorded at Dhofar region and once at Qurm NP in the north.

**Intermediate Egret - *Ardea intermedia*** One at Mughsayl khawr on 23-02-2018 and two at Raysut lagoon on 27-02-2018.

**Little Egret - *Egretta garzetta*** Several record in suitable habitat at Dhofar and a single at Qurm park.

**Western Reef-Heron - *Egretta gularis*** Small numbers recorded in Dhofar at various sites and four at Qurm park on 03-03-2018.

**Cattle Egret - *Bubulcus ibis*** Recorded at Raysut settling pools and lagoon on different dates. Several seen at Shisr fields in the empty quarter and a single at Sahnawt farm.

**Squacco Heron - *Ardeola ralloides*** Small numbers seen at several sites in Dhofar and recorded once at Qurm and Ansab lagoons.

**Indian Pond-Heron - *Ardeola grayii*** Mostly singles and occasionally a handful of individuals recorded at several sites in Dhofar. Two records from the north in Ansab lagoons and Qurm park.

**Striated Heron - *Butorides striata*** A single bird recorded at Qurm NP on 28-02-2018 and 03-03-2018.

**Black-crowned Night-Heron - *Nycticorax nycticorax*** Two seen on the large boulders near the deck at Mirbat on 24-02-2018.

**Glossy Ibis - *Plegadis falcinellus*** Small numbers seen at various sites in Dhofar.

**Sacred Ibis - *Threskiornis aethiopicus*** A single bird was at Raysut lagoon on 26-02-2018.

**Eurasian Spoonbill - *Platalea leucorodia*** A flock of ten birds seen at Raysut lagoon on 26 and 27 February.

**Osprey - *Pandion haliaetus*** Singles at Raysut lagoon on 20-02-2018 and 26-02-2018 . Another individual at Ras AlSawadi on 28-02-2018.

**Oriental Honey-buzzard - *Pernis ptilorhynchus*** A single at Ansab lagoons on 28-02-2018.

**Lappet-faced Vulture - *Torgos tracheliotus*** A single bird soaring at AlHajar mountains on 03-03-2018.

**Eurasian Griffon - *Gyps fulvus*** Three near Tawi Atyr on 22-02-2018 and a single on 27-02-2018. Another two soaring above Ansab lagoons.

**Egyptian Vulture - *Neophron percnopterus*** One bird soaring high at Hajar mountains on 03-03-2-18.

**Greater Spotted Eagle - *Clanga clanga*** Common at many sites in Dhofar , and a handful recorded at Ansab lagoons in the north .

**Booted Eagle - *Hieraetus pennatus*** A single dark morph individual seen near Tawi Atyr on 27-02-2018.

**Steppe Eagle - *Aquila nipalensis*** Common at several sites I the south in Dhofar and hundreds at Raysut dump.

**Imperial Eagle - *Aquila heliaca*** Small numbers recorded in Dhofar region.

**Bonelli's Eagle - *Aquila fasciata*** A single at wadi Mughsayl on 23-02-2018 and another at Tawi Atyr on 27-02-2018. One bird soaring above Qurm park on 03-03-2018.

**Eurasian Marsh-Harrier - *Circus aeruginosus*** Mostly singles recorded at Raysut lagoon , Raysut wtp and west khawr . Another bird at Shisr fields and one at Ansab lagoons on 04-03-2018.

**Eurasian Sparrowhawk - *Accipiter nisus*** A single at Jabal Samhan on 21-02-2018 and another bird at Hajar mountains in the north on 03-03-2018.

**Black Kite - *Milvus migrans*** Recorded at Raysut lagoon on different dates with singles at Shisr fields and Tawi Atyr.

**Arabian Scops-Owl - *Otus pamela*** One spotlighted at Ayn Jarziz on 20-02-2018 and other seen in Wadi Darbat on another occasion.

**Eurasian Hoopoe - *Upupa epops*** Two at Ayn Hamran on 21-02-2018 and a single at Sahnawt farm on 24-02-2018.

**Common Kingfisher - *Alcedo atthis*** Two at Qurm park on 03-03-2018.

**Green Bee-eater - *Merops orientalis*** Two at wadi AlMughsayl on 23-2-2018 , four and six at Qurm NP on 28-2-2018 and 3-3-2018 respectively . Two at Ansab lagoon s on 4-3-2018.

**Blue-cheeked Bee-eater - *Merops persicus*** One at Qurm NP on 3-3-2018.

**Indian Roller - *Coracias benghalensis*** Three at Qurm NP on 28-2-2018 and one there on 1-3-2018.

**Eurasian Wryneck - *Jynx torquilla*** Three at Ayn Hamran on 21-3-2018.

**Eurasian Kestrel - *Falco tinnunculus*** Mostly singles observed in the south on different dates.

**Barbary Falcon - *Falco peregrines ( Pelegrinoides )*** A bird that flew past the car at Jabal Samhan on 22-2-2018.

**Alexandrine Parakeet - *Psittacula eupatria*** Two birds at Qurm NP on 28-2-2018 and 3-3-2018.

**Rose-ringed Parakeet - *Psittacula krameri*** A handful of birds at Qurm NP and mostly singles in the south.

**Black-crowned Tchagra - *Tchagra senegalus*** Six birds at Ayn Hamran on 21-2-2018.

**Isabelline Shrike - *Lanius isabellinus*** Mostly recorded at the wetlands in the south with a single bird at Ansab lagoons on 4-3-3018.

**Great Gray Shrike - *Lanius excubitor*** Two at Jarziz farm on 24-2-2018 and three at Shisr fields on 25-2-2018. A single at Mudday on 25-2-2018.

**African Paradise-Flycatcher - *Terpsiphone viridis*** Nine at Ayn Hamran on 21-2-2018 and two at Tawi Atyr on 22-2-2018.

**House Crow - *Corvus splendens*** Common throughout.

**Brown-necked Raven - *Corvus ruficollis*** Three at Muntasar oasis on 26-2-2018 and a single at Al Hajar mountains on 3-4-2018.

**Fan-tailed Raven - *Corvus rhipidurus*** Common at sites in the Dhofar mountains.

**Greater Hoopoe-Lark - *Alaemon alaudipes*** A single on the way to Shisr fields and four there on 25-2-2018.

**Desert Lark - *Ammomanes deserti*** Three at wadi AlMughsayl on 23-2-2018 , a single at Mudday on 25-2-2018 and around Ghubrah village on 1-3-2018.

**Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark - *Eremopterix nigriceps*** Six at Jarziz farms on 24-2-2018 and thirteen at Shisr fields on 25-2-2018.

**Singing Bushlark - *Mirafra cantillans*** A single bird sighted on the way to Jabal Samhan on 21-2-2018 and two at Sahnawt farm on 24-2-2018.

**Greater Short-toed Lark - *Calandrella brachydactyla*** Recorded at Sahnawt farm, Jarziz farms and Muntasar oasis.

**Lesser Short-toed Lark - *Alaudala rufescens*** A single bird at Muntasar oasis on 25-2-2018 was the only sighting.

**Crested Lark - *Galerida cristata*** Recorded at several locations in the south.

**Pale Crag Martin - *Ptyonoprogne fuligula ( Obsoleta )*** Common at many locations in the south.

**Red-vented Bulbul - *Pycnonotus cafer*** A handful of birds recorded at Qurm NP on three visits.

**White-spectacled Bulbul - *Pycnonotus xanthopygos*** Recorded throughout.

**White-eared Bulbul - *Pycnonotus leucotis*** Recorded in the north At Qurm NP and Ansab lagoons.

**Scrub Warbler - *Scotocerca inquieta*** In total five birds seen at a locality at Hajar mountains on 3-3-2018.

**Plain Leaf Warbler - *Phylloscopus neglectus*** One bird at Qurm NP on 28-02-2018 and one around Ghubrah village on 1-3-2018 and a total of three birds while on the way to Sayq plateau on 2-3-2018.

**Common Chiffchaff - *Phylloscopus collybita*** Recorded a several locations in the south and at Qurm NP in north.

**Siberian Chiffchaff – *Phylloscopus collybita ( Tristis )*** A single bird at Qurm park on 28-02-2018 was the only sighting.

**Eastern Olivaceous Warbler - *Iduna pallida*** A single bird at Ayn Hamran on 21-2-2018.

**Clamorous Reed Warbler - *Acrocephalus stentoreus*** Recorded almost daily at wetlands.

**Graceful Prinia - *Prinia gracilis*** Common and recorded at all wetlands.

**Asian Desert Warbler - *Sylvia nana*** A single bird at Mudday on 25-2-2018 and three at Muntasar oasis on 26-2-2018.

**Lesser Whitethroat - *Sylvia curruca*** Singles recorded at handful of locations both in the south and north.

**Arabian Warbler - *Sylvia leucomelaena*** Four at Ayn Hamran on 21-2-2018 and a pair at Tawi Atyr on 22-2-2018.

**Menetries's Warbler - *Sylvia mystacea*** A single female recorded at Muntasar oasis on 26-2-2018.

**Abyssinian White-eye - *Zosterops abyssinicus*** Seen at Ayn Hamran , Tawi Atyr , Raysut settling pools and on the way to Jabal Samhan.

**Arabian Babbler - *Turdoides squamiceps*** In total twelve birds recorded at Ghubrah bowl on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> of march and another four birds at Hajar mountains on 3<sup>rd</sup> of march.

**Bluethroat - *Luscinia svecica*** A single at west khawr on 21-2-2018 and another single at Ansab lagoon on 28-2-2018 . Three at Ansab lagoons on 4-3-2018.

**Red-breasted Flycatcher - *Ficedula parva*** A single bird at Ansab lagoons on 4-3-2018 was the only record.

**Black Redstart - *Phoenicurus ochruros*** Mostly singles recorded in the south at several locations.

**Blue Rock-Thrush - *Monticola solitarius*** Singles seen at wadi Mughsayl, khawr AlMughsayl and around Ghubrah village.

**European Stonechat - *Saxicola rubicola*** A single at Shisr fields on 25-2-2018 and another at Al Qurm NP on 3-3-2018

**Blackstart - *Cercomela melanura*** Common and recorded at several locations in Dhofar region.

**Hooded Wheatear - *Oenanthe monacha*** A single bird at Mudday on 25-2-2018.

**Hume's Wheatear - *Oenanthe albonigra*** Two at a locality near Al Rustaq town in AlHajar mountains on 2-3-2018 and two not far from Sayq plateau on 3-3-2018.

**Northern Wheatear - *Oenanthe oenanthe*** Three seen at Shisr fields on 25-2-2018.

**Arabian Wheatear - *Oenanthe lugentoides*** Three seen on the way to Jabal Samhan on 21-2-2018 and another three at Tawi Atyr on 22-2-2018. A pair at AlMughsayl wadi on 23-2-2018.

**Pied Wheatear - *Oenanthe pleschanka*** Singles at Raysut and Shisr fields.

**Red-tailed Wheatear - *Oenanthe xanthopyrmyna*** A single bird at the same locality where Hume's wheatears were recorded was the only sighting.

**Desert Wheatear - *Oenanthe deserti*** Common and almost recorded daily at all visited locations in Dhofar region.

**Isabelline Wheatear - *Oenanthe isabellina*** Seen at several locations in Dhofar region and on different dates.

**Rosy Starling - *Pastor roseus*** A small flock seen very near Raysut lagoon on 26-2-2018.

**Common Myna - *Acridotheres tristis*** Common throughout.

**Tristram's Starling - *Onychognathus tristramii*** Common and recorded at several locations in Dhofar.

**Nile Valley Sunbird - *Hedydipna metallica*** A total of eight birds at Mudday on 25-2-2018

**Palestine Sunbird - *Cinnyris osea*** Five at Ayn Hamran on 21-2-2018 and another three at Tawi Atyr at the same day. Six at Tawi Atyr on 22-2-2018

**Shining Sunbird - *Cinnyris habessinicus*** Seven at Ayn Hamran on 21-2-2018 and a single at Tawi Atyr on the same day . One at Albaleed archeological site on 27-2-2018.

**Purple Sunbird - *Cinnyris asiaticus*** Mostly singles and pairs recorded in the north.

**Western Yellow Wagtail - *Motacilla flava*** Common and recorded at suitable habitat at Dhofar region.

**Citrine Wagtail - *Motacilla citreola*** Common with many sightings from Dhofar and the north at Ansab lagoons and Qurm NP.

**White Wagtail - *Motacilla alba*** Common and always seen at suitable habitat both in Dhofar and in the north.

**Long-billed Pipit - *Anthus similis*** A single at Ayn Hamran on 21-2-2018 and another three on the way to Jabal Samhan on same day . Three at Mughsayl area on 23-02-2018.

**Tawny Pipit - *Anthus campestris*** Common and recorded mostly in the south.

**Tree Pipit - *Anthus trivialis*** Five birds seen at Sahnawt farm on 24-2-2018.

**Red-throated Pipit - *Anthus cervinus*** A single bird at Sahnawt farm on 24-2-2018 was the only record.

**Water Pipit - *Anthus spinoletta*** Three at Sahnawt farm on 24-2-2018 and five at Muntasar oasis on 26-2-2018.

**Arabian Golden-winged Grosbeak - *Rhynchostruthus percivali*** Six at Ayn Hamran on 21-2-2018.

**Yemen Serin - *Crithagra menachensis*** Seven at Tawi Atyr sinkhole on 22-2-2018.

**Cinnamon-breasted Bunting - *Emberiza tahapisi*** Reasonably common and recorded at several location in Dhofar especially in the mountains

**Striolated Bunting - *Emberiza striolata*** Eight at AlMughsayl on 23-2-2018 and a single bird at the camel farm in Mudday on 25-2-2018. A total of four at Ghubrah bowl on 02-03-2018.

**House Sparrow - *Passer domesticus*** Recorded at Raysut lagoons and Raysut settling pools.

**Ruppell's Weaver - *Ploceus galbula*** Common and recorded almost in every location at Dhofar.

**Streaked Weaver - *Ploceus manyar*** One individual at Ansab lagoon on 04-03-2018 was the only sighting.

**Indian Silverbill - *Euodice malabarica*** Two at Qurm NP on 28-02-2018 and another two near AlRustaq town on 02-02-2018 . A total of sixteen at Ansab lagoon on 04-03-2018.

**African Silverbill - *Euodice cantans*** Small parties recorded at several locations in Dhofar.

**Scaly-breasted Munia - *Lonchura punctulata*** A total of five birds at Sahnawt farm on 24-02-2018.



*The arid but rewarding Ghubra Bowl.*

**For any information or questions on the trip, My email address: [Bassel\\_2002tii@hotmail.com](mailto:Bassel_2002tii@hotmail.com)**